



National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Professional Practice in an Educational Setting (SCQF level 6)

CODE F7HV 12

SUMMARY

This Unit is a mandatory Unit in the Professional Development Award in Education Support Assistance (SCQF level 6). The Unit is designed to introduce candidates to the principles of professional practice required for working as an Education Support Assistant. Candidates will learn what is meant by the term 'professional practice' in an educational setting and the qualities, skills, expertise, knowledge and values needed for the post. They will also learn about being a reflective practitioner and the importance of continuously upgrading their skills/knowledge base.

This Unit is appropriate for those who are considering employment in the school sector or wish to progress onto further study in education.

OUTCOMES

- 1 Describe the principles, values and reflective practice which underpin professional practice in working with children and young people in an educational setting.
- 2 Describe the role of the Education Support Assistant and their relationship with other professionals within an educational setting.
- 3 Describe curriculum guidelines and initiatives in operation in Scottish educational settings.

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:

- ◆ *Communication* at SCQF level 4
- ◆ *Numeracy* at SCQF level 4

Administrative Information

Superclass: GB

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CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at SCQF level 6 (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 6*).

**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:

- ◆ *Communication* at SCQF level 5
- ◆ *Working with Others* at SCQF level 5

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

Describe the principles, values and reflective practice which underpin professional practice in working with children and young people in an educational setting.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Explain what is meant by the term ‘professional practice’ in an educational setting.
- (b) Describe the principles and values which underpin working with children and young people in an educational setting.
- (c) Identify relevant charters, legislation, and national/local policies from which principles and values are drawn.
- (d) Explain what is meant by the term reflective practice within an educational setting.

OUTCOME 2

Describe the role of the Education Support Assistant and their relationship with other professionals within an educational setting.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Describe the role of the Education Support Assistant in terms of local and national guidelines.
- (b) Describe the role of other professionals within an educational setting.
- (c) Identify the characteristics of an effective relationship with other professionals within an educational setting.

OUTCOME 3

Describe curriculum guidelines and initiatives in operation in Scottish educational settings

Performance Criteria

- (a) Describe curriculum guidelines and their implementation in Scottish educational settings.
- (b) Describe the current initiatives in operation in Scottish educational settings.
- (c) Describe pupil support in relation to current curriculum guidelines and initiatives in operation in Scottish educational settings.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

Written and/or oral recorded evidence is required to demonstrate that the candidate has achieved all of the Outcomes and the Performance Criteria.

The evidence for all Outcomes should be obtained under controlled supervised conditions and should last no more than one hour. A single question paper with extended or restricted response questions as illustrated in the National Assessment Bank item could be used. This should be taken on completion of all Outcomes.

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 designed to introduce candidates to the concept of professional practice when working in the role of an Education Support Assistant. Candidates will have the opportunity to demonstrate the relevant skills and qualities necessary for these posts, as well as gaining insight into the legislation and frameworks from which the values and principles are drawn.

Outcome 1

It is important that candidates are aware of what is meant by the term ‘professional practice’. This could be linked to the National Occupational Standards for Education Support Assistants, and the National review of the early years and childcare workforce. The term professional practice can be viewed as practice which demonstrates professional knowledge, expertise, relevant skills and qualities, competencies, values and beliefs, within a framework of agreed standards.

An exploration could be made of the ability to gain professional knowledge and skills which may be dependent on the nature of the working environment assigned to the Education Support Assistant, for example, some may have more clerical based tasks and less classroom contact. Candidates should also consider the relationship with the class teacher, timetable and type of school (large city school, small rural schools).

Continuous professional development is the process of upgrading knowledge and skills necessary for the post. CPD may take two forms:

- ◆ Informal professional development: Candidates learn through observing/doing tasks. Examples from practice could be examined, eg toe by toe work carried out by an Education Support Assistant copying approaches used by other staff.
- ◆ Formal professional development: This could include gaining National Qualifications for classroom assistants/support for learning assistants; Short course accreditation such as child protection, implementation of legislation; ‘In-house’ training organised by schools and local authorities.

Candidates should explore the ways in which their professional development is recorded and the mechanisms in place in their settings for formally planning/evaluating their practice.

Candidates should be encouraged to explore the ‘themes’ of professionalism:

Quality

This is a key concept which underpins professional practice. Parents expect a high quality service from all school staff, but what constitutes quality is open to interpretation. It is necessary to have frameworks, standards and inspections to set benchmarks for practice.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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Standards

These could be considered benchmarks which allow professionals to evaluate their practice.

Expertise

This is the ability to apply knowledge, as well as professional attitudes, dispositions, values and beliefs to practice.

Reflection

Reflection on practice is ongoing, and requires the professional to critically evaluate their practice.

Identity

This is the feeling of belonging to a professional body.

Status

This is the perceived value put on the role of the profession.

The principles and values which underpin working with children and young people are:

- ◆ The needs, rights and views of the child should be at the centre of all practice
- ◆ The welfare of the child is paramount
- ◆ Children have a right to play
- ◆ Children's individuality should be valued
- ◆ Anti-discriminatory practice and equality of opportunity should be adhered to
- ◆ Parents are partners in the care, learning and development of their child
- ◆ Confidentiality should be respected unless a child's welfare is at risk
- ◆ Effective teamwork supports the child's care, learning and development

Candidates should be encouraged to explore their own value base and how they came to have these values.

Relevant charters, legislation, national and local standards and policies which give a framework for professional practice should be identified. These should include:

- ◆ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ◆ Children (Scotland) act 1995
- ◆ The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001
- ◆ The National Care Standards: Early Education and Childcare up to 16 years
- ◆ A Curriculum for Excellence

Candidates should recognise the link between agreed international principles ie UN Convention on the rights of the Child and national principles, eg Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Candidates should be aware of the main points of the convention and how provision, protection and participation impacts on practice. Relevant school policies or local authority frameworks should also be identified.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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Reflective practice is practice which is seen as an ongoing learning experience where the practitioner continually evaluates his or her own skills, knowledge, values, competencies and reflects this new knowledge into their practice. Candidates may explore the distinction between ‘reflection as action’ and ‘reflection in action’ (Schon 1987) and an exploration may be made of routine action where practice is carried out the same way (routinely) and reflective action where actions are evaluated. The seven characteristics of reflective practice could be identified. They are (adapted from Pollard 2002) from Professionalism in the Early Years, Hodder Education:

- ◆ Active focus on goal setting — and how these goals can be achieved
- ◆ Continuous monitoring of practice — evaluating and revising it
- ◆ Making informed judgements about practice, based on sound evidence
- ◆ Having open-minded, responsible and inclusive attitudes (being open to new ideas and recognising when you may have made errors in the past)
- ◆ Having the capacity to change practice in the light of new insights
- ◆ Having dialogue with other colleagues
- ◆ Having the ability to know when to adopt new approaches or to adhere to existing practices, knowing that ‘new’ does not necessarily mean better

Outcome 2

The role of the Education Support Assistant should be drawn from Local Authority job descriptions/specifications. Candidates should investigate the differing role of Education Support Assistants in different settings, eg large city schools or small rural schools. Investigation may also be made of roles outside classroom situations, eg playground, outings.

Candidates should investigate the role of the teacher in relation to class management, curriculum planning and teaching. Acknowledgement should be made of the role teachers’ play in planning Education Support Assistant activities.

Other professionals who may work with Education Support Assistants are Head Teachers/depute, early intervention assistants, educational psychologists, family support workers, social workers, early years practitioners, health professionals, speech and language therapists, home visiting teachers, multi-lingual support services and peripatetic teachers. The roles of these professionals may vary in each local authority, and candidates should demonstrate a positive professional relationship in their educational setting.

For a positive relationship to be effective all parties should:

- ◆ recognise and respect each other’s roles and responsibilities
- ◆ present information clearly, so that all parties understand
- ◆ provide constructive feedback to colleagues
- ◆ quickly identify any disagreements/misunderstandings
- ◆ understand the priorities/expectations of the other parties
- ◆ understand the culture and ethos of the school
- ◆ comply with the legal requirements of the school

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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Outcome 3

Candidates should explore the background to the changes in the curriculum starting with the National debate on Education 2002. The four capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence should be studied, ie successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Examination should be made as to how these are implemented in the classroom.

Other initiatives may include Assessment is for Learning, GLOW (formerly Scottish Schools Digital Network), active learning and other local initiatives. Candidates should be encouraged to see these initiatives as supporting a Curriculum for Excellence and not sitting apart from it when explaining how these initiatives are implemented.

Pupil support mechanisms may include Individualised Education Plans, personal support plans and coordinated support plans. How the Education Support Assistant supports pupils by offering one-to-one support and working to IEP targets.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

The approach taken throughout this Unit should be one which allows candidates to reflect on their own professional practice, and the frameworks, policies, guidelines and systems in place in their educational settings. Candidates should through group work, have opportunities to share their professional practice. Some of the following approaches could be used:

- ◆ Case studies
- ◆ Worksheets
- ◆ Individual research
- ◆ DVD/videos
- ◆ Relevant visiting speakers
- ◆ Use of school policies/local authority guidelines
- ◆ Pro-forma examples, eg CPD systems

Candidates should explore the policies in operation in their own educational setting and the CPD recording mechanisms. DVD material showing classroom practice could be used to identify qualities and skills. Candidates could be encouraged to research legislation from the Scottish Government and evaluate its impact on their own practice. A range of other professionals as outlined in Outcome 2 may be asked to speak about how they interface with Education Support Assistants.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Candidates will have the opportunity to participate in group working. This provides ideal opportunities to develop aspects of the Core Skills of *Communication* and *Working with Others*.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

Guidance on approaches to assessment for this Unit are clearly defined in the Evidence Requirements section of the statement of standards of this specification.

Written and/or oral recorded evidence is required to demonstrate that all Outcomes and Performance Criteria are addressed through sampling of Unit content. An appropriate assessment would be a closed-book supervised test consisting of restricted response questions. Time should be allowed for any necessary reassessment.

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 Communication 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)*.

DISABLED CANDIDATES AND/OR THOSE WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements