National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Geography: Applications (Higher)
NUMBER D239 12
COURSE Geography (Higher)

SUMMARY
This unit seeks to develop breadth and depth in conceptual understanding of specified physical and human environments. This unit will also apply concepts from the Physical Core and Human Core to geographical relationships within current environmental issues.

OUTCOMES
1 Describe the physical environment and human activity and explain the ways in which they interact.
2 Interpret and analyse complex geographical information.
3 Describe and evaluate possible strategies for environmental management or solutions to the issues arising from the interaction.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY
While entry is at the discretion of the centre, candidates would normally be expected to have attained one of the following:
• Standard Grade Geography or another social subject at Grade 1, 2 (or possibly 3)
• Intermediate 2 Geography or its component units
• Intermediate 2 in another social subject or its component units
• Intermediate 2 Geology, Managing Environmental Resources or Travel and Tourism or their component units

Administrative Information
Superclass: RF
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CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Higher.

CORE SKILLS

This unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Complete core skills for the unit  None
Core skills components for the unit  Critical Thinking  H

Additional information on the automatic certification of any core skills in this unit is published in Automatic Certification of Core Skills in National Qualifications (SQA, 1999).
National Unit Specification: statement of standards

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Acceptable performance in this unit will be the satisfactory achievement of all 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 the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

OUTCOME 1

Describe the physical environment and human activity and explain the ways in which they interact.

Performance criteria
a) The description of the physical environment or its formation is accurate and clear.
b) The description of the human environment or activity is accurate and clear.
c) The detailed explanation of the interaction is accurate and clear.
d) The explanation of the environmental consequences or issues arising from the interaction is accurate and clear.

OUTCOME 2

Interpret and analyse complex geographical information.

Performance criteria
a) The interpretation of the information is accurate.
b) The analysis is accurate, takes account of the information which may include differing points of view and indicate relationships.

OUTCOME 3

Describe and evaluate possible strategies for environmental management or solutions to the issues arising from the interaction.

Performance criteria
a) The description and the strategies or solutions is accurate and detailed.
b) The evaluation of strategies or solutions is valid.

Evidence requirements
Candidates are required to produce evidence (which could be written, oral or diagrammatic). This evidence should show achievement of the outcome and, therefore, imply satisfaction of the performance criteria in relation to the three chosen applications which are listed in the course content, ie one piece of work from group one, one piece of work from group two and one other from either group. For each application, evidence for all three outcomes will be gathered using one assessment item. The evidence should be collected under controlled conditions (closed book), ie timed, supervised and with no access to additional resources or support.
National Course Specification: support notes

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This part of the unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes 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

This unit is one of three mandatory units which together make up the course in Higher Geography. The other units are Geography: Physical Core and Geography: Human Core.

Geography: Applications
Within the Geography: Applications unit, the content is divided into two sections of three parts each:

Group 1
Application (a) - Rural land resources
Application (b) - Rural land degradation
Application (c) - River basin management

Group 2
Application (d) - Urban change and its management
Application (e) - European regional inequalities
Application (f) - Development and health.

In order to achieve certification in this unit, candidates have to attain all three outcomes stated in the unit specification. The outcomes are to be met in relation to one of the applications in Group 1 and one of the applications in Group 2, plus a third application from either Group 1 or Group 2. (Note that in the external assessment, candidates will have to answer questions on two applications – one from Group 1 and one from Group 2).

Refer to the course specification for further details on the unit/topic content.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

Induction and review
Candidates should receive a general overview of the objectives and content of the unit, and specific criteria for achieving the unit award.

Candidates should be introduced to the ways of working on the unit (for example, if the use of a case study approach to a topic is chosen), the kinds of information and study skills expected from them (for example, if the unit is to be undertaken on a supported self-study format) and the kind of support they can expect from the teacher/lecturer (for example, if there are to be informal tutorials as well as formal class lessons).
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Learning experiences
Where this unit is being delivered as part of a course, units can be taught in an integrated manner in which the Geography: Physical Core and Geography: Human Core and Geography: Applications are linked or by teaching the units sequentially. In the latter case, the Core units should be taught before the Applications unit. Within these two approaches, a great deal of flexibility exists for centres to customise their delivery to the needs of the candidate group.

The methodology used by teachers/lecturers will be built on existing good practice. Teacher/lecturer exposition and note-taking from textbooks, information sheets and a wide variety of other resources may form the basis of class work in this unit. Class and group discussions may reinforce this. Extension work, access to a variety of sources of information and resource-based learning should be made available to individuals and groups as appropriate. It could be possible to deliver the material in some sub-sections through the use of case studies where the subject matter, learning approach, teacher/lecturer support and assessment were differentiated. Formal or informal group work could be used as an approach to learning where dialogue and interaction between candidates and between candidates and teachers/lecturers would be possible. The unit also encourages the use of a wide range of media and resources.

The following learning experiences are essential to the unit. Candidates should:
- make use of relevant terminology, concepts and ideas
- extract, interpret, analyse and present geographical evidence
- systematically record information derived from a variety of sources, such as maps, books, notes, graphs, statistics, audio-visual materials
- develop the skills of communicating information in written (or equivalent), map and graphical forms for a variety of purposes
- take part in formal and informal discussion and debate based on, and informed by, geographical evidence and knowledge in order to develop the ability to think independently and make informed judgements.

Opportunities for extension, remediation and consolidation should be built into the unit; how this is organised would depend on the teaching approach.

The Geography: Applications unit may be taught in any order. The learning experiences in both group one and group two reinforce each other: knowledge and understanding of the content and general concepts will be developed along with increased competence in the skills listed in the outcomes and course specification.

Where a candidate has failed to pass the assessment item for an application the candidate must be reassessed on that application. Time should be allowed for remediation and reassessment.
GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

Approaches to assessment
The pieces of work which demonstrate competence in the outcomes for each unit should also demonstrate a level of achievement equivalent to a Grade C in the course. The same pieces of work may be assessed against the grade descriptions for the relevant part of the external course assessment to ascertain whether an A or B can be recorded as a course estimate or as evidence in the case of an appeal. For details of the grade descriptions for external assessment, refer to the course specification.

Additional pieces of work can be used for continuous assessment and as practice for external assessment. These could be grouped and/or timed to develop examination skills (as in a preliminary examination). Towards the end of the course, it may be useful to allow candidates to revisit the content covered at the beginning of the year, using skills developed through experience and maturation as the year’s work progressed.

Advice may also be given on the organisation of revision for the external assessment. Knowledge and understanding needs to be effectively retained and skills practised with unfamiliar sources or questions.

Advice on generating evidence
The evidence can be gathered at anytime and should reflect the requirements set out in the unit specification. Applications may be tested individually (see National Assessment Bank items for examples) or applications may be tested together (for example, in a preliminary examination).

It would be possible to use similar instruments of assessment to those used in the external examination for the course. It will be necessary to identify and record whether each application has been passed. The marking scheme should reflect the standard embodied in the performance criteria. The level of attainment required for successful completion of the unit should represent satisfactory attainment of the outcomes in all three applications and, therefore, by inference, satisfactory coverage of all performance criteria.

Where a candidate has failed to pass the assessment item for an application, a retest may be undertaken after appropriate remediation. This must reassess the application. If the candidate remains unsuccessful in all or part of the unit, a different assessment item should be used for the subsequent reassessment.

Further information and advice on assessment is given in the Subject Guide and National Assessment Bank.

SPECIAL NEEDS
This unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. Special needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering alternative outcomes for units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document Guidance on Special Assessment and Certification Arrangements for Candidates with Special Needs/Candidates whose First Language is not English (SQA, 1998).