



National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Digital Culture: Social Software (SCQF level 4)

CODE F81P 10

SUMMARY

This Unit is designed to make candidates aware of the impact of digital technology on contemporary culture and enable them to make use of social software, a term used to describe a range of software tools that promote communication and collaboration. These tools include, but are not restricted to, email, chat, newsgroups or forums, instant messaging, blogs, wikis, social networking sites and virtual worlds.

OUTCOMES

- 1 Describe the various types of social software available.
- 2 Describe the impact of digital technology on contemporary culture.
- 3 Use social software to perform specific tasks.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

Entry is at the discretion of the centre. No previous knowledge or experience of computers or the Internet is required. However, it would be advantageous if candidates possessed basic IT skills and were aware of the factors involved in making safe use of the internet. This could be evidenced by possession of Unit F3GC 10 *Information and Communication Technology* and FOH5 10 *Internet Safety* (or equivalent).

CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at SCQF level 4 (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 4*).

**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

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CORE SKILLS

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit Specification.

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

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 various types of social software available.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Describe the origins and characteristics of social software correctly.
- (b) Identify the main types of social software and their applications correctly.
- (c) Select appropriate social software tools for use in specific circumstances.

OUTCOME 2

Describe the impact of digital technologies on contemporary culture.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Identify areas of digital technologies that have an impact on contemporary culture.
- (b) Describe the aspects of contemporary culture affected by digital technology.

OUTCOME 3

Use social software to perform specific tasks.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Use social software tools safely, efficiently and effectively.
- (b) Keep content up-to-date and relevant to its purpose and target users.
- (c) Ensure that social software supports effective communication and collaboration.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

Outcomes 1–3

Each candidate is required to create and maintain a blog (or equivalent) to record their activities in the course of the Unit. The blog must cover all Outcomes and must include evidence to demonstrate that all Performance Criteria have been met. The blog posts must demonstrate that the candidate can:

- ◆ describe the origins and characteristics of social software correctly
- ◆ identify the main types of social software and their applications correctly
- ◆ select appropriate social software tools for use in specific circumstances
- ◆ identify areas of digital technologies that have an impact on contemporary culture
- ◆ describe the aspects of contemporary culture affected by digital technology
- ◆ use social software tools safely, efficiently and effectively
- ◆ keep content up-to-date and relevant to its purpose and target users
- ◆ ensure that social software supports effective communication and collaboration

The blog must be updated regularly and should show that entries have been made at different dates and times. Posts must contain relevant content, including links, where appropriate.

The assessment methodology must comprise 90% tutor assessment and 10% peer assessment. Further details can be found in the Assessment Support Pack for this Unit, which provides sample assessment materials such as an instrument of assessment for knowledge and practical activities including an assessor checklist. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the Assessment Support Pack to ensure a comparable standard.

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

Corresponding to Outcomes 1–3

The overall aim of this Unit is to introduce candidates to the use of social software applications and their impact on contemporary culture. The Unit should ideally be delivered over an extended period to give candidates an appreciation of the skills required to use social software applications over an extended timeframe. Where this is not possible, it is permissible for candidates to use social software applications over a shorter time period but such use should involve a significant amount of activity.

Centres are encouraged to be imaginative in their selection of the social software applications to be covered in this Unit, rather than sticking to the more familiar applications.

Care should be taken in introducing young people to applications which may allow them to interact with people unknown to them and staff delivering this Unit may wish to consider whether access to the various types of groups should be restricted to groups formed within their own educational establishment or between collaborating establishments.

Social software is fundamental to some of the latest developments in the World Wide Web, often referred to as Web 2.0. It is characterised by the predominance of user-developed content and the widespread use of tagging.

E-mail will already be familiar to most candidates. However it can be regarded as one of the earliest forms of social software, particularly with regard to its one-to-many communication features, such as the use of the cc: field and mailing lists, as well as the use of contact lists or address books.

Instant Messaging (IM) allows individuals to communicate privately with one another over a public network. Communications were initially text based but have now been expanded to include audio and video and users can also exchange files.

Chat is an abbreviated name for Internet Relay Chat (IRC) which lets users join chat rooms and communicate with many people simultaneously. Users can join an existing chat room or create one of their own, on any topic of interest to them. Once in a chat room they can post comments and respond to the comments of others and invite other users to participate in private chats.

Newsgroups or forums are the Internet version of electronic bulletin boards, popular among computer users long before Internet. A user can post comments on a topic and other users can respond. Messages are visible to all members of the group and some services provide extensions such as file storage and calendaring.

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At the time of writing, contemporary types of social software include blogs, wikis, social networking sites and virtual worlds, including online games.

Weblogs (or simply Blogs) are generally on-line journals for a particular person or group. Owners post messages periodically and allow others to comment on them. Topics can include everyday life, politics or just about anything else. Links to other weblogs, often on similar topics, are a significant feature. There are a number of variants on blogs, including photoblogs and audioblogs, a type of podcasting.

A Wiki is a group of Web pages that allows users to add their own content and permits others to edit the content. It provides a simple method of producing HTML content and is an effective medium for collaboration. The term is also used to describe the collaborative software, sometimes known as a wiki engine, used to create such a website.

Social networking services allow people to meet on-line around shared interests or causes. In some cases it is only possible to join a social network by being recommended by an existing member.

Virtual Worlds and Massively-Multiplayer On-line Games (MMOGs) are places where it is possible to interact with other people in a virtual world.

Outcome 1

This Outcome relates to describing social software applications of various types. The types of social software applications that candidates should be familiar with are defined in the associated Evidence Requirements. The Performance Criteria define the standards which should be applied to candidate activity.

Performance Criterion (a) relates to describing correctly the origins and characteristics of social software. Candidates should be aware that the term social software is used to describe a range of software tools that promote interaction and collaboration.

Candidates should also know that social conventions and etiquette play an important role in this area, in parallel with technical features. They should be aware of the role of social software in developing virtual communities.

Performance Criterion (b) relates to identifying correctly the main types of social software and their applications. Candidates should be aware of the common factors which link all of the providers and the special features and facilities which distinguish between them.

Performance Criterion (c) relates to selecting appropriate social software tools for use in specific circumstances. Candidates should be aware of the features which characterise social software: communication, collaboration and interaction. It is important to note that these features often operate at a group level: communications between members to establish and maintain a group, interaction (often one-to-many or many-to-many) within that group and collaboration on the development of products, often the result of the shared knowledge of the group.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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Outcome 2

This Outcome is about the impact of digital technologies on contemporary culture.

Performance Criterion (a) relates to correctly identifying areas of digital technologies that have an impact on contemporary culture. These might include the use of mobile telephones, including the use of SMS and multimedia messaging, use of social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace, use of blogs, wikis and video publishing sites to publish information online and participation in virtual worlds (such as Second Life or There) and online games. Owing to the pace of development in this area providers are likely to change rapidly as old ones fade and new ones arise. The examples suggested should be regarded as indicative, rather than being a definitive list.

Performance Criterion (b) relates to describing the aspects of contemporary culture affected by digital technology. These might include work, education, leisure, social interaction, amongst others.

Outcome 3

This Outcome is about using social software applications to perform specific tasks. The Performance Criteria define the standards which should be applied to candidate activity.

Performance Criterion (a) relates to the safe, efficient and effective use of social software tools. Efficient use of tools means that candidates will be able to use the tools within an acceptable time scale and without too many attempts. They are also expected to use the tools effectively, without assistance. Candidates should be aware of the wide variety of social software tools available, the differences between them and where they can be obtained or used.

Performance Criterion (b) relates to keeping content up-to-date and relevant to its purpose and target users. Candidates should be aware that one of the most important features of social software is currency. A site or application which is out of date can rapidly become useless.

Performance Criterion (c) relates to ensuring that social software applications support effective communication and collaboration. Candidates should be aware that a social software application can be regarded as an effective communication tool when it succeeds in reaching the target audience, which could be defined by demographics, location, interests or many other variables and communicating the desired information, whether factual or opinion. Effective collaboration tools should allow users to work together to solve a problem or create a collaborative product.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

A practical, hands-on approach to learning should be adopted. The emphasis should be on learning-by-doing. Terminology and underpinning knowledge should be introduced in a practical context.

The actual distribution of time between Outcomes is at the discretion of the centre. However, the following distribution is suggested:

Outcome 1: 14 hours

Outcome 2: 13 hours

Outcome 3: 13 hours

Throughout this Unit, candidate activities should relate to their personal or vocational interests. For example candidates locate and use social software applications relating to their academic work, hobbies and pastimes, recreational and entertainment preferences or other topics that can genuinely stimulate their interest.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

This Unit may afford opportunities for developing aspects of the Core Skill in *Problem Solving*. In addition, opportunities may arise for candidates to work together as part of the learning process. These opportunities may allow candidates to develop aspects of the Core Skill of *Working with Others*.

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

Evidence of practical competence should be stored in an electronic portfolio, which may be implemented using a blog or another appropriate platform. At the completion of this Unit the portfolio should contain a range of evidence, drawn from the Evidence Requirements for each Outcome. If this Unit is being taught in conjunction with DN81 11 *Weblogs*, there may be scope for integration of assessments.

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)*.

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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