National Unit Specification: general information

✕SQA

UNIT   Shorthand: An Introduction (SCQF level 5)

CODE   F5AA 11

SUMMARY

This is a free-standing Unit, which is part of a group of three shorthand units. This Unit is designed to enable candidates to adopt and use a recognised shorthand system and demonstrate basic note-taking and transcription skills. It is aimed at candidates who have no previous experience of using a shorthand system. Candidates who have a working knowledge of a *shorthand* system should be encouraged to undertake the Unit *Shorthand: Speed Development (50wpm)* and/or *Shorthand: Speed Development (60 wpm)*.

OUTCOMES

1   Use a recognised shorthand system and demonstrate a basic understanding of the principles and rules of the system.
2   Use a recognised shorthand system to produce a simple document from shorthand notes.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

While entry is at the discretion of the Centre, candidates would normally be expected to have attained one of the following, or equivalent: Core Skill *Communication* at Intermediate 1 level or a suitable equivalent. Ideally candidates should have completed or be working towards a keyboarding/word processing qualification.

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CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at SCQF level 5: (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.

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:

♦   Information Technology (SCQF level 4)

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

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

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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

Use a recognised shorthand system and a basic understanding of the principles and rules of the system.

Performance Criteria

(a) Demonstrate the basic principles and rules of a recognised shorthand system, including special outlines, word groupings and distinguishing outlines for common/every day words.
(b) Use a recognised shorthand system to record simple text.

OUTCOME 2

Use a recognised shorthand system to produce a simple document from shorthand notes.

Performance Criteria

(a) Record a simple document dictated at 40 words per minute using a recognised shorthand system.
(b) Produce an accurate transcription from own notes in handwriting or word processed.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

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

Assessment should take place at appropriate points during delivery of the Unit.

Outcome 1

Candidate should produce a file of evidence showing that they understand a recognised system of shorthand — basic principles, common rules, outlines, special outlines, word groupings and distinguishing outlines.

The file should be in the form of simple theory worksheets. The worksheets, completed through the course, should demonstrate that the candidate can, as a minimum:

♦   transcribe 50 unseen printed outlines from shorthand into English
♦   transcribe 20 unseen printed special outlines and 20 unseen word groupings/phrases from shorthand into English
♦   transcribe five simple sentences from English into shorthand

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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Assessment must be carried out under controlled conditions. Candidates may use an English dictionary to check spelling. The use of a shorthand dictionary is not permitted. Satisfactory performance will be an error tolerance of 10%. Where a candidate has an error tolerance of over 10%, then they must undertake an alternative assessment, after a period of remediation.

The file of evidence will support and consolidate teaching and will provide good evidence of knowledge and understanding. Where a shorthand system has flexibility, ie there can be more than one way to write words, then questioning could be employed to supplement the work produced and assess knowledge and understanding. Where questioning and/or observation is used as evidence, then checklists should be in place.

Evidence Requirements will be the file of competence produced, supplemented with checklists if applicable.

Outcome 2

Candidates will record a simple document of 80 words dictated at 40 words per minute, using a recognised shorthand system. The document could be a statement, letter, press release, memorandum, file note, extract from a minute of meeting or short report. Candidates should receive a basic briefing on the document before dictation commences — ie type of document and title of document. Full stops and paragraphs in the text should be dictated.

Candidates will then produce a transcription of the document using their own notes within an error tolerance of 2.5% (ie two errors or less) by writing back or using a word processor. The emphasis will be on mail-ability of the document — a document that is fit for purpose and will not cause embarrassment to an organisation. Transcription time will be no longer than 20 minutes for this task. Candidates should be encouraged to use a word processor to produce the transcription.

This assessment must be conducted under controlled conditions. Candidates may use a shorthand or English dictionary while transcribing their own notes.

Where a candidate has more than two errors in this task, then the candidate will be required to undertake an alternative assessment.

Evidence for this Outcome will be the shorthand notes produced with the transcription, including amendments, where applicable.

National Unit 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 an optional Unit in the National Certificate Group Award in Administration (SCQF level 5). It can also be used as a free-standing Unit.

This Unit is intended to introduce candidates to a recognised shorthand system. It is recognised that the need for traditional shorthand dictation of correspondence, ie manager/secretary, is in decline. Therefore, this Unit should focus on learning a shorthand system and developing a basic general vocabulary, rather than an exclusive business vocabulary. It is expected that candidates would use the skills acquired, in a business setting to undertake, for example, note-taking at meetings.

Outcome 1 introduces the theory of a recognised shorthand system, while building up a good basic vocabulary. Candidates should build up a file of competence throughout the course.

Outcome 2 introduces basic note-taking and transcription skills. Working to deadlines is introduced as part of this Outcome.

Students may progress from this Unit to the *Shorthand: Speed Development (50 wpm)* Unit.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

Candidates undertaking this Unit are likely to be working towards a Group Award which is designed to provide candidates with the knowledge and skills required to perform an administrative role. The skill of shorthand could increase employability prospects. The use of shorthand in a modern business environment should be considered when delivering this Unit. The traditional use of shorthand is in decline and materials used for practice should not be restricted to business correspondence. Where students are undertaking a vocational course (eg medical/legal) then the Unit could be contextualised to that area, enhancing perhaps the special outlines/word groupings relating to that area.

In Learning Outcome 1 students should be introduced to a recognised shorthand system and the use of shorthand in a modern business environment should be reinforced. A wide, general vocabulary should be included. Throughout Learning Outcome 1, candidates will produce a file of competence which will demonstrate understanding as theory is covered.

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In Learning Outcome 2 note-taking skills are introduced and the need to produce documents from the candidate's own notes reinforced. Basic listening skills and memory techniques will be introduced. The practice material used should, again, be of a general nature, but could be contextualised to specific vocational programmes. Transcription skills will be introduced and the benefits of transcribing using a word processor could be highlighted. It is expected that candidates will be undertaking keyboarding/word processing training as part of their course. In the speed development units, word processing of transcription is mandatory. The need to plan and organise work within deadlines should be introduced and reinforced throughout the teaching of this Unit. Students should develop proof-reading skills and work towards error-free submission of work, in line with working practices.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

By the use of Word Processing to transcribe dictation, it is envisaged that candidates will be able to develop aspects of the Core Skills in *Information Technology*.

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

Outcome 1

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The file should be in the form of simple theory worksheets. The worksheets should demonstrate that the candidate can, as a minimum:

♦   transcribe 50 unseen printed outlines from shorthand into English
♦   transcribe 20 unseen printed special outlines and 20 unseen word groupings/phrases from shorthand into English
♦   transcribe five simple sentences from English into shorthand

Assessment must be carried out under controlled conditions. Candidates may use an English dictionary to check spelling. The use of a shorthand dictionary is not permitted. Satisfactory performance will be an error tolerance of 10%. Where a candidate has an error tolerance of over 10%, then they must undertake an alternative assessment, after a period of remediation.

The file of evidence will support and consolidate teaching and will provide good evidence of knowledge and understanding. Where a shorthand system has flexibility, ie there can be more than one way to write words, then questioning could be employed to supplement the work produced and assess knowledge and understanding. Where questioning and/or observation is used as evidence, then checklists should be in place.

Evidence Requirements will be the file of competence produced, supplemented with checklists if applicable.

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Outcome 2

Candidates will record a simple document of 80 words dictated at 40 words per minute, using a recognised shorthand system. Full stops and paragraphs, in the text, should be dictated. The document could be a statement, letter, press release, memorandum, file note, extract from a minute of meeting or short report. Candidates should receive a basic briefing on the document before dictation commences — ie type of document and title of document.

Candidates will then produce a transcription of the document using their own notes within an error tolerance of 2.5% (ie two errors or less) by writing back or using a word processor. Transcription time will be no longer than 20 minutes for this task. Candidates should be encouraged to use a word processor to produce the transcription.

This assessment would be conducted under closed-book conditions. Candidates may use a shorthand or English dictionary while transcribing their own notes.

Where a candidate has more than two errors in this task, then the candidate will be required to undertake an alternative assessment.

Evidence for this Outcome will be the shorthand notes produced with the transcription, including amendments, where applicable.

An example of a simple document for dictation is shown below. This document includes punctuation and dictation timings.

> "When you leave college and begin working it may be$^{/\frac{1}{4}}$ a good idea to open a current
>
> account at a$^{/\frac{1}{2}}$ bank (**Paragraph**).
>
> The main benefit of having a current account$^{/\frac{3}{4}}$ is that you receive a debit card with
>
> the latest$^{/1}$ chip and PIN technology for your convenience (**Full Stop**). This//$^{1\frac{1}{4}}$ is
>
> very useful when you are shopping or whenever you$^{/1\frac{1}{2}}$ are required to pay an
>
> outstanding bill (**Full Stop**). It/$^{1\frac{3}{4}}$ is much more convenient to pay by card (**Full**
>
> **Stop**)//^{2}."

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).*

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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**).