

NATIONAL CERTIFICATE MODULE: UNIT SPECIFICATION**STATEMENT OF STANDARDS****UNIT NUMBER:** 7350685**UNIT TITLE:** CONTEMPORARY ISSUES 3

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. DEVISE AND PLAN AN INVESTIGATION OF A CONTEMPORARY ISSUE

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- (a) An initial self-assessment clearly identifies qualities and skills and realistic personal goals are set.
- (b) Definition of goals of investigation is clear and accurate.
- (c) Information located to aid planning is relevant.
- (d) A step-by-step plan produced for the investigation is clear and comprehensive.
- (e) The feasibility of the plan is analysed, evaluated and the plan 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 for PCs (b), (d) and (e).

Performance evidence and written evidence for PC(c).

OUTCOME

2. UNDERTAKE AN INVESTIGATION OF A CONTEMPORARY ISSUE

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- (a) Resources to carry out plan are organised effectively.
- (b) Tasks in investigation activities are detailed and prioritised as appropriate to the achievement of the set goals.
- (c) The plan is implemented according to pre-prepared plan.
- (d) Investigation activities are undertaken with commitment and confidence.
- (e) Flexibility, initiative and problem-solving skills are demonstrated clearly in the investigation activities.
- (f) Performance in investigation activities is self-monitored in order to establish whether the purpose of the activities has been achieved.
- (g) Records of investigation procedures are detailed and accurate.
- (h) The report of the investigation findings is detailed and accurate.

RANGE STATEMENT

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

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

Performance evidence for PCs (a)-(f).
Records and report for PCs(g) and (h).

OUTCOME

3. INITIATE AND SUSTAIN WORKING RELATIONSHIPS IN THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INVESTIGATION OF A CONTEMPORARY ISSUE

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- (a) Cooperative working relationships in unfamiliar situations are initiated independently.
- (b) Ideas, information and judgements volunteered to others are relevant, accurate and sensible.
- (c) Anticipated needs of others are responded to relevantly.
- (d) Advice is sought as required and evaluated effectively.
- (e) Opinions of others during the progress of the investigation are evaluated critically.
- (f) Behaviour is modified appropriately to meet the needs of different situations.

RANGE STATEMENT

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

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

Performance evidence which covers all of the performance criteria for the investigation of a contemporary issue.

OUTCOME

4. EVALUATE 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 evaluated effectively.
- (b) Progress and learning gained are described clearly concisely.
- (c) Feelings and reactions to the investigation are expressed clearly.
- (d) Performance in task management skills and interpersonal skills is evaluated and related 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 up-dated self-assessment.

PC(b)-(d) Written and/or oral evidence for one investigation.

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: 7350685

UNIT TITLE: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES 3

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 The unit is designed to provide opportunities to develop planning, organisational, investigative, interpersonal skills and self-awareness through investigation activities. It provides candidates with the opportunity to develop understanding and knowledge of a contemporary issue and task management skills in a framework which permits an in-depth examination of the issues involved.

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 planning, organisational, investigative, interpersonal skills, and self-awareness and your knowledge and understanding of an issue of current importance. You will have the opportunity to select some aspect of a contemporary issue, to investigate this in depth and to present your findings.

CONTENT/CONTEXT Corresponding to Outcome 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 planning, investigation 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 candidate to follow their own interests and to exploit the range of resources available to them.

In the initial stages of the unit the tutor's/trainer's role is as a consultant or facilitator but all necessary preparations for the investigation activity should be made by the candidate.

Individuals or groups, working independently, should identify and clearly define the goals of the investigation. Choice of investigation topic will be made after examination of a number of possible options and a review of information from a range of sources identified by the candidate. Definition of goals will be set out in a project brief/statement of intent which outlines the subject for research. This brief will include the topic or subject title, a brief indication of the candidate's previous knowledge, an outline plan indicating general themes to be investigated, the location of possible sources of information, people who can be contacted etc) and a brief indication of the research programme.

Candidates should then produce a detailed step-by-step plan outlining specific area to be investigated and indicating a timescale for these. Specific information on sources of information, people to be contacted, methods of investigation should be included in the detailed plan. Candidates should analyse and evaluate the feasibility of the plan, adjusting as is necessary.

2. The candidate should take responsibility for the organisation and implementation of the investigation. The high level of organisational skills required of candidates in this unit should be reflected in the investigation activities. The investigation techniques employed must be appropriate to the investigation. Candidates should be encouraged to use a variety of techniques which can be employed including interviews; questionnaires; photographs; audio and video recordings; appeals for information and opinions via local press; library research; museum research; map work; "opinion polls"; surveys; discussion 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 should organise resources to implement their plan and detail and prioritise tasks appropriate to achievement of the goals outlined earlier. Activities should be organised to a self-constructed timescale and candidates will require to demonstrate evidence of commitment and competence in undertaking the investigation. The tutor/trainer should look for evidence of flexibility, initiative and problem solving throughout. In addition candidates should demonstrate evidence of effective self-monitoring of performance, record investigation procedures and report findings in a detailed and accurate manner.

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

3. Investigations of contemporary issues provide an appropriate context for the development of interpersonal skills. The tutor/trainer should emphasise to candidates the importance of this aspect of the investigation activity.

Candidates should ensure that methods of investigation and information retrieval provide opportunities to develop interpersonal skills. Individuals or groups should initiate and develop contact with individuals or agencies and provide evidence that they can effectively contribute to establishing rapport in unfamiliar situations, as well as seeking and critically evaluating advice and opinions on the progress of the investigation. Tutors/trainers should ensure that candidates provide evidence that they can volunteer ideas, information and judgements to others and can alter behaviour to meet the needs of different situations.

4. Candidates should be given the opportunity to analyse and evaluate the learning gained during the investigation activity at interim review sessions and in the final debriefing interview. They should describe their personal feelings and in the final debriefing interview. They should describe their personal feelings and reactions with a significant degree of insight and evaluate their progress towards their identified goals. The final interview provides an opportunity for candidates to evaluate performance of task management and interpersonal skills and to relate these to their personal, social and vocational 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 project brief, preliminary and detailed planning sheets of the proposed investigation, log sheet which records the activities undertaken by the candidates in the process of the investigation, material (in appropriate print or non-print format) which presented the results of the investigation activities and a final review sheet with reflections on the investigation processes 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. At this level the tutor/trainer acts in a consultative role and it is important that this is fully explained to candidates at the outset. Tutors/trainers should ensure that a framework is established which encourages independent activity and autonomy.

Candidates working independently should identify a topic for investigation related to their local area and focus on particular contexts or issues. At this level candidates should not be discouraged from tackling complex issues. The issue should be set out in a project brief. Methods of investigation and possible content should be discussed and agreed between candidate and tutor/trainer.

2. Each candidate or group undertakes the investigation, maintains accurate records of the investigation as it progresses and presents investigation findings. During this phase the tutor's/trainer's role is to act as a facilitator or consultant. It is important that the initiative lies with the candidates. The tutor/trainer must make a judgement regarding the timing and degree of intervention should problems arise.

Candidates will have chosen the methods of presentation of the findings of each investigation which 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. Candidates should also be assisted with preparation for learning through the investigation and resource activities. Where necessary they should practise personal and social development skills, research techniques and task management skills involved in fieldwork activities, library visits, interview, planning, information retrieval, interviewing, group work (if appropriate), time management, record keeping, presentation of findings, review and self-evaluation.

The level of skills required in relation to the above is high and should be reflected in candidate performance throughout the unit.

4. In a short debriefing interview with each individual the tutor/trainer will discuss the candidate's experiences of investigation and research activity. Tutors/trainers should not prompt performance but should create an atmosphere and framework within which candidates are encouraged to evaluate progress towards defined goals, describe learning gained and critically evaluate performance of task management and interpersonal skills relating to future 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 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 with a final debriefing interview at the end of the unit.

Interviews 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 project brief/statement of intent and preliminary and detailed planning sheets.
2. Personal interview drawing on evidence from planning sheets, log sheets and presentation of findings of investigations in appropriate format.
3. Personal interview drawing on evidence from log sheets.
4. Personal interview drawing on evidence from review sheet.

PROGRESSION This unit is the third in a series of units on Contemporary Issues. Successful candidates may wish subsequently to progress to unit 7350695 Contemporary Issues 4 which sets more demanding targets for candidates. National Units 7350665 Contemporary Issues 1 and 73450675 Contemporary Issues 2 set 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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