SQA Advanced Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

Unit code: HP6M 47

Unit purpose: This unit helps candidates to take responsibility for their own learning and development. In particular, it provides a framework for the development of the personal and general skills and qualities which employers seek in the workplace and which are increasingly recognised as underpinning success in personal life, in citizenship and in lifelong learning. The contexts of progression to employment, or from college to university, or developing Core Skills, can be used.

Through a process of *Personal Development Planning*[1] candidates will identify their skills, abilities and development needs and review these in the context of their own personal, educational and career aims. They will devise a *personal action plan*, then undertake and evaluate that plan. They will gather, organise and present evidence of each stage of the plan - including personal reviews - in their *personal development portfolio*.

On completion of the unit the candidate should be able to:

1. Create and maintain a *personal development portfolio* and a *personal action plan.*
2. Implement his/her *personal action plan.*
3. Monitor and evaluate the plan and its implementation.

Credit value: 1 SQA Credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

*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 National 1 to Doctorates.

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[1]For the purposes of this unit:

- **Personal Development Planning** is *' a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development'* (QAA 2001);
- a **Personal Development Portfolio** is the folder/file in which, throughout the process, a candidate stores and organises his/her evidence of achievement and development; and,
- a **Personal Action Plan** is a set of specific aims/targets, derived from the candidates Personal Development Portfolio. (See Guidance on Delivery and Assessment)

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Access to this unit is open to all candidates admitted to SQA Advanced Certificate and Diploma programmes. It is designed to complement the candidate's SQA Advanced study programme and to support the development of a wide range of transferable skills and abilities.

Core skills: There will be many opportunities to gather evidence towards Core Skills in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

The unit will assist students to identify their current Core Skill achievements and help them to identify and pursue further opportunities for their development. Opportunities for developing Core Skills will be available in every SQA Advanced programme.

Context for delivery: Candidates may use this Unit:

-   to develop the Core Skills required by their SQA Advanced programme in an integrated manner OR
-   to prepare for progression to employment OR
-   to prepare for progression to a degree or professional qualification OR
-   to develop other skills in preparation for the next stage of their careers

The unit focuses on the *process* of personal development planning – *investigate, plan, implement and evaluate*. Candidates will require regular, but non-directive, support to develop and demonstrate their ability to understand and apply this process. Support can be provided through a wide range of group and individual tutorial activities and guidance. The primary purpose is to encourage autonomy and self-directed learning and development. In this context this is demonstrated where the candidate is able to take responsibility for his/her own personal, educational and career development. The nature of the unit requires that it be delivered over an extended period of time. This will normally be one academic session for full time students or two academic sessions for part time students.

The Assessment Support Pack (ASP) for this unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable and practicable assessment. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the ASP to ensure a comparable standard. A list of existing ASPs is available to download from SQA's website (https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/90557.10883.html)

Assessment: The unit should be assessed holistically. To achieve this a candidate should create, maintain and present a portfolio of evidence - a *personal development portfolio*. The activities associated with the unit should provide ample opportunities for candidates to generate and gather the required evidence of achievement.

Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

Unit code: HP6M 47

The sections of the unit stating the Outcomes, knowledge and/or skills, and evidence requirements are mandatory.

Outcome 1

Create and maintain a personal development portfolio and personal action plan.

Knowledge and/or skills

A candidate will need to know:
- the principles of *personal development planning* and approaches to it used in FE colleges and by other higher education providers
- the nature and level of personal transferable skills – including perhaps *Core Skills* - demanded by employers or other gatekeepers on their chosen progression route
- details about the abilities, achievements, interests and aspirations with which he/she entered the SQA Advanced programme
- the extent to which his/her views on the above are confirmed, enhanced or moderated by the views of colleagues, workmates, classmates, tutors and others
- details of the requirements and options of his/her SQA Advanced programme
- what s/he wants to get out of the SQA Advanced programme i.e. personal, educational and career aims/aspirations
- details of progression pathways (including learning pathways in the SQA Advanced programme) towards his/her aims, together with the sorts of contexts, institutions, gatekeepers, etc that s/he will meet and the resources and help available
- details of the challenges s/he is likely to encounter and possible role models amongst those who have faced similar challenges

A candidate will need to be able to
- gather evidence of his/her own abilities, achievements, interests and aspirations
- give and receive effective feedback
- investigate progression pathways (including learning pathways in the SQA Advanced programme)
- communicate and negotiate with 'gatekeepers' (including unit tutors on the SQA Advanced programme) and others on chosen pathways
- secure personal, social and other resources to help approach identified goals

Evidence requirements

To achieve this outcome candidates need to present a *personal development portfolio* which:
- covers at least a year of a full time SQA Advanced programme (or two years of a part time programme)
- shows a realistic appraisal of his/her options as a holder of the chosen SQA Advanced Certificate or SQA Advanced Diploma (in learning and in career progression) and

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relates these to realistic aims for progression (to employment, further learning or other substantial achievements) beyond an SQA Advanced programme
- contains confirming, enhancing or moderating evidence gathered from appropriate others
- includes a detailed *personal action plan* and objectives for achieving identified aims
- shows evidence of being actively used to monitor and guide activities over one/two academic sessions

Assessment guidelines

The developmental focus of this unit favours holistic approaches to assessment. This outcome can be combined with Outcomes 2 & 3 as part of a single assessment instrument for the unit, details of which are given under Outcome 3.

Outcome 2

Implement a personal action plan.

Knowledge and/or skills

A candidate will need to know
- the principles underpinning effective personal development planning, including:
    - action planning for the achievement of aims
    - using clear, measurable and achievable targets
    - identifying helping and hindering factors
    - personal learning preferences
    - effective management of time, opportunities and resources
    - risk analysis and contingency planning

- what s/he wishes to get from their SQA Advanced programme, taking account of a personal analysis of aspirations and existing abilities

A candidate will need to be able to
- devise a *personal action plan*, incorporating clear, measurable and achievable targets, derived from a personal analysis of aspirations and existing abilities
- take responsibility for achieving his/her *personal action plan* targets over a period of one/two academic sessions
- select and use different ways of working towards his/her targets
- manage effectively the time, opportunities and resources available to him/her
- monitor his/her progress, seeking and using advice and support as necessary/appropriate
- revise and adapt his/her *personal action plan* as necessary - to meet unforeseen/changing circumstances
- gather evidence of the above and present it in a *personal development portfolio*

Evidence requirements

To achieve this outcome candidates need to present a *personal development portfolio* which:
- contains a *personal action plan* and clear, measurable and achievable targets relating to the one/two academic sessions of this unit
- shows a realistic analysis of aspirations, abilities and current circumstances
- demonstrates that the candidate has taken responsibility for achieving the *personal action plan* and has managed, effectively, the available time, opportunities and resources
- shows that the candidate has monitored progress towards the identified aims, gathering feedback from others, and amending the plan, where necessary, to meet unforeseen circumstances

Assessment guidelines

The developmental focus of this unit favours holistic approaches to assessment. This outcome can be combined with Outcomes 1 & 3 as part of a single assessment instrument for the unit, details of which are given under Outcome 3.

Outcome 3

Monitor and evaluate the plan and its implementation.

Knowledge and/or skills

A candidate will need to know
- details of his/her aims and *personal action plan*
- details of his/her progress towards identified aims and *personal action plan*

A candidate will need to be able to
- monitor progress towards his/her *personal action plan*
- identify and present evidence for targets achieved, not achieved and/or amended
- identify how/where learning was most/least effective
- identify ways to further improve his/her learning and performance
- amend his/her *personal development portfolio* taking account of their experience, reflection and evaluation

Evidence requirements

To achieve this outcome a candidate will need to present a *personal development portfolio* which:
- shows that he/she has monitored, on an on-going basis, progress towards the action plan
- includes evidence of personal achievements, learning and development arising from the implementation of the *personal action plan*
- contains an evaluation of where/how learning occurred and identifies lessons and implications for future learning/development
- identifies ways to further improve his/her learning and performance
- amends his/her *personal development portfolio* in light of experience, reflection and evaluation

Assessment guidelines

The assessment of this outcome can be combined with outcomes 1 and 2 as part of a single assessment for the unit. Each candidate should create and maintain a *personal development portfolio*, including a *personal action plan* and a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate that he/she can fulfil the assessment requirements of the unit. (See evidence requirements for all three).

The *portfolio* should contain a record of the tasks and activities that the candidate has undertaken, together with the outputs/evidence arising from the tasks. Candidates might be encouraged to respond to the review questions - *What did I do?, What did I learn?, What should I do now?* - selecting, organising and presenting supporting evidence from his/her portfolio. (See Guidance on Delivery and Assessment of the Unit, and Guidance to Candidates - below).

Administrative information

Unit code: HP6M 47

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

Superclass category: HB

Date of publication: August 2017

Version: 01

Source: SQA

FURTHER INFORMATION: Call SQA's Customer Contact Centre on 44 (0) 141 500 5030 or 0345 279 1000. Alternatively, complete our Centre Feedback Form.

Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

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

Personal Development Planning is now widely used a wide range of occupations, in higher education and in the professions, as a mechanism to encourage and support individuals to take responsibility for their own learning and continuing development. It is described as *'a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development'* (Universities UK 2002[2])This unit has been designed to help candidates undertaking SQA Advanced programmes to benefit from opportunities to participate in personal development planning, particularly with regard to one or more of the following contexts:

- integrated Core Skill development OR
- progression to employment OR
- progression from college to university OR
- continuous professional development

The development of autonomy and self-directed learning are the primary considerations in this unit and personal 'ownership', by the candidate, of the processes of planning, implementation and evaluation is imperative. Helping candidates to relate the unit activities to their own personal, educational and career aspirations is an important factor.

To achieve the outcomes for this unit a candidate must demonstrate, through the evidence gathered and presented in his/her *personal development portfolio*, the ability to:
- review his/her experience - in terms of personal and formal learning and development and gather, and present in a portfolio, evidence of achievements, interests and preferences in a range of contexts, such as formal learning, personal, social, sporting, leisure activities
- analyse, on the basis of the above, his/her achievements, abilities, and interests; and identify personal, educational and career aims
- produce a *personal action* plan, including a set of clear, measurable and achievable targets - relating to his/her study programme and personal learning/development
- implement the *personal action plan*
- review and evaluate the *personal action plan* and its implementation
- gather, present and summarise evidence of the above in his/her *personal development portfolio*

Universities UK, 2002, *Guidelines for HE Progress Files*, Universities Scotland, SCOP, LTSN & QAA - www.universitiesUK.ac.uk/employability

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

Candidates should create and maintain a *personal development portfolio* of information and evidence throughout the unit. They will also be required to devise and implement a *personal action plan*, which should include an appropriate set of clear, measurable and achievable targets.

i   Create and Maintain a Personal Development Portfolio

The evidence presented for assessment by each candidate should show that s/he has, acquired an understanding of the principles underpinning *personal development planning*; developed the skills/knowledge necessary to undertake a systematic review and analysis of their previous experience, achievements, learning, interests and preferences; together with their development needs. It should demonstrate that he/she has seriously considered personal, educational and career aims and opportunities; has used this analysis to devise a personal development plan; and, to develop an action plan, based on clear, measurable and achievable targets.

Candidates should be given opportunities to examine a range of instruments/frameworks for personal review and analysis, (such as SWOT, Forcefield and Learning Styles analyses) together with guidance and support in their use. However, the evidence presented by each candidate should show that he/she has been able to select and use the instruments which are most appropriate to his/her particular circumstances.

The evidence should demonstrate that the candidate has been able to review what s/he has done in the past and what s/he would like to do in the future. Gathering, analysing, summarising and presenting, in a portfolio, evidence of this is a key feature of the personal development planning process, as well as being an assessment requirement for this unit.

The evidence presented should include:

- a personal account by the candidate of his/her review of previous experience - identifying achievements, interests and preferences - and a consideration of what s/he would like to achieve in personal, educational and career terms. This should include identifying:

    - achievements and existing attributes in terms of personal, social, sporting, leisure/cultural and educational contexts
    - interests and preferences, including learning/development styles
    - career/personal aims, together with implications for educational and other developmental requirements

- a description of his/her *personal action plan*, showing that it stems from the above review/analysis, and that it will lead to the achievement of the identified aims. It should also demonstrate that the candidate has been able to translate his/her aims into clear, measurable and achievable targets as a part of a *personal action plan* over a period of one/two academic sessions. This will require evidence of:
  - identifying/considering 'helping' and 'hindering influences' on achievement of aims
  - identifying appropriate short term targets and action points
  - considering priorities and planning how to use time effectively, including the use of deadlines and reviewing progress
  - identifying help/support required and where/how it can be accessed
  - producing an action plan

- a summary, in the portfolio/personal development plan, of the outcomes from the review, of the analysis and planning stages of the above process.

ii   Implementing an action plan

The evidence presented must show that in implementing the *personal action plan* the candidate has been able to:

- use the *personal action plan* to address his/her targets - including planning ahead, organising time, opportunities and reviewing progress
- select and use different ways of working towards targets, including at least one formal learning and one informal/practical learning situation
- review/amend the action points as appropriate/necessary - including the ability to respond to changing circumstances and unexpected difficulties
- seek and use advice from tutors and others - including feedback on performance, advice on problem-solving and planning future action
- gather, analyse, summarise and present evidence of the above in his/her *personal development portfolio*

Although course and guidance tutors play a significant facilitating role, the evidence presented must demonstrate that the candidate has taken responsibility for his/her own *personal action plan* and for learning from the experience of implementing the plan.

The evidence should include a personal account by the candidate describing his/her implementation of the *personal action plan.* This should demonstrate the candidates understanding of the requirement to plan ahead; to organise to use time and opportunities effectively; and, to review progress. The account should also describe the use of a formal learning situation - perhaps linked to an SQA Advanced unit - and an informal/experiential learning situation - perhaps linked to an out of college context, such as personal, social, leisure/cultural/sporting activities. Evidence should be provided to show that the candidate was able to amend the plan to accommodate changing or unexpected circumstances and to show that he/she was able to seek feedback/advice from tutors and other people. This personal account should be retained in the portfolio.

The candidate should also provide a brief review/analysis of the implementation process. This should highlight the achievements, learning and development which he/she believes to

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have arisen from the implementation process and identify the likely impact on his/her overall personal development plan.

iii   Monitor and Evaluate the personal action plan and its Implementation

The evidence that a candidate gathers and presents should show that s/he has been able to

- review/monitor - on an on-going and summative basis - experience of devising and implementing their *personal action plan*; and where/how the plan was modified
- identify, describe and give evidence for personal achievements, learning and development - including evidence of amending the plan to accommodate unexpected/changed circumstances
- identify what was learned and how/where learning occurred ie what was learned - knowledge, skills, attitudes; what learning styles were preferred; where did learning occur most effectively? what are the implications for future learning?
- identify ways to further improve learning and performance and amend his/her *personal action plan* accordingly

Again, the objective of promoting self-directed learning is fundamental to the requirement that the candidate monitors and evaluates his/her own experience of devising and implementing an action plan. Under all circumstances candidates must be encouraged to reflect on their own experience and challenged to use their personal reflection to generate insights and understanding of their own strengths and development needs. Specifically, candidates should be helped to identify achievements, learning and developments which have arisen from their experience and reflection; and, they should be helped to identify ways in which they might improve further their learning and performance.

Assessment

(Detailed briefing notes and guidance on the creation, maintenance and assessment of portfolios will be provided for tutors and students.)

Equality and inclusion

This unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

General information for candidates

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

This unit will help you to clarify and to achieve your personal and career aims. *Personal Development Planning* is a process that is increasingly used by individuals, in a wide range of occupations, to keep their personal and job related knowledge, skills and expertise up to date. One of the particular qualities a potential employer will look for is your ability to manage your own learning and development. Completing this unit will help you to demonstrate - to yourself and an employer - that you are capable of doing this.

In this unit you will have the opportunity to:

    i   create and maintain a *personal development portfolio* and *personal action plan*

    ii   implement your *personal action plan*

    iii   monitor and evaluate your action plan and its implementation

You will need to know:

- about yourself - your aims, aspirations, your current abilities; and your learning strengths/preferences
- the personal qualities and general skills demanded by employers or other gatekeepers for your chosen career/progression route
- the *principles* underpinning effective *personal development planning*, including those that might help you:
    - plan to achieve your aims
    - set clear, measurable and achievable targets
    - identify factors that might help you and factors that might hinder you
    - use your personal learning preferences
    - effectively manage time, opportunities and resources
    - appreciate risks and plan for when things do not go as anticipated
- details of the career and progression pathways towards your aims (including learning options in your chosen SQA Advanced programme)
- what you want to get out of your SQA Advanced programme to progress your personal, educational and career aims

You will need to be able to

- review all your relevant experience - in terms of personal and formal learning and development; then gather and present, in a *personal development portfolio,* evidence of achievements, interests and preferences in a range of contexts - formal learning, personal, social, sporting, leisure activities
- analyse, on the basis of the above, your achievements, abilities, and interests; and identify personal, educational and career aims
- produce a *personal action plan* - including a set of clear, measurable and achievable targets - relating to your study programme and personal learning/development

- implement your *personal action plan*
- review and evaluate your *Personal Action Plan* and how you set about it
- gather, present and summarise evidence of the above in your *personal development portfolio*

For purposes of assessment you will provide evidence, in your *Personal Development Portfolio,* that you have been able to complete the unit activities and that you are able to meet the unit outcomes. You will be provided with guidance and support to help you to create, maintain and present your portfolio and your assessment evidence.