

SQA Advanced Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Digital Culture: Online Collaboration

Unit code: HR83 48

Unit purpose: The Unit examines the creation and operation of virtual communities. It discusses the sociology of virtual communities and the technological infrastructure required to support them and examines how individuals can collaborate for a common purpose using social networking, online collaboration and online publishing tools.

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

- 1 Describe the sociology, construction and operation of virtual communities.
- 2 Collaborate using online collaboration tools.
- 3 Collaborate using social networking tools.
- 4 Collaborate using online publishing tools.
- 5 Create and participate in online communities within virtual worlds.

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

**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.*

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Access to this Unit will be at the discretion of the Centre, however it is recommended that candidates should have previous experience of using IT and Internet Applications. This may be evidenced by the completion of relevant PC Passport units.

Core Skills: There are no opportunities to develop Core Skills in this Unit.

Context for delivery: If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

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Assessment:

Evidence is required that candidates have achieved all Outcomes.

A candidate is encouraged to use the Internet in any research, etc. However, the evidence produced must be the candidate's own words. Assessors should ensure themselves of the authenticity of candidate's evidence.

Written and/or oral recorded evidence is required which demonstrates that the candidate has achieved the requirements of all of the Outcomes to show that the candidate has appropriate knowledge and understanding of the content of this Unit.

Outcome 1 should be assessed by analysis of candidates' participation in online forum discussions initiated by themselves.

Outcomes 2, 3, 4 and 5 should be assessed by a collaborative project requiring candidates to collaborate using a minimum of four different tools, with at least one being selected from each of the following categories: online collaboration, social networking, online publishing and virtual worlds.

Assessment for Outcomes 2, 3, 4 and 5 should have three components: self-assessment (20%), peer assessment (30%) and tutor assessment (50%).

Assessors should assure themselves of the authenticity of each candidate's submission. Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment.

If an observation checklist is used then the assessor will record that all the tasks have been undertaken correctly by the candidate. An assessor must endorse each checklist with the candidate's name, their name, signature and date.

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Unit specification: statement of standards

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The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, knowledge and/or skills, and Evidence Requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the knowledge and/or skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Describe the sociology, construction and operation of virtual communities

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Virtual communities (including virtual worlds)
- ◆ Online support groups
- ◆ E-Learning
- ◆ E-Democracy
- ◆ E-Activism

Evidence Requirements

Performance evidence of candidates' participation in online forum discussions initiated by themselves.

Outcome 2

Collaborate using online collaboration tools.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Production of documents or other artefacts
- ◆ Project scheduling/monitoring

Evidence Requirements

Performance evidence to demonstrate that candidates can collaborate, using relevant Web 2.0 applications, to produce documents or other artefacts and to schedule and monitor projects.

Outcome 3

Collaborate using social networking tools.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Personal social networking tools
- ◆ Professional social networking tools
- ◆ Online communities

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Evidence Requirements

Performance evidence to demonstrate that candidates can collaborate, using relevant personal and professional social networking tools and online communities.

Outcome 4

Collaborate using online publishing tools.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Publish text
- ◆ Publish images
- ◆ Publish video

Evidence Requirements

Performance evidence to demonstrate that candidates can collaborate, using relevant Web 2.0 applications, to create and publish content online.

Outcome 5

Create and participate in online communities within virtual worlds.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Create virtual communities
- ◆ Use collaborative tools

Evidence Requirements

Performance evidence to demonstrate that candidates use create online communities and use collaborative tools within a virtual world.

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Administrative Information

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Unit title:	Digital Culture: Online Collaboration
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Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Digital Culture: Online Collaboration

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 examines the creation and operation of virtual communities. It discusses the sociology of virtual communities and the technological infrastructure required to support them and examines how individuals can collaborate for a common purpose using social networking, online collaboration and online publishing tools and virtual worlds.

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.

Outcome 1

This Outcome is about describing the sociology, construction and operation of virtual communities, including virtual worlds. Candidates will be expected to describe the application of virtual communities to online support groups, E-Learning, E-Democracy and E-Activism. They will be expected to demonstrate that they can initiate and participate in online forum discussions.

A virtual community, sometimes referred to as an e-community or online community, is a group of individuals who interact via electronic media such as social networking sites, email, online groups or instant messaging for social, professional, educational or other purposes. Virtual communities may exist exclusively online, or they may act as a secondary means of communication for people who know one another offline, particularly to aid collaboration on a project.

Depending on the nature of the community, the links formed between individuals may be weaker than is normal with offline communities, for example when communities are purely of an informational or question and answer nature, but links can also be surprisingly strong, especially where members of virtual communities support one another through real-life difficulties for extended periods. Virtual communities depend heavily on social interaction and reciprocal exchange between members.

Modern virtual communities tend to make extensive use of Web 2.0 technologies, but virtual communities have been around for many years, early examples being the PLATO timesharing system and USENET newsgroups. The first web-based community sites, including GeoCities, Tripod and TheGlobe began to appear in the mid-1990s. These early sites were generally based around the notion of publishing personal web pages and foreshadowed the development of blogging and social networking. Web 2.0 virtual communities started to appear in the early years of the new millennium, based on the use of tools such as WordPress, MySpace and Facebook.

Virtual communities display different levels of interaction among their members, ranging from adding comments or tags to blogs or social bookmarking sites to competing with other members in online role-playing games. There are clear differences between traditional structured online communities, such as message boards and chat rooms and the more individually-centred tools such as blogs and social networking sites.

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Virtual communities can be found in a variety of areas, including E-Learning, E-Activism and E-Democracy. Moodle is a tool which allows educational establishments to develop their own online communities of teachers and learners. Moodle itself is developed and maintained by an online community of volunteer developers. Many other Web 2.0 tools, including blogs, wikis and social networking sites can be used to develop and support E-Learning communities. The Centre for Learning and Development Technologies offers a huge directory of tools at:

<http://www.c4lpt.co.uk/index.html>

E-Activism, also known as Internet activism or cyberactivism involves the use of electronic communication technologies such as email, the World Wide Web and social networking tools to enable faster communications by activist groups and the delivery of up-to-date information to large audiences. Uses include fundraising, community building, lobbying and organising volunteers. E-Activists, including non-profit organisations and charities, also organise E-petitions to be sent to the government and public and private bodies. The Internet is also used to organise gatherings and protests and to communicate with supporters. Mainstream social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are becoming increasingly popular with e-activists, for example in allowing users to comment on the Outcome of disputed elections.

E-Democracy involves the use of information and communication technologies by those involved in local, national or international political and governance processes, including voters, governments, elected officials, the media and political organisations. It aims to enable greater voter involvement in addressing public issues.

Outcome 2

This Outcome is about collaborating using online collaboration tools to produce documents or other artefacts and to schedule and monitor projects. Candidates will be expected to demonstrate that they can collaborate, using relevant Web 2.0 applications, to produce documents or other artefacts and to schedule and monitor projects. Wikipedia provides an extensive list of collaborative software at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_collaborative_software.

Collaborative software includes tools like email, calendaring, text chat, wiki and bookmarking. It can be distinguished from the more general social software tools, such as Twitter and Facebook, by the fact that it is normally used for work rather than leisure, often with the aim of creating a collaborative working environment. The more general social software tools can also be used for collaborative purposes, eg: Facebook groups can be used in a work context, or Twitter can be used to publish progress reports.

The first real collaborative software tools appeared in the early 1990s in the form of groupware systems, such as Lotus Notes. Modern collaborative tools, such as Google Docs and Microsoft Windows Live, tend to be Web 2.0 based and include functions such as document sharing, calendaring, instant messaging and web conferencing. Collaborative software tools can be divided into four categories: knowledge management tools, knowledge creation tools, information sharing tools and collaborative project management tools.

Collaborative project management is a rapidly developing area with many project managers opting to use online tools such as Basecamp (<http://basecamp.com>) or Zoho Project (<http://projects.zoho.com>), as an alternative to traditional project management tools like Microsoft Project. Huddle (<http://www.huddle.net>) is a network of secure online workspaces which allows users to share files, collaborate on ideas, manage projects and organise virtual meetings.

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Outcome 3

This Outcome is about collaborating using personal and professional social networking tools and online communities. Candidates will be expected to demonstrate that they can collaborate, using relevant personal and professional social networking tools and online communities.

A January 2009 survey ranked Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>) as the world's most popular social networking site. It allows users to add friends, send them messages and update their personal profiles to keep friends informed about what they are doing. Users can also join networks organised by city, workplace, school or region. Facebook has sometimes been controversial. It has been blocked at times by several countries and has been banned at many educational establishments and places of work to discourage students or employees from wasting time.

The second most popular network is MySpace (<http://www.myspace.com>), which is owned by News International. MySpace profiles contain sections for About Me, Who I'd Like to Meet, Interests and Details. Profiles also contain a blog, which has standard fields for content, emotion, and media. MySpace supports the uploading of images, one of which can be chosen as the default image that will be displayed on the profile's main page, search page, and alongside the user's name on comments, messages, etc.

MySpace users can customise their profile pages by entering HTML code and can include videos and flash-based content. They can also add music to their profile pages via MySpace Music, a service that allows groups to post songs for use on MySpace. This has led to the site becoming very popular with up-and-coming musicians and groups. MySpace profiles for musicians allow artists to upload complete discographies consisting of MP3 songs, as long as they have the rights to use the songs. Unsigned musicians can post and sell music using SNOCAP.

Bebo (<http://www.bebo.com>) is a social networking site owned by AOL which has become particularly popular with British teenagers. The name is an acronym for 'Blog early, blog often'. Bebo profiles must include a comment section where other users can leave a message, and a list of the user's friends. Users can add additional modules. When an account is initially created the users' profile is private, meaning that it can only be viewed by their friends, but users can opt for a public profile if they wish to do so.

Like MySpace, Bebo offers additional facilities for musicians under the heading of 'Bebo Music' which allows groups or solo artists to create a profile showcasing their music. Bebo has been applauded as the first major social networking site to display the CEOP 'Report Abuse' button, allowing users to report online abuse immediately to the relevant authorities.

(<http://www.ceop.gov.uk/>)

LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com/>) is a business-oriented social networking site launched in May 2003. It is mainly used for professional networking and was reported in October 2009 to have more than 50 million registered users in more than 200 countries. The main purpose of LinkedIn is to allow registered users to maintain a list of contact details of people, known as Connections, whom they know and trust in business. This 'gated-access approach', where making contact with a user requires either an existing relationship or the intervention of a contact, is intended to build trust among the service's users.

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LinkedIn also allows users to find information about companies. If the name of a company is entered in the search box, statistics about the company will be displayed, which may include the ratio of female to male employees, common titles/positions held within the company, the location of the company's headquarters and offices and a list of past and present employees.

XING (<http://www.xing.com>) is a social software platform for professionals, similar in many respects to LinkedIn. It offers personal profiles, groups, discussion forums, event coordination, and other common social networking features. Basic membership is free, but many functions, like searching for people with specific qualifications or messaging people you are not connected to, can only be used by premium members, who pay around 5 pounds per month. XING has a rigid privacy and no-spam policy. In contrast with most other social networking sites, XING provides its paying members with easy email access to other members. XING also offers a system for closed communities, known as Enterprise groups. These have their own access paths and interface designs and are used by many major companies.

Ning (<http://www.ning.com>) is an online platform which allows users to create their own social networks. It is ideal for users who want to create their own social networks around specific interests with their own visual design, choice of features and member data. Ning offers a customisable template which lets anyone create their own social network. Developers have some source level control of their social networks, enabling them to change features and underlying logic. Ning offers both free and paid options. Ning networks are free by default and run ads that Ning controls. If the network owner wishes, they can pay a monthly fee for an ad-free service or for premium services such as extra storage and bandwidth.

Outcome 4

This Outcome is about collaborating using online publishing tools to publish text, images and video. Candidates will be expected to demonstrate that they can collaborate, using relevant Web 2.0 applications, to create and publish content online. A whole range of tools can be used to publish online content, including blogging platforms (WordPress and Blogger), wikis (MediaWiki), video publishing sites (YouTube), picture publishing sites (Flickr), document publishing sites (Scribd) and content management systems (Drupal, Joomla!).

WordPress (<http://wordpress.org>) is an open source blog publishing application which is developed and maintained by an online community. Although it started out as a blogging platform it has now developed into a full-scale content management system. WordPress blogs can be created at www.wordpress.com or hosted on your own server. WordPress sites are based upon editable themes and can be customised using plug-ins and widgets. WordPress also features integrated link management, a search engine-friendly permalink structure and support for categories and tagging.

Blogger (<http://blogger.com>) is probably the most popular blogging platform around. It was initially produced by Pyra Labs, but was bought by Google in 2003 and is integrated with Google's Picasa photo publishing tool and Google AdSense. Blogger is highly versatile, but there are some restrictions on content storage and bandwidth. Users can modify the standard templates to create unique themes. Blogger is extremely easy to use, making it an ideal choice for first-time bloggers. Blogger offers a free hosting service at www.blogspot.com, but many users prefer to host their blogs on their own domain.

MediaWiki (<http://www.mediawiki.org>) is a web-based wiki software application, originally developed to support Wikipedia encyclopedia, but now widely used as a content management system. A wiki is simply a website that simplifies the task of creating number of interlinked web pages via a web browser using a markup language or a WYSIWYG text editor. Wikis are often used to create collaborative websites and to power community websites.

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YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>) is a video sharing website owned by Google which allows users to upload and share videos. It uses Adobe Flash technology to display a range of user-generated video content, including movie clips, TV clips, and music videos, as well as amateur content such as video blogs and short original videos. Most of the content has been uploaded by individuals, but some media companies also upload material. Unregistered users watch videos, but only registered users can upload them.

Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com>) is an image and video hosting website which allows users to share and embed personal photographs. It is also used by bloggers to host images embedded in blogs. As of October 2009 Flickr claimed to host more than 4 billion images. There are two types of Flickr accounts: Free and Pro. Free account users are limited to uploading 100 MB of images a month and 2 videos. If they upload more than 200 photos they will only be able to view the most recent 200, but the others remain stored on the site and can still be linked from blogs. Pro account users can upload an unlimited number of images and videos every month and receive unlimited bandwidth and storage. Images are organised by means of tags, making it easy for searchers to find images related to particular topics.

Scribd (<http://www.scribd.com>) is a document sharing website which lets users post documents in a range of formats and embed them in a web page using the iPaper format, a rich document format similar to PDF, designed for web use. iPaper was built with Adobe Flash, so it can be viewed across multiple operating systems without conversion, as long as the Flash player is installed. It supports all major document formats, including Word, PowerPoint, PDF, OpenOffice and PostScript. Scribd documents can either be private or open to the whole Scribd community. The iPaper document viewer can be embedded in any website or blog, making it easy to display documents in their original layout.

Drupal (<http://drupal.org>) is a free open source content management system which is used as a back-end system for many different types of websites, ranging from small personal blogs to large corporate and government sites. The Drupal core can maintain user accounts using a flexible permissions system, create and manage menus, RSS feeds, customise page layout, perform logging and administer the system. Drupal can be used to create standard websites, single- or multi-user blogs, Internet forums or community websites supporting user-generated content.

Joomla! (<http://www.joomla.org>) is an open source content management system used for publishing content on websites. Its features include page caching, RSS feeds, printable pages, news flashes, blogs, polls and searching. The platform consists of many different parts, which allow modular extensions to be made easily. There are over 3, 000 extensions for Joomla! available via the Extensions Directory.

Outcome 5

This Outcome is about creating and participating in virtual communities within virtual worlds. Candidates will be expected to demonstrate that they can create virtual communities and use collaborative tools within a virtual world.

A virtual world is a computer-based environment which allows users to interact via avatars. The computer presents perceptual stimuli to the user, who can manipulate elements of the modelled world. Modelled worlds may have rules based on the real world or a fantasy world, eg gravity, topography, motion, real-time actions and communication. Communication between users can make use of text, graphical icons, visual gesture and sound.

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One popular type of virtual world is Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMPORGS) which often depict a world very similar to the real world, with real world rules and real-time actions and communication. Players create a character to travel between locations to carry out business or leisure activities. Communication usually takes place via text messages or VOIP.

Second Life (<http://secondlife.com>) is a popular virtual world developed by Linden Research. Its users, known as 'residents' can interact with each other through avatars. They can explore, meet other residents, socialise, participate in individual and group activities, and create and trade virtual property and services or travel throughout the world.

The software incorporates three-dimensional modelling tool based around simple geometric shapes that allows a resident to build virtual objects. More complex three-dimensional objects, textures for clothing or other objects, and animations and gestures can be created using external software.

There (<http://www.there.com>) is a virtual world which provides a venue for socialising with less role-playing than usually found in MMORPGs. It offers a shared experience that allows people to interact in an online society. New members must choose a unique name and a male or female avatar. These cannot be modified, but other attributes such as hair colour and style, head and body shapes, skin and eye colour, clothing, etc. can be changed as desired. Through their avatars, members can communicate in real-time using body language, text chat and voice. Members can create items, such as clothing, vehicles, buildings and furniture, and sell them to others for use in the virtual world.

World of Warcraft (<http://www.worldofwarcraft.com/index.xml>) is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) which has multiple expansions. The game is set around the world of Azeroth, a fantasy setting which contains the traditional races of elves, dwarves, gnomes and trolls.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of 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: 12 hours
- Outcome 2: 7 hours
- Outcome 3: 7 hours
- Outcome 4: 7 hours
- Outcome 5: 7 hours

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

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.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

There are no opportunities to develop Core Skills in this Unit.

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Open learning

If this Unit is delivered by open or distance learning methods, additional planning and resources may be required for candidate support, assessment and quality assurance. A combination of new and traditional authentication tools may have to be devised for assessment and re-assessment purposes.

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.

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General information for candidates

There are five Outcomes in this Unit and upon completion you should be able to:

- 1 Describe the sociology, construction and operation of virtual communities.
- 2 Collaborate using online collaboration tools.
- 3 Collaborate using social networking tools.
- 4 Collaborate using online publishing tools.
- 5 Collaborate using virtual worlds.

In Outcome 1, you will learn about the sociology, construction and operation of virtual communities, including virtual worlds. You will be expected to describe the application of virtual communities to online support groups, E-Learning, E-Democracy and E-Activism and to demonstrate that you can initiate and participate in online forum discussions.

In Outcome 2, you will learn about using online collaboration tools to produce documents or other artefacts and to schedule and monitor projects. You will be expected to demonstrate that you can collaborate, using relevant Web 2.0 applications, to produce documents or other artefacts and to schedule and monitor projects.

In Outcome 3, you will learn about collaborating using personal and professional social networking tools and online communities. You will be expected to demonstrate that you can collaborate, using relevant personal and professional social networking tools and online communities.

In Outcome 4, you will learn about collaborating using online publishing tools to publish text, images and video. You will be expected to demonstrate that you can collaborate, using relevant Web 2.0 applications, to create and publish content online.

In Outcome 5 you will learn about creating and participating in online communities within virtual worlds.

You will be expected to demonstrate that you can create online communities and use collaborative tools within a virtual world.