

-SQA-SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL CERTIFICATE MODULE: UNIT SPECIFICATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

-Module Number- 6350026

-Session-1996-97

-Superclass- CX

-Title- INFORMATION IN BUSINESS

-DESCRIPTION-

GENERAL COMPETENCE FOR UNIT: Explaining the nature and importance of information and information technology to the operations of businesses.

OUTCOMES

1. explain the nature and importance of business information;
2. report on the application of information technology to business operations.

CREDIT VALUE: 1 NC Credit

ACCESS STATEMENT: Entry is at the discretion of the centre. However, it would be beneficial if candidates had core skills in communication. This may be evidenced by possession of National Certificate Module 7110035 Communication 2 or Standard Grade English or equivalent.

This module can be taken as part of a course which also includes 6350036 Introduction to the Nature of Business and 6350046 Key Areas of Business. Where all three are taken together, it is expected that they will be integrated. Where this is not the case, it is likely that, on balance, candidates would find it helpful if these modules had been completed prior to the start of this module.

For further information contact: Committee and Administration Unit, SQA, Hanover House, 24 Douglas Street, Glasgow G2 7NQ.

Additional copies of this unit may be purchased from SQA (Sales and Despatch section). At the time of publication, the cost is £1.50 (minimum order £5.00).

NATIONAL CERTIFICATE MODULE: UNIT SPECIFICATION**STATEMENT OF STANDARDS****UNIT NUMBER:** 6350026**UNIT TITLE:** INFORMATION IN BUSINESS

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

OUTCOME

1. EXPLAIN THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF BUSINESS INFORMATION

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- (a) Explanation includes relevant examples of current business practice.
- (b) Explanation includes an accurate distinction between data and information.
- (c) Explanation of the importance of business information is accurately related to the uses of information in business.
- (d) Different types of information are accurately identified and each is evaluated with reference to a particular aspect of business activity.
- (e) Sources of information are accurately described in terms of their potential costs and benefits for a particular business purpose.

RANGE STATEMENT

Data: primary; secondary.

Information: quantitative; qualitative.

Uses of information: control; decision making; awareness of current performance.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

Oral or written evidence to cover all aspects of the performance criteria and the range statements.

For performance criterion (d), four different types of information should be identified and evaluated.

For performance criterion (e) four different sources of information are required.

OUTCOME

2. REPORT ON THE APPLICATION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TO BUSINESS OPERATIONS

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- (a) The uses of information technology in business are accurately explained with reference to relevant examples drawn from current business practice.
- (b) The benefits of information technology to business are accurately explained with reference to relevant examples drawn from current business practice.
- (c) Appropriate software is used to correctly manipulate data contained in an existing database.
- (d) Financial data in a spreadsheet is correctly manipulated and the results accurately interpreted.

RANGE STATEMENT

The range for this outcome is fully reflected within the performance criteria.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

Oral or written evidence to cover all aspects of the performance criteria and the range statements.

For performance criterion (a), candidates should give one example drawn from current business practice for 6 different types of information technology used in business.

For performance criterion (c), candidates should provide print-outs to show (i) a list of records using three selection methods, (ii) five different amendments applied to at least five different fields, (iii) deletion of one record and addition of one record. The database should consist of a minimum of 20 records with 5 fields per record.

For performance criterion (d), candidates should provide (i) print-out(s) of the spreadsheet showing two different 'what-if' scenarios, (ii) written evidence of two conclusions drawn from each scenario. The spreadsheet should have a minimum of 4 columns and 6 rows per column including two variables that can be changed to illustrate 'what if' scenarios.

ASSESSMENT

In order to achieve this unit, candidates are required to present sufficient evidence that they have met all the performance criteria for each outcome within the range specified. Details of these requirements are given for each outcome. The assessment instruments used should follow the general guidance offered by the SQA assessment model and an integrative approach to assessment is encouraged. (See references at the end of support notes.)

Accurate records should be made of the assessment instruments used showing how evidence is generated for each outcome and giving marking schemes and/or checklists, etc. Records of candidates' achievements should be kept. These records will be available for external verification.

SPECIAL NEEDS

In certain cases, modified outcomes and range statements can be proposed for certification. See references at end of support notes.

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NATIONAL CERTIFICATE MODULE: UNIT SPECIFICATION**SUPPORT NOTES****UNIT NUMBER:** 6350026**UNIT TITLE:** INFORMATION IN BUSINESS

SUPPORT NOTES: This part of the unit specification is offered as guidance. None of the sections of the support notes is mandatory.

NOTIONAL DESIGN LENGTH: SQA allocates a notional design length to a unit on the basis of time estimated for achievement of the stated standards by a candidate whose starting point is as described in the access statement. The notional design length for this unit is 40 hours. The use of notional design length for programme design and timetabling is advisory only.

PURPOSE SQA publishes summaries of NC units for easy reference, publicity purposes, centre handbooks, etc. The summary statement for this unit is as follows:

The purpose of this module is to enable candidates to explain the nature and importance of information to all aspects of contemporary business activities in the UK with particular reference to the application of information technology.

CONTENT/CONTEXT The module focuses on the importance of information to all aspects of contemporary business activity. Increasingly this is an area where information technology is of major significance both with respect to hardware and software and it is helpful to see the module against this background. The module, however, sees information technology as a means by which business activity can be made more effective and the emphasis is thus more on the applications of information technology to business than on the use of information technology as such.

'Hands-on experience' is important and the module expects that candidates should develop some IT skills in the use of software packages relevant to business in order to fully appreciate the uses which information technology has in a business context. It would be appropriate, therefore, if the examples chosen reflected this. It would be helpful also if industry standard examples chosen reflected this. It would be helpful also if industry standard software were used if it is available. Examples of hardware should also reflect current business practices.

Corresponding to the outcomes:

Outcome 1

Information is data which has been organised into a form which makes it useful to a business organisation.

Types of information can include oral, written, numerical, pictorial, formal, informal, manual, electronic.

Sources of information can be internal (eg from various departments such as sales or cost data, from investigation or research such as the results of market research) or external such as journals, magazines, government. They can be formal (eg information provided regularly by the company on budgetary control etc) or informal (eg discussions with sales representatives on customer reactions and attitudes).

Outcome 2

Information technology could cover things such as: mainframe; mini-computers; personal computers; networks; knowledge base systems; telecommunications technology; multimedia; business software; e-mail. Examples chosen should reflect current practice and could be selected to match with the experience of candidates. Thus, networks could be exemplified by local area networks while instances of telecommunications could be FAX or mobile telephone.

Databases could be constructed for maintaining records of customers, keeping personnel records etc while spreadsheets could relate to cost information or projected revenue. Thus, revenue could change if sales are more or less than anticipated, if prices changes etc.

APPROACHES TO GENERATING EVIDENCE This module offers considerable scope for active learning. As well as 'hands-on' experience using appropriate software, candidates could do project work and practical investigations, including visits to business organizations (eg to see how they make use of IT; to see examples of information generated within the business). Information could also be gathered from IT suppliers, company reports etc. Visiting speakers from local companies could be asked to explain how they use information and give examples of the type of information involved.

There is scope for institutions to build up their own case study material using information gained from Local Enterprise Companies (LECs), local companies etc which can be used by candidates taking this module.

Where the module is taken as a package with Introduction to the Nature of Business and Key Areas of Business, there are opportunities also to integrate the generation of evidence. If the other two are taken first, then examples used previously can be introduced again or earlier material developed. Thus, financial information considered in Key Areas of Business could be incorporated into a spreadsheet in this module.

The development of skills in handling software is time-consuming and it may be useful to do this throughout the module so that other aspects of it run parallel to the acquisition of competence in the use of the software.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES A number of different methods of assessment are likely to be suitable for this module (eg assignments, project work, investigations). However, the structure of the module is such that an outcome by outcome assessment approach is less likely to be appropriate than a more holistic strategy.

A suitable assessment strategy might be:

A single assignment which looks at the use of information in business as a whole. It could be divided into three sections. The first section would cover parts of Outcome 1 and consist of three questions covering performance criteria (b), (d) and (e). The second section would also consist of three questions relating to Outcome 1 performance criterion (c) and performance criteria (a) and (b) of Outcome 2 (this would be to emphasize the importance of IT to the information flow in business). The final section would ask candidates to manipulate a database and devise a spreadsheet as per performance criteria (c) and (d) of Outcome 3.

If desired this could be modified so that section 3 was done separately. This would mean that there were two separate assessments for the module.

A further alternative is for sections two and three above to be taken first. In this way, the questions related to Outcome 1 could be used to bring the whole module together. In this case, performance criterion (c) of outcome 1 would revert to the final section. Again, performance criteria (c) and (d) of outcome 3 could be done separately.

As a further alternative, a case study approach could be used where candidates could be given a case study of an organization (eg a small business wishing to expand) which covers all aspects of the module. They could be asked suitable questions on the case study to ensure coverage of all performance criteria.

This type of approach would enable assessment in this module to be integrated with assessment work undertaken for the complementary units. Introduction to the Nature of the Business and Key Areas of Business.

EXEMPLARS

The following is an example of an assessment that could be set as the first part of a two assignment strategy.

This assignment will enable you to demonstrate that you can explain the nature and importance of business information and the importance of information technology in business. It covers outcome 1 and outcome 2 PC(a) and PC(c).

Throughout your answer, you should refer to examples of business practice with which you are familiar:

Section 1: Information

1. Explain the distinction between data and information, and distinguish between primary and secondary data and quantitative and qualitative information.
2. Explain four different types of information that business make use of and relate each to a particular example of business activity.
3. Explain four sources of information used in business and indicate the benefits of getting information from each of these sources and the costs of doing so.

Section 2: Information Technology

1. Explain how businesses use information and indicate the importance of each use.
2. Explain the benefits of information technology to businesses and illustrate your explanation by reference to at least six different kinds of information technology.

RECOGNITION Many SQA NC units are recognised for entry/recruitment purposes. For up-to-date information see the SQA guide 'Recognised Groupings of National Certificate Modules'.

REFERENCES

1. Guide to unit writing. (A018).
2. For a fuller discussion on assessment issues, please refer to SQA's Guide to Assessment. (B005).
3. Procedures for special needs statements are set out in SQA's guide 'Candidates with Special Needs'. (B006).
4. Information for centres on SQA's operating procedures is contained in SQA's Guide to Procedures. (F009).
5. For details of other SQA publications, please consult SQA's publications list. (X037).

A support pack for this unit is available from SQA. Please call our Sales and Despatch section on 0141-242 2168 to check availability and costs. Quote product code B080.

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