

Personal Development Course and Units: questions and answers

The following questions, comments and responses are available as a support to staff in centres who are interested in delivering Personal Development Courses or Units. These are based on questions and comments raised at the national launch events.

The questions are grouped as follows:

Course and Unit structure
Assessment, Evidence and Differentiation
Content
Implementation
General issues

Course and Unit structure

Why is the Self Awareness Unit not part of the Course at Access 3 level (SCQF level 3)?

Only three Units are required for any Course at Access 3 level. All the other Units have an element of self awareness in that they contain an evaluation and/or review. For this reason the decision was made to omit the Self Awareness Unit from the Course at Access 3 level. It is, however, available as a free-standing Unit.

Why are there only three Units at Access 3 (SCQF level 3)?

The design rules for NQ Courses allow 120 hours of study at this level. This equates to 3 x 40 hour Units.

Can the Units be free-standing?

Yes. All of the Units of the Course can be delivered individually as a free-standing option. It is quite likely that many centres will choose this mode of delivery.

Do the Units replace others?

Yes, as follows:

- ◆ *Personal Development: Self Awareness* replaces *Personal Awareness & Development* (D364)
- ◆ *Personal Development: Self in Society* replaces *Social Awareness & Development* (D365)
- ◆ *Personal Development: Self and Work* replaces *Vocational Awareness & Development* (D366)

Personal Development: Practical Abilities is new and does not replace any other Unit.

Can the Units of the existing Course contribute to the new Course?

No. Although some of the Units have a similar focus the Outcomes and Performance Criteria are different.

Assessment, Evidence and Differentiation

Is the Course graded?

No.

Why is there no exam?

Assessment is based around the individual candidate's own personal development needs, skills and abilities. Candidates' evidence will be as individual as they are. Given the flexibility of contexts in which candidates might work an examination is not a suitable instrument of assessment for this Course. The amount of support given to candidates, the complexity of their tasks and their level of accountability determine the level at which they are working.

If there is no examination how is the Course assessed?

The assessment is focussed on the Units; a pass in all of the Units of the Course is required to pass the Course. For example, candidates who pass all of the Units of the Course at Intermediate 2 level will achieve the Course at Intermediate 2. This means that their SQA certificate will show that they have Personal Development Intermediate 2. The Units are assessed internally at appropriate points. Internal assessment is subject to verification by SQA.

How does this Course equate with externally-assessed Courses?

All levels of the Course have been written within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). This ensures that the challenge to candidates, ie the difficulty of the work, is appropriate and as expected for each level from Access 3 through to Higher. Though innovative in how it is assessed, this Course is not the first SQA qualification without grade. Skills for Work Courses, which are available from Access 3 through to Higher, have been successfully piloted and have been well received by centres, candidates, parents and HMIE.

What happens if a candidate achieves the Units of the Course at different levels?

The candidate would receive a Course award at the lowest level achieved but would be awarded individual Units at the level at which they had been achieved.

Will the absence of an external assessment mean that candidates presented for them will consider they have achieved less than those who have undertaken external assessments?

There is no doubt that achieving good examination results can lead to a rise in self esteem. However self esteem is not affected purely by examination results. There are many other issues which affect self esteem such as self confidence, relationships, skills, personal history and so on. In the Personal Development Course and Units candidates will be given the opportunity to learn about themselves, to develop their skills and to demonstrate their abilities. This may enable them to relate to and contribute to the world around them. This may help them both with their learning in other areas and may help to build self confidence and raise self esteem.

How will staff in centres differentiate between levels?

Differentiation will focus on the level of demand on candidates, ie degree of teacher/lecturer support, complexity of tasks and individual accountability for their own work. For example:

At Access 3 (SCQF level 3) candidates will receive explicit instructions from their teacher or lecturer and their tasks will be simple.

At Higher (SCQF level 6) candidates will work independently, their tasks will be complex and they will need to reach conclusions about their work.

The glossary in the appendix to each Unit and Course specification explains the terms used to differentiate between the levels.

Is there progression as candidates move up through the levels?

Yes. All levels of the Course have been written within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. As a result the demand on candidates at Higher level, for example, is very much greater than the demand on pupils at Access 3. There are three main ways in which differentiation across the levels is determined:

- ◆ the amount of **support** a candidate requires ranging from explicit instructions at Access 3 level to taking responsibility for own work at Higher level
- ◆ a candidate's **level of involvement in and accountability for own work** ranging from, for example, identifying strengths and weaknesses with help from the teacher or lecturer at Access 3 level to carrying out an evaluation of strengths and weaknesses using a recognised technique and then providing an in depth explanation of why that particular technique was chosen
- ◆ the **complexity of the candidate's tasks** ranging from simple tasks which are routine and familiar and consisting of a few steps to complex tasks containing non-routine and unfamiliar elements and consisting of several stages.

The glossary in the appendix to the Course and Unit specifications may provide further guidance.

Will the NABs be available for candidates to use in electronic format?

This possibility is currently being investigated.

Can centres or candidates produce their own NABs?

Yes. As with other subjects, it is acceptable for centres to devise their own NABs as long as they are of a comparable standard and allow candidates to record the evidence required. Where centres devise their own NABs they are advised to have these prior verified by SQA before candidates use these. This will reduce the likelihood of difficulties arising when the centre's judgements are verified.

Will there be NABs for all Units at all levels?

Yes. These will be published on the secure area of SQA's website prior to August 2008.

Why are the NABs so paper intensive?

At first glance it may seem that there is a lot of paperwork involved in the NABs. However, the actual paperwork to be completed and retained is quite small. For example, the complete *Personal Development: Self in Society* Intermediate 2 NAB contains 45 pages, but only 11 of those pages need to be completed and retained for each candidate. The templates and checklists within the NAB are designed to make it easier both for candidates to record their evidence at appropriate points through the Unit and for teachers/lecturers to retain the evidence.

It has been shown that font 'Comic Sans' is easier for SEN candidates to read. The NAB templates use 'Arial'.

As a general rule all NABs produced and uploaded to the secure area of SQA's website are now in Arial 12 font. However, if candidates have additional support needs centres can contact SQA to seek other fonts and type size.

At Access 3 level the assessment boxes in the NABs are too small.

The possibility of having the National Assessment Bank (NAB) materials published in a word format to allow centres to change the size of the boxes to suit is being investigated.

Can evidence be gathered from other curricular areas?

Yes, if it shows that candidates have met the Outcomes for a particular Unit.

Is there a time limit on evidence?

Each Unit is nominally 40 hours, however, it is for centres to decide how to allocate this time and what deadlines to set for candidates.

Is it possible to receive more than one award in the same skills but in different contexts?

Yes, if the different context is also at a different level, eg in Self and Work, candidates could develop task management skills in the context of health at Access 3 level then progress to Intermediate 1 in the context of enterprise. However, it is not possible for a candidate to be accredited for two Self and Work Units at Access 3 (or any level).

How can evidence be gathered if a candidate is involved in a project outwith the centre?

The evidence requirements for each Unit are clearly stated in the Unit specifications and relate to the Outcomes and Performance Criteria. Evidence is not required for everything that candidates will do as part of their project but evidence is required for all of the Outcomes and Performance Criteria. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the projects candidates are involved in allow them the opportunity to generate the evidence required.

Candidates, with guidance, are responsible for generating their own evidence but it is the responsibility of the centre to gather and assess this evidence. In the situation where candidates are completing their identified tasks independently or under the supervision of a third party such as a training provider, teachers/lecturers must be satisfied that these tasks have in fact been completed under appropriate conditions. They may wish to see some evidence of this such as log books, reports, videos, photographs, etc.

Does the evidence need to be paper based?

No, other formats are perfectly acceptable. For example, audio/visual technology may be used to capture evidence with the candidates speaking rather than writing. It may be possible that a photograph or video could be used to provide evidence of candidates completing their tasks. Candidates may wish to use a word processing package or power point to record their evidence. This does not need to be printed out as long as it can be stored safely and retrieved when required.

Practical Abilities is a completely new Unit: what extra work will centres and candidates have to do for Practical Abilities?

Unless it is being delivered as a free-standing Unit, most of the evidence required for Practical Abilities may be produced by the candidates anyway as they work through their project(s) for the other Units. In such cases the 'extra' demand is to be aware of what that evidence is and to ensure that it is retained. It will also be necessary to allow an opportunity for candidates to review their practical abilities.

How do we retain evidence for Practical Abilities and other Units?

It is expected that each candidate will have a folio of evidence for each Unit which will contain their evaluations, targets, tasks, reviews, etc. In addition the Assessor will have completed checklists for each candidate.

Written and/or orally recorded evidence

Although it is anticipated that this evidence will come in a hard copy, other formats such as recordings of interviews, e-mails, BLOGS, Assessor record of candidate responses and electronic presentations are encouraged.

Performance evidence

Completed Assessor observation checklists are required for this type of evidence. These could be supported by audio and video recordings, BLOGS, e-mails and Assessor comments, although this is not a requirement.

Product evidence

Completed Assessor checklists are required for this type of evidence. These could be supported by audio and video recordings, an artefact, photographs and Assessor comments.

Does all the evidence for Practical Abilities need to come from one project?

No. The evidence could come from one, two or three projects. Centres can decide what best suits them and their candidates. However, if more than one project is used the evidence for each Outcome should be sourced from a single project.

What is meant by a folio?

This is a broad term used to describe the actual evidence produced by the candidate and the format in which it is stored. This could be all in paper or electronic format or a mixture of different audio/visual formats.

The folio may also include Assessor checklists and other items to support performance and product evidence, eg audio and video recordings, BLOGS, e-mails, artefacts, photographs and Assessor comments.

When is evidence collected?

There is no end of Unit assessment. Evidence should be gathered at appropriate points as candidates progress through each Outcome of each Unit, eg evidence of a candidate evaluation will be gathered at the start of a Unit; evidence of a candidate review will be gathered towards the end of a Unit.

Can evidence generated for other qualifications be used for Personal Development Units?

As with any Unit, SQA requires each Outcome to be evidenced. SQA provides guidance notes which include examples of content, contexts and teaching and learning approaches. These are not mandatory. As long as evidence is provided to satisfy the Outcomes and Performance Criteria, SQA does not stipulate how this is generated.

Can evidence be produced in a paper format?

Yes. Although other formats are acceptable, it is anticipated that the majority of evidence submitted will be in a paper format.

When performance evidence is required does the candidate need to be observed at every stage?

The requirements for performance evidence are clearly stated in the Unit specifications and exemplified in the NABs. The candidate must be observed for a long enough period for the teacher or lecturer to be able to make a judgement as to whether or not the Outcome has been achieved.

What are the conditions of assessment?

Candidates should be allowed access to their notes during assessment, ie open book conditions. Timing and re-assessment are a matter of professional judgement and are at the discretion of the teacher or lecturer. Re-assessment is recommended to take place on only one occasion, but in exceptional circumstance a further attempt can be permitted.

Content

Is there a list of tasks appropriate to the different levels?

No, because the tasks are dependent on each candidate's personal development targets. However, examples of tasks at each level are given in the National Assessment Bank (NAB) materials.

Is there a list of suitable contexts?

No. A suitable context is anything that centres deem appropriate and which allows candidates the opportunity to develop their skills, to increase their self awareness and/or to demonstrate their abilities. Examples of contexts can be found in the Unit specifications and include citizenship, independent living, sustainability, personal learning styles and health.

What is meant by an output such as a product and service?

This relates to the Personal Development: Practical Abilities Units.

A product is something that a candidate will produce for a project, eg cakes for a coffee morning, a poster for an event, a resource to be used in the classroom or an item to be sold for an enterprise company.

A service is something that a candidate will provide for a project, eg show guests to their seats for a coffee morning, sell tickets for an event, give a talk to other students or wash cars for an enterprise company.

Is Practical Abilities really PSE?

Although not from a traditional PSE area, Practical Abilities is very relevant in a Personal Development Course as it allows candidates to demonstrate and review life skills such as managing information, communicating and delivering a product or a service. It also allows candidates to receive credit and recognition for the work that they will be doing for projects in the other Units of the Course.

Are there any Core Skills associated with the Units or Course?

Yes. All levels of Personal Development: Self in Society have the 'Working with Others' Core Skill, and all levels of Personal Development: Self and Work have the 'Problem Solving' Core Skill. Some of the other Core Skills are signposted within the Unit specifications.

Is there enough material to fill 40 hours?

The notional 40 hours does not just include the time it will take candidates to complete the NABs. It also includes teaching time and time for the projects to be carried out. For example, a centre may choose to deliver some lessons on particular skills before asking candidates to carry out an evaluation; a candidate involved in a work placement for Personal Development: Self and Work may need 30 hours in which to complete the placement. The 40 hours may be reduced if centres choose to use one project to cover more than one Unit. It is for centres to decide how to allocate the time.

Why use the term ‘weakness’ in some of the Unit specifications and NABs?

In order to get the whole picture candidates must recognise and assess their own strengths and weaknesses whilst carrying out a self evaluation. The term ‘weakness’ was chosen rather than, for example, ‘areas for improvement’ in order to simplify the language and help candidates understand what they have to do and think about. It is important for candidates to learn that some weaknesses can be diminished or eliminated through planning, development and growth.

Why is some of the terminology and language is not candidate friendly?

Within the parts of the National Assessment Bank (NAB) materials that candidates will have access to, ie the candidate brief, guidance and templates for recording evidence, the language has been simplified as much as possible. The remaining parts of the NAB are meant for the teacher or lecturer and should not be issued to candidates. Although candidates may read the Course and Unit specifications, the target audience for these is teachers and lecturers. There is a glossary at the end of each Course and Unit specification that teachers and lecturers can use to help their candidates understand the terminology used.

Implementation

How do centres know which level to start candidates at when they do not know the candidates and have multi-level classes?

While there are no stated entrance requirements for this Course, looking at an individual candidate’s previous achievements may give a starting point. However, as candidates progress through a Unit the amount of support they require, the complexity of the tasks and activities they identify and carry out and the amount of explanation they are able to give will enable the teacher or lecturer to make a decision about the level at which the candidate is able to work.

Does this just become a paper exercise, eg gathering evidence from other curricular areas?

No. Whilst candidates may be involved in projects from other curricular areas they will need time to carry out self evaluations, to plan and identify tasks and to review their progress. Simply gathering evidence from elsewhere in the curriculum will not enable candidates to meet all of the Outcomes.

How do centres make the new Course and/or Units fit with what they do now?

The new Course and Units are designed to be flexible so that they can suit a wide range of projects in a variety of centres. Advice contained within the guidance notes of the Unit specifications and the exemplified NABs will be useful to centres in deciding how best to deliver the Course. Centres who have been involved with the existing PSE Course or Units (Personal Awareness & Development D364, Social Awareness & Development D365, and Vocational Awareness & Development D366) will find that because candidates will focus on some of the same areas as before, eg self awareness, interpersonal skills and task management skills, the work that they are currently doing will fit in easily with the new structure. In all cases, however, staff in centres must ensure that they are clear about the evidence required for each Unit. This can be found in the mandatory section of the Unit specification.

Can a single project cover more than one Unit?

Yes. For example, candidates involved in an enterprise company could for:

Self Awareness: identify tasks which would enable them to investigate their suitability for leadership.

Self in Society: aim to develop their leadership skills as they work with others within the enterprise company.

Self and Work: plan to improve task management skills whilst carrying out activities for the company.

Practical Abilities: gather and organise information, send out e-mails, make telephone calls and create a product for the company.

The Self in Society Unit has to be delivered in groups. What about candidates with additional support needs who may be working one to one with a tutor?

A group is defined as a minimum of three. However, two may be acceptable in exceptional circumstances. It is acceptable for the teacher, tutor or lecturer to be a member of the group.

How do the Units fit into a school structure?

As it stands different schools structure the curriculum in different ways. For this reason the qualification has been designed to be flexible so that it can fit a wide range of situations. However, it is for schools to decide how they will use the Course and Units. Schools may choose to offer the Course as a subject choice within the column structure; they may decide to deliver Units (or the Course) in core PSE time; they may decide to implement the Course or Units across the curriculum gathering evidence from different areas. School managers can adapt delivery and content to fit in the needs of their candidates and the resources/staffing available.

How will centres decide which Units to deliver?

Centres may have things going on which will fit into particular Units allowing candidates to gain recognition for their success, eg events organised by

candidates, committees, peer mentoring programmes, work experience and placements, etc. Centres would choose the Units most appropriate.

Centres may decide that they want the candidates to develop particular skills, eg leadership skills, in which case they may decide to deliver the Self in Society Unit.

What support materials will be available?

This is a difficult area to support with specific materials because of the wide range of suitable contexts. Two types of support for these Units are being developed at present:

The National Assessment Bank (NAB) materials will provide templates for assessment and exemplification of candidate and assessor responses. These can be accessed from the secure area of SQA's website.

Learning and Teaching Scotland is responsible for producing support notes and materials for teaching and learning. A number of developments are currently taking place. Contact LTS for more information at **enquiries@LTScotland.org.uk**

In addition, the Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU) is producing a resource at Access 3 level for the Self Awareness Unit. This resource has a specifically adult theme to it. This will be available from SFEU's website (**www.sfeu.org.uk**) during the spring of 2008

Can evidence be generated from across the curriculum? If yes, who will coordinate this?

These qualifications have been designed to be flexible and it is for centres to decide how they will be delivered and managed as they know about the needs of the candidates, about the activities going on within the centre and about the staffing and resources available. Centres may choose to offer the qualifications as a subject choice within their column structure; they may decide to deliver them in core PSE time; they may decide to implement them across the curriculum gathering evidence from different areas; they may decide to deliver the whole Course; they may decide to deliver particular Units.

Coordination between schools, colleges and other centres delivering these qualifications needs to be improved.

SQA hopes to be able to establish support networks for centres delivering the qualifications in order to share experience and good practice.

Are these Courses and Units suitable for mixed ability classes?

Since there is no mandatory content in the Course and since the candidate's own skills, abilities and self knowledge are the focus of the Units, then it should be possible to teach candidates of different abilities within the same group. Conversely mixed ability classes could be an advantage as candidates take on different roles and levels of responsibility within group projects.

How can a large group of Higher candidates all have a supervisory role?

All candidates do not need to take on a supervisory role. However, they will be expected to take responsibility for their own work and to take the lead in aspects of the work for a group project.

General issues

When will the current Courses and Units finish?

The current PSE Course will cease to exist after the 2008 diet of examinations. The Units (Personal Awareness & Development, Social Awareness & Development and Vocational Awareness & Development) will be available until July 2009.

Will the Higher level Course have the same value as a Higher in any other subject?

All levels of the Course have been written within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) to ensure that the demand on candidates is as expected at each level. The Course and Units have gone through robust SQA quality assurance procedures to ensure that this is the case.

How will Personal Development: Self in Work affect other Work Experience Units?

Personal Development: Self and Work does not affect other Work Experience Units for the following reasons:

- ◆ a work placement is not compulsory
- ◆ there are many non-work based suitable vocational projects
- ◆ the Self and Work Unit has different Outcomes to the Work Experience Unit which means candidates need to produce different evidence than that which is required for Work Experience

Centres may choose to use a work placement to allow them to deliver both the Self and Work and Work Experience Units.

Will the Personal Development Course replace SVS?

No.

Is there possible progression from SVS?

Yes. Standard Grade SVS would be good preparation for Personal Development Courses. The Personal Development Course may give SVS candidates the opportunity to further develop their social and vocational skills.

Will senior pupils, parents and higher education see the value in Personal Development Courses?

There are a number of ways in which it is expected that the value of this Course will be appreciated.

This is not the first non-graded Higher. Skills for Work Higher has been successfully piloted. This has been well received by centres, candidates and parents and received very positive feedback from HMIE. The Personal Development Higher, whilst different in content, assessment and focus, has built on the strengths of the Skills for Work model.

All Personal Development Courses and Units have been written within Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) to ensure that candidates are suitably challenged at each level, ie the difficulty of the work is equivalent to other subjects at this level. For the Higher the Outcomes and Evidence Requirements have been audited against SCQF level 6 and are of a similar or greater challenge than other awards which have been independently assessed as being an equivalent to externally-assessed and graded Higher Courses.

This Higher gives candidates the opportunity to develop and demonstrate personal, transferable skills and abilities. They will also gain knowledge of their own skills abilities and qualities. This will not only complement their other learning but will stand them in good stead for the future. It reflects the stage of development of the individual rather than simply assessing knowledge or skills.

This innovation at all levels means that SQA will have a structured hierarchy of Units and Courses in place which will allow candidates to receive credit for activities beyond their formal curriculum.

SQA will be applying for UCAS points, however this requires actual candidate work and therefore a formal application cannot be made until candidate work is available.

Many higher education institutions place a lot of emphasis on UCAS points in their entry requirements for different Courses. A candidate with a Personal Development Unit or Course may, in future, also have these UCAS points — but he/she will also have a certificate which reflects aspects of personal development as well. Higher education institutions also use information about personal development opportunities when assessing candidate suitability for their Courses.

How do we sell Personal Development to candidates?

From a candidate's perspective a selling point maybe that there is no exam! Another selling point is that candidates will learn about the own skills, abilities and feelings. They will have the opportunity to develop skills and increase their self awareness. They will be involved in projects and will be able to learn through experience. Candidates involved in projects across the school will be able to use these projects as an opportunity for personal development and gain recognition for this. Candidates will be much better equipped to sell themselves on application forms and at interviews because they will know what skills they possess and they will have evidence of theses skills.

These Courses and Units seem to be suitable for specialist centres but how useful will they be in mainstream centres?

The Courses and Units are offered from Access 3 through to Higher. There is no mandatory content as the focus of the Units is the individual candidate's personal development. All potential candidates, regardless of ability or support needs, have scope for personal development. The Course and Units provide an opportunity for personal development through learning about self and through the development of skills. Self evaluating, target-setting, planning and reviewing — these are useful skills for all candidates.

What is meant by 'beyond the formal curriculum'?

Candidates may be involved in projects within the centre such as a college newspaper or they may be involved in projects outwith the centre such as a youth drop-in centre in their community. Both of these projects provide scope for personal development. However, in all cases the responsibility for assessment lies with the centre.

Is there funding available for training providers that might wish to use these Units?

SQA is not in a position to provide funding.

Where does the Personal Development qualification sit in relation to other non-SQA qualifications within this subject area?

There are other awarding bodies and qualifications within this subject area; it is for centres to choose which qualifications best meet the needs of their candidates. To achieve qualifications in Personal Development candidates must generate the evidence required as stated in the Unit specifications. Activities for other qualifications may generate this evidence. This evidence may come from suitable activities undertaken in connection with work carried out for other purposes.

What is happening with the free-standing Units within the PSE/PSD subject area?

It is possible that the current provision may need to be updated and rationalised. An audit of the current provision will be undertaken to ascertain which Units are being used, which Units should be removed and which Units need to be updated. This will be done over the next two years in consultation with centres. At this stage only Personal Awareness & Development (D364), Social Awareness & Development (D365) and Vocational Awareness & Development (D366) are being deleted from the Catalogue. This will happen in July 2009.

What qualifications and occupational competency are required to deliver and assess the Units of this Course?

All centres on SQA's auto-approved list are permitted to enter candidates for these Courses and Units. It is possible that other organisations such as training providers or community groups which may not be auto-approved might be interested. Should this be the case they should contact SQA's Assessment Standards section where advice on these competencies can be obtained.