



National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Front of Office Skills (SCQF level 5)

CODE F59P 11

SUMMARY

This Unit is designed to enable candidates to develop the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills required to work in a front of office environment. They will have to communicate effectively with visitors and colleagues in person, by phone and using other electronic methods of communication. On successful completion, candidates will understand the role of reception and the procedures involved in its maintenance.

OUTCOMES

- 1 Demonstrate knowledge of the procedures for receiving, directing and responding to visitors.
- 2 Demonstrate knowledge of the procedures for processing incoming and making outgoing telephone calls.
- 3 Make effective use of electronic office communication systems.
- 4 Demonstrate knowledge of the procedures involved in maintaining the reception area.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

Entry is at the discretion of the Centre.

CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Intermediate 2 (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 5).

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Administrative Information

Superclass: AY

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

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CORE SKILLS

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills in this Unit.

The Unit provides opportunities for candidates to develop aspects of the following Core Skills:

- ◆ Communication (SCQF level 4)
- ◆ Working with Others (SCQF level 4)
- ◆ Information Technology (SCQF level 4)

These opportunities are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit Specification.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Front of Office Skills (SCQF level 5)

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

Demonstrate knowledge of the procedures for receiving, directing and responding to visitors.

Performance Criteria

- (a) The procedures for greeting visitors are accurately described and in accordance with organisational requirements.
- (b) Procedures for receiving and directing a range of visitors are accurately described and in accordance with organisational procedures.
- (c) The skills for effective communication with visitors are accurately described.
- (d) Records maintained by front of office staff are accurately described.

OUTCOME 2

Demonstrate knowledge of the procedures for processing incoming and outgoing telephone calls.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Procedures for receiving incoming telephone calls are accurately described.
- (b) Procedures for taking messages are accurately described.
- (c) The process of transferring calls is accurately described.
- (d) The preparations for and process of making outgoing calls are accurately described.

OUTCOME 3

Make effective use of electronic office communication systems.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Prepare and record a voicemail greeting for a given situation.
- (b) Prepare and leave a suitable voicemail message for a given situation.
- (c) Recorded messages are transcribed accurately and urgent messages identified and prioritised.
- (d) Use fax and e-mail appropriate to an office situation.
- (e) Identify the role of electronic office communication systems in an office.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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OUTCOME 4

Demonstrate knowledge of the procedures involved in maintaining the reception area.

Performance Criteria

- (a) The health and safety procedures to be followed are accurately described.
- (b) The security and confidentiality procedures of the organisation are accurately described.
- (c) The procedures to be followed in maintaining the reception area are accurately described.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

Evidence is required to demonstrate that candidates have achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

The assessments for Outcomes 1, 2 and 4 will be undertaken by candidates answering a series of restricted response questions in supervised, closed-book conditions.

The assessment for Outcome 3 will be a set of multiple choice questions carried out under supervised closed-book conditions.

The Assessment Support Pack for this Unit provides sample assessment material. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the Assessment Support Pack to ensure a comparable standard.

Outcome 1 and 2 Written and/or Oral Evidence

Written/oral evidence is required for Outcome 1 which demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the procedures involved in the receiving, directing and responding to a variety of visitors to the standard specified in the Outcome and Performance Criteria. Written/oral evidence is required for Outcome 2 which demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the receiving and making of telephone calls to the standard specified in the Outcome and Performance Criteria. The evidence required for both Outcomes will consist of responses to a series of restricted response questions relating to a range of video clips of front of office scenarios. This assessment will be closed-book and carried out under supervised, controlled conditions.

Outcomes 3 Performance Evidence and Written and/or Oral Evidence

Practical Exercises covering Outcome 3 should be carried out under supervision in a realistic front of office environment. A candidate log must be retained to provide evidence of performance along with hard copy of any written or electronic records maintained by the candidate.

Evidence for PC (e) will consist of multiple choice questions and should be produced under supervised closed-book conditions. Achievement can be decided by the use of a cut-off score. Where candidates fail to reach the agreed threshold score, re-assessment should follow using an alternative instrument of assessment.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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Outcome 4 Written and/or Oral Evidence

Written/oral evidence is required for Outcome 4 which demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the procedures involved in the maintenance of a reception area to the standard specified in the Outcome and Performance Criteria. The evidence required will consist of responses to a series of restricted response questions relating to a range of video clips of front of office scenarios. This assessment will be closed-book and carried out under supervised, controlled conditions.

National Unit Specification: support notes

UNIT Front of Office Skills (SCQF level 5)

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 a mandatory Unit in NC in Administration (SCQF level 5) but can also be undertaken as a free-standing Unit.

This Unit should be set in the context of a modern business environment and will introduce candidates to the skills required to work in a front of office environment. Practical activities for this Unit should be carried out in a realistic simulated work environment.

Key areas of knowledge and skills development are:

Outcome 1

- ◆ role of receptionist/front office
- ◆ importance of friendly and efficient reception service
- ◆ importance of creating a positive image of the organisation
- ◆ knowledge of organisation, structure, products and services
- ◆ importance and benefits of good customer service, impact of poor customer service, customer service strategies
- ◆ types of customers/visitors — with appointments, without appointments, internal, external, difficult
- ◆ identifying customer needs and expectations — routine and non-routine enquiries
- ◆ effective communication skills, questioning and listening skills, non-verbal communication, barriers to communication
- ◆ dealing with difficult customers
- ◆ customer complaints
- ◆ maintaining working relationships with customers and colleagues
- ◆ records maintained by the receptionist
- ◆ managing diary systems
- ◆ taking messages and composition of messages from visitors (paper, e-mail)

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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Outcome 2

- ◆ importance of first impressions and creating positive image over telephone systems
- ◆ procedures for receiving telephone calls, both internal and external
- ◆ identifying the caller and his needs
- ◆ giving accurate and up-to-date information
- ◆ features of telephone systems and their use
- ◆ transferring calls
- ◆ procedures for making telephone calls
- ◆ internet telephony (Voice over Internet Protocol)
- ◆ taking messages and composition of messages from telephone calls (paper, e-mail)

Outcome 3

- ◆ preparation of material for transmission using the fax machine
- ◆ receiving and passing on incoming faxes
- ◆ e-mail — receiving e-mail, composition of outgoing e-mails
- ◆ answering machine/voicemail
- ◆ other answering services eg 1571
- ◆ transcribing messages, prioritising and passing them on
- ◆ keeping answering machine/voicemail announcements up-to-date
- ◆ leaving messages on voicemail/answering machines
- ◆ use of any other emerging technologies as appropriate

Outcome 4

- ◆ importance of reception area in creating a positive image of the organisation
- ◆ policies and procedures of the organisation on the maintenance of the reception area including notice boards and general housekeeping
- ◆ compilation and maintenance of organisational charts and internal directories
- ◆ security and confidentiality procedures
- ◆ health and safety procedures
- ◆ awareness of current legislation, eg health and safety, data protection
- ◆ dealing with emergency situations

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

The main approach to learning and teaching should be practical and experiential. Candidates should be encouraged to learn through a variety of activities which are designed to enhance their awareness of the work and skills involved in working in a front of office environment.

Learning and teaching for each Outcome should incorporate both theory and practice with candidates taking on the role of receptionist. Role play activities and peer group observation could be used throughout to encourage students to reflect on performance and to promote team working. The working conditions where possible should reflect those found in the workplace and include the facilities, equipment and materials used in this environment.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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The Unit, therefore, should incorporate a variety of approaches to learning and teaching and may include:

- ◆ tutor demonstrations
- ◆ practical activities
- ◆ role play
- ◆ peer observations
- ◆ a variety of resource materials including use of ICT, e-learning opportunities, videos/DVDs, books
- ◆ visits to organisations could be arranged to allow candidates to observe working practices in a front of office environment or visiting speakers
- ◆ use of video to record candidate performance to allow reflection on learning

There may be integration opportunities with other Units within National Certificate in Administration (SCQF level 5) eg *Managing your Time and Resources*.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

There may be opportunities within the Unit to develop aspects of Core Skills.

In this Unit candidates will be involved in communicating with customers internal and external to the organisation both face to face and electronically and will develop the following Core Skills:

- ◆ Communication — Written and Oral
- ◆ Working with Others
- ◆ IT eg use of word processing and presentation software, e-mail, e-diary

Opportunities should be taken to emphasise the employability skills which will be developed during this Unit.

Opportunities should also be taken to develop citizenship skills throughout the Unit.

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

The Evidence Requirements are fully expressed in the mandatory section of the Unit Specification.

This Unit is set in the context of the modern business organisation in a front of office environment and candidates are expected to develop a knowledge and understanding of appropriate working practices as well as some practical skills in the use of electronic methods of communication.

Outcomes 1, 2 and 4 will be assessed through the use of a range of video clips covering a variety of front of office scenarios with candidates answering a series of restricted response questions relating to these.

Outcome 3 will be assessed through practical tasks covering the use of a variety of electronic methods of communication with candidates maintaining a log as well as hard copy of evidence of use of these communication methods. Multiple choice questions will be used to assess PC (e) and should be carried out under supervised closed-book conditions.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

Opportunities for the use of 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 communications technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or e-checklists. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all candidate evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. Further advice is available in *SQA Guidelines on Online Assessment for Further Education (AA1641, March 2003)*, *SQA Guidelines on e-assessment for Schools (BD2625, June 2005)*.

CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES AND/OR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (www.sqa.org.uk).