



## Higher National Unit specification

### General information

**Unit title:** Public Relations: Principles and Practice (SCQF level 7)

**Unit code:** completed by SQA

**Superclass:** HC2P 34

**Publication date:** March 2016

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 02

### Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to introduce learners to the function of Public Relations (PR) in a contemporary marketing environment. The main purpose of this Unit is to provide an understanding of how PR professionals, organisations and media operate in this sector. It provides an underpinning knowledge of core PR principles and provides a context for how this is applied in a contemporary business environment. Learners will develop knowledge and understanding of the role and function of modern PR and will develop skills to design and produce PR materials.

This Unit covers both online and offline techniques, tools and media.

### Outcomes

On successful completion of the Unit the learner will be able to:

- 1 Explain the role of Public Relations (PR) in the marketing environment.
- 2 Design and produce Public Relations (PR) materials for a client.

### Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7)

### Recommended entry to the Unit

Access to this Unit is at discretion of the centre. However it would be useful if the learner has *Communication Skills* at SCQF level 6 or equivalent.

## Higher National Unit Specification: General information (cont)

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### Core Skills

Achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following Core Skills component:

Complete Core Skill	None
Core Skill component	Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5

There are also opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills which are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit specification.

### Context for delivery

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

### Equality and inclusion

This Unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website [www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements).  
Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards

## Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards

**Unit title:** Public Relations: Principles and Practice (SCQF level 7)

Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

### Outcome 1

Explain the role of Public Relations (PR) in the marketing environment.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Function of Public Relations in the marketing environment
- ◆ Key differences between Public Relations and advertising
- ◆ Structure and services of the Public Relations industry
- ◆ Role of media in Public Relations
- ◆ Public Relations techniques and tools
- ◆ Communication with publics

### Outcome 2

Design and produce Public Relations (PR) materials for a client.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Public Relations objectives
- ◆ Public Relations tools for external publics
- ◆ Public Relations as an in-house communication tool
- ◆ Media sources
- ◆ Sponsorship and endorsement
- ◆ Methods of evaluation

### Evidence Requirements for this Unit

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills across all Outcomes by showing that they can:

#### Outcome 1:

- ◆ explain the function of Public Relations in the marketing environment.
- ◆ explain the key differences between Public Relations and advertising.
- ◆ describe the structure and services of the Public Relations industry.
- ◆ explain the role of media in Public Relations.
- ◆ distinguish between different Public Relations publics.
- ◆ describe the different on line and off line techniques and tools used in Public Relations for communicating both externally and internally.

## **Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)**

**Unit title:** Public Relations: Principles and Practice (SCQF level 7)

### **Outcome 2:**

- ◆ identify appropriate objectives for a PR campaign.
- ◆ design and produce a News Release, which includes a relevant sponsor, endorsement and list of appropriate media.
- ◆ design and produce PR communication materials suitable for both internal and external publics.
- ◆ identify qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating PR materials.

Assessment for Outcomes 1 and 2 could take a variety of forms. Please see Guidance on Approaches to Assessment of this Unit in Support Notes for more details.



## Higher National Unit Support Notes

**Unit title:** Public Relations: Principles and Practice (SCQF level 7)

Unit Support Notes are offered as guidance and are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

### Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

Since digital technologies have become commonplace in society, the role and structure of the PR industry has changed. Whilst the traditional principles of PR remain, practitioners have adapted traditional tools and mastered the new techniques and tools that have fallen under the PR remit. As a result, learners should gain an understanding of the modern media landscape (both on line and off line) and understand the role of terms such as search engine optimisation (also known as marketing optimisation), social media, and content marketing and their application in the PR Sector.

**Outcome 1** is designed to allow learners to develop knowledge of Public Relations.

**Outcome 2** encourages learners to not only acquire knowledge but also apply understanding to designing and creating PR materials for a client.

To minimise confusion and in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) definition/usage in PR activities, the term 'publics' is included in Knowledge and Skills and Evidence Requirements of this Unit. However, there is an increasing use of the term 'stakeholders' amongst marketing practitioners. This should be highlighted to learners to ensure they are aware of both terms being used in PR and marketing.

Full credit transfer can be given from the old version of this Unit (FK8N 34) to this Unit.

### Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

#### Outcome 1:

This Outcome requires learners to understand and explain the role of PR in the communications mix by discussing how PR can be used with other communication mix element. It is important that PR is explored from a broader organisational perspective as well as its use as a communications tool. Within the delivery of this Unit, learners should be able to identify the key difference between PR and advertising in terms of objectives, payment structures and audiences.

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Public Relations: Principles and Practice (SCQF level 7)

The structure of the PR industry could be explored from two angles. Firstly, the advantages and disadvantages of an in-house/out of house PR operation, and secondly how the sector is driven by current professional bodies and associations. Throughout this Unit learners should be aware of the use and role of media in the PR operation. They should be able to distinguish between bought, owned and earned media space and how PR can influence this. They should also be familiar with different traditional and digital media outlets and its relationship with the function of PR.

Learners will be expected to identify the difference between different PR audiences such as users/consumers, employees and publics/stakeholders, and suppliers and distributors. This ties into the different techniques and tools used for communicating to external and internal audiences, eg news releases and new conferences, bulletins and brochures, and blogs and social media (including on line and off line).

### Outcome 2

This Outcome allows learners to apply their knowledge in a more practical manner. Learners could be presented with a contemporary organisation, event or issue that would require the production of PR materials. It is suggested that this case study materials be freshened up on a regular basis to ensure it is consistent with PR in a contemporary marketing environment.

Learners would identify relevant PR objectives for their materials as well as suitable evaluation and measuring techniques.

The 'news release' is still a PR industry standard document and learners should be able to produce news release(s) as a key component of their PR materials. To complement the news release, there should be an appropriate media contact list for the case study. In addition to the news release, learners should produce an example of PR communication material for both internal and external publics. This could range from a simple leaflet and bulletin, to a blog post and house journal.

It is suggested that the split in delivery between Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 is 40%–60% as this will allow more time for the more practical application of knowledge.

In terms of delivery, it is suggested that a broad mix of methods could be used from traditional lecture formats to more participative learner-led group work and discussion.

### Guidance on approaches to assessment of this Unit

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Outcome 1 could take the form of a report based on a range of structured questions. Learners could provide extended responses based on a portfolio over an agreed period of time that would cover the Evidence Requirements for the Unit. Due to the portfolio and report/blog/wiki aspect of the assessment, electronic submissions via VLEs or the use of portfolio software could be used.

Outcome 2 requires learners to produce a range of PR materials which could be based on a case study etc. Learners could generate their evidence by submitting a short report, oral presentation or blog, etc along with a portfolio of work.

For both Outcomes the use of blog, wikis and presentations could be used — providing all Evidence Requirements are met.

Due to the design aspect of this Unit, co-assessment with a design-led Unit such as *Digital Imaging* could be appropriate.

### Opportunities for e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this Unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at [www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment](http://www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment).

### Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

This Unit will provide opportunities to develop Core Skills in:

- ◆ *Communication:* learners will have many opportunities to develop both Written and Oral skills in conveying information and opinions regarding the role of PR within the marketing context; the responsibilities of those in the PR sector; differences between PR and advertising and PR techniques and tools. In Outcome 2, they will design communication materials for internal and external publics. Across the Unit, they will have opportunities to communicate orally; in written format; or using blogs, wikis, etc.
- ◆ *Problem Solving:* learners will have many opportunities to develop all aspects of problem solving. They will use analysis and reasoning to make decisions and create ideas for relevant PR communication materials, a news release for a particular client and understand the differences between PR and advertising. They are to establish objectives for a PR campaign and be involved qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating PR materials.

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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- ◆ *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*: learners will have opportunities to use ICT to access a wide range of information about PR and the PR industry; they will cover the use of digital technologies in the PR sector and it is also likely that they will also use ICT in the design and production of their PR materials

This Unit has the Critical Thinking component of Problem Solving embedded in it. This means that when learners achieve the Unit, their Core Skills profile will also be updated to show they have achieved Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5.



## History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Core Skills Component Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5 embedded.	24/05/16

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## General information for learners

### Unit title: Public Relations: Principles and Practice (SCQF level 7)

This section will help you decide whether this is the Unit for you by explaining what the Unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the Unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

This Unit introduces you to Public Relations (PR) within a modern, contemporary marketing environment. You will cover how PR professionals, organisations and the media operate within the PR sector. You will develop knowledge of core PR principles and how you can apply this knowledge in the modern, competitive business environment. You will cover the role and function of modern PR and how PR differs from advertising. You will have the opportunity to apply this knowledge and develop skills to design and produce PR materials. You will cover both online and offline techniques, tools and media.

On successful completion of the Unit, you will be able to:

- ◆ explain the role of Public Relations (PR) in the marketing environment.
- ◆ design and produce Public Relations (PR) materials for a client.

Assessments will be outlined by your tutor and are likely to include production of short reports or wikis/blogs, etc on PR within the marketing environment; and you will also design and produce a range of PR materials appropriate for a client.

There are also opportunities to develop Core Skills in *Communication, Problem Solving, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*.

To undertake this Unit, it would be helpful if you have *Communication Skills* at SCQF level 6 or equivalent.

This Unit is mandatory within the HN in Advertising and PR — and successful achievement of this Unit and HN award could provide opportunities for progression to HE, employment in the advertising, PR and marketing or related sectors.

This Unit has the Critical Thinking component of Problem Solving embedded in it. This means that when you achieve the Unit, your Core Skills profile will also be updated to show you have achieved Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5.