

-SQA-SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL CERTIFICATE MODULE: UNIT SPECIFICATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

-Module Number- 7350675 -Session- 1995-96

-Superclass- HB

-Title- CONTEMPORARY ISSUES 2

-DESCRIPTION-

GENERAL COMPETENCE FOR UNIT: Developing planning, organisational, investigative, interpersonal skills and self-awareness and an understanding of aspects of a contemporary issue through investigation activities with limited tutor/trainer support.

OUTCOMES

1. plan an investigation of a contemporary issue with limited tutor/trainer support;
2. undertake an investigation of a contemporary issue under limited supervision;
3. work cooperatively with others in an investigation of a contemporary issue;
4. review the contribution of the knowledge and skills gained through an investigation of a contemporary issue to own personal and social development.

CREDIT VALUE: 1 NC Credit

ACCESS STATEMENT: Access to this unit is at the discretion of the centre. However, it would be beneficial if the candidate had achieved any level 1 PSD unit or 7110035 Communication 2 or Standard Grade in Social and Vocational Skills at 4 or equivalent.

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).

NATIONAL CERTIFICATE MODULE: UNIT SPECIFICATION**STATEMENT OF STANDARDS****UNIT NUMBER:** 7350675**UNIT TITLE:** CONTEMPORARY ISSUES 2

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. PLAN AN INVESTIGATION OF A CONTEMPORARY ISSUE WITH LIMITED TUTOR/TRAINER SUPPORT

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- (a) An initial self-assessment clearly identifies qualities and skills and realistic personal goals are set.
- (b) Definition of goals of an investigation is clear and accurate.
- (c) A limited range of possible sources of information is identified accurately.
- (d) Information collected to aid planning is relevant.
- (e) A step-by-step plan produced for the investigation is clear and comprehensive.
- (f) Feasibility of the plan is reviewed and the plan is adjusted as required.

RANGE STATEMENT

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

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

PC(a) An initial self-assessment.

An investigation plan meeting Performance Criteria (b)-(f) for the investigation of a contemporary issue.

OUTCOME

2. UNDERTAKE AN INVESTIGATION OF A CONTEMPORARY ISSUE UNDER LIMITED SUPERVISION

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- (a) Resources to carry out plan are organised effectively.
- (b) Activities are implemented according to the pre-prepared plan.
- (c) Tasks are completed correctly and according to the pre-prepared plan.
- (d) Records of investigation procedures are clear and accurate.
- (e) Investigation activities are monitored effectively in order to establish whether their purpose has been achieved.
- (f) A report of the investigation findings is clear and accurate.

RANGE STATEMENT

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

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

PC(a), (b), (c) and (e) Performance evidence for the investigation of a contemporary issue.

PC(d) and (f) Written and/or oral records and report.

OUTCOME

3. WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH OTHERS IN AN INVESTIGATION OF A CONTEMPORARY ISSUE

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- (a) Potential contacts are approached in a way which encourages cooperation.
- (b) Questions asked are relevant to the purpose of the investigation.
- (c) Responses of the contacts are listened to attentively.
- (d) Advice, assistance and opinions of others are sought when required.
- (e) Working relationships formed are cooperative in nature.
- (f) Behaviour is modified appropriately to meet the needs of different situations.
- (g) Ideas, information and judgements volunteered are relevant, accurate and sensible.
- (g) Ideas, information and judgements volunteered are relevant, accurate and sensible.

RANGE STATEMENT

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

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

Performance evidence for all of the performance criteria for one investigation topic.

OUTCOME

- 4. REVIEW THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS GAINED THROUGH AN INVESTIGATION OF A CONTEMPORARY ISSUE TO OWN PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- (a) The initial self-assessment is re-examined in terms of strengths and weaknesses and progress towards defined goals is reviewed effectively.
- (b) Progress and learning gained is stated clearly concisely.
- (c) Feelings and reactions to learning gained are expressed clearly.
- (d) The value of the learning gained is reviewed in relation to future personal, social and vocational goals.

RANGE STATEMENT

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

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

PC(a) An updated self-assessment.

PC(b)-(d) Written and/or oral evidence for the investigation of a contemporary issue.

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: 7350675

UNIT TITLE: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES 2

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 This unit is designed to provide opportunities to develop planning, organisational, investigative interpersonal skills and self-awareness and understanding and knowledge of a contemporary issue through investigation activities with a limited degree of tutor/trainer support.

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

This unit is designed to develop your skills in planning, organising, investigating and understanding aspects of an issue of current importance. In addition it develops the interpersonal skills which you require to carry out these tasks. During the unit with some assistance from your tutor/trainer you will select some aspect of a contemporary issue, investigate it and review the progress of the investigation.

CONTENT/CONTEXT Corresponding to Outcomes 1-4:

1. The possible contexts for the investigation of a contemporary issue are wide ranging. They may be of a local, national or international nature and include environment, politics, industry, society, education and leisure. This list is not prescriptive and tutors/trainers will find that a range of other contexts provide appropriate topics for investigation which encourage the candidates to develop appropriate planning, investigative and interpersonal skills. In particular the unit provides candidates with the opportunity to explore topics which are not a feature of other elements of their programme and thus to increase their awareness and understanding of contemporary issues.

The scope for investigation activity within any of these contexts is wide ranging. The topic chosen should have a current relevance. In an investigation within the environmental context, for instance, possible

subjects might include nuclear waste disposal, oil spillage from tankers, logging by international companies in the rainforest, comparison of recycling methods in different countries. Investigation could focus on pressure groups eg Greenpeace and the industrial and governmental agencies involved eg oil companies, Department of the Environment. Tutors/trainers should encourage topic choice which enables candidates to follow their own interests and to exploit the range of resources available to them.

2. The investigation techniques employed must be appropriate to the investigation. Candidates should be encouraged to use a variety of techniques as appropriate to particular contexts or issues. The range of investigation techniques which can be employed includes interviews; questionnaires; photographs; audio and video recordings; appeals for information and opinions via local press; library research; museum research; map work; "opinion polls"; surveys; discussions with local experts.

Where possible, use might be made of government departments, newspapers and radio/TV programmes, political parties, trade associations, research institutes and electronic sources of information such as the Domesday disks.

Candidates, with limited support from the tutor/trainer, should organise resources to carry out the investigation plan, implement the plan, keep an accurate record of the investigation procedures and report accurately on the investigation findings. The form which these records takes may vary but each candidate should maintain a folder of material containing information on the planning and execution of the project and the investigation findings.

The findings can be presented in a variety of forms, including video records, tape slide presentations, written reports supported by graphical material, photographs, wall posters etc.

3. Each candidate should gather information from people during the investigation. Tutors/trainers should ensure that methods of investigation and information retrieval provide opportunities for candidates to develop interpersonal skills. In an environmental investigation, for instance, candidates might be encouraged to question visiting speakers, interview local members of pressure groups, contact research institutes, librarians or the press.

Candidates should demonstrate interpersonal skills in approaching contacts, encouraging their cooperation, obtaining information and reviewing and responding to opinions of the tutors/trainers and others on the progress of the investigation. Candidates should show evidence of seeking advice and assistance where necessary and of modifying behaviour as appropriate to the needs of different situations.

4. Towards the end of the unit each candidate should review the investigation activity and what has been gained from the exercise. There should be a review of progress towards the achievement of the goals identified earlier in the unit. The learning gained should be identified and personal feelings and reactions towards this learning should be expressed. Candidates should review the value of the learning experience to their own personal and social development.

APPROACHES TO GENERATING EVIDENCE In this unit candidates may choose whether to undertake the investigation individually or in groups. If a group approach is preferred each candidate must maintain individual records of his or her part of the investigation. It is expected that in the course of the unit each candidate will compile a folder of assessment evidence containing planning sheets of the proposed investigation, log sheets which record the activities undertaken by the candidates in the process of the investigation, material (in appropriate print or non-print format) which presents the results of the investigation activities and a final review sheet with reflections on the investigation process and its relevance to personal and social development.

Involving candidates in the decisions which affect them is valuable for personal development as well as being a powerful motivating factor. Among the areas for negotiation in this unit are:

membership of investigation groups; choice of investigation topics; roles within groups and allocation of tasks to group members; methods of investigation; methods of recording results of investigation.

Corresponding to Outcomes 1-4:

1. Induction to the unit including explanation of its key features and establishing working relationships. An important role of the tutor/trainer is to act as facilitator to provide the appropriate framework and climate where candidates can take responsibility for decision making, planning, organising and problem solving.

Appropriate tutor/trainer input will take the form of limited support for candidates who have little experience of methods of planning, monitoring progress, gathering information and presenting results. A variety of approaches might be appropriate, including short talks by candidates who have experience, a study of examples of investigation reports, discussions leading to individuals or the group drawing up notes for guidance.

Candidates should identify a topic for investigation with limited tutor/trainer support. A definition of "contemporary issue" must be agreed and possible content should be discussed between

candidate and tutor/trainer. Candidates should be allowed to choose a topic which follows their own interests and allows exploitation of the available resources. Advice from the tutor/trainer may be required as to the complexity of particular issues.

Establishing a base of knowledge for investigations of a contemporary issue can be achieved through a variety of methods eg visiting speakers, case studies, radio and TV documentaries, visits to local libraries. This phase of the unit should be limited and merely provides the framework for subsequent investigation activities.

2. Each candidate or group undertakes the investigation, maintains accurate records of the investigations procedures and reports on the findings. During this phase the tutor's/trainer's role is to provide limited support as required. However the candidate must demonstrate that he or she can effectively monitor his or her own investigation activities. It is important that the initiative lies with the candidate. The tutor/trainer must make a judgement regarding the timing and degree of intervention should problems arise.

Where possible the findings of each investigation should be considered and discussed by the group as a whole. The sharing of knowledge and experience gained is valuable and the presence of an audience for the findings creates a sense of purpose.

3. All learning activities should be designed to develop personal and social development skills. Individual or group exercises to enable candidate to identify qualities and skills necessary for successful investigation activities may be used. These might include tutor/trainer exposition, case studies, role play. Tutors/trainers should thus attempt to ensure that problems relating to investigation techniques and methods are anticipated before tasks are undertaken. Candidates should also be assisted with preparation for learning through the investigation activities through practice of personal and social development skills involved such as interviewing skills, group work, time-management, record keeping presentation of findings, self- evaluation.
4. In a short interview with each individual the tutor/trainer will discuss the activities undertaken throughout the unit and the feelings of the candidates towards these. Tutors/trainers should not prompt performance but should create an atmosphere and framework within which candidates are encouraged to speak openly about their progress towards the defined goals, their feelings and reactions in relation to the tasks undertaken and the contribution which the learning activities have made towards their own personal and social development.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES During the unit the candidate is required to plan and undertake an investigation of a contemporary issue during which he or she should assemble a folder of assessment evidence in relation to the outcomes. Personal interviews are central to the assessment and will be used to explore the candidate's experience of the investigation tasks in relation to the stated performance criteria.

The tutor/trainer may conduct personal interviews with individual candidates or with groups, as appropriate. The interviews will take place on an on-going basis throughout the unit and should draw on relevant evidence from the candidate's assessment folder.

Centres may use the instruments of assessment which are considered by tutors/trainers to be the most appropriate. Examples of instruments of assessment which could be used are as follows:

Corresponding to outcomes:

1. Personal interview drawing on evidence from planning sheet.
2. Personal interview drawing on evidence from planning sheet, log sheet and record of findings of investigation in appropriate format.
3. Personal interview drawing on evidence from log sheet.
4. Personal interview using review sheet.

PROGRESSION This unit is the second in a series of units on Contemporary issues. Successful candidates may wish subsequently to progress to units 7350685 Contemporary Issues 3 and 7350695 Contemporary issues 4 which set more demanding targets for candidates. Unit 7350665 Contemporary Issues 1 sets less demanding targets for candidates.

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

REFERENCES

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

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