SQA Advanced Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Project Management: Project Justification and Planning

Unit code: HV58 48

Unit purpose: This unit is designed to provide the candidate with the knowledge and skills required to prepare a project proposal including an outline project plan. The resultant skills will enable the candidate to develop a business case for a project which demonstrates its fit with the organisation's business objectives and its viability based on the appraisal of a number of possible options.

This unit is intended for project managers working in the public, private or voluntary sectors. They will be experts in their field of operation but without any formal project management qualifications. This unit is designed to provide the project managers with the knowledge and skills to seek and gain approval for a project proposal based on a well-developed business case and outline project plan.

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

1   produce the rationale for a project
2   assess the viability of a project proposal
3   prepare for project implementation

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 would be beneficial if the candidate had some general communication, numeracy and practical computing skills as might be demonstrated by the achievement of units in Communication at SCQF level 6, Numeracy at SCQF level 5 and Using Information Technology at SCQF level 5. In the absence of such evidence, equivalent experience and regular computing experience within a working environment would be desirable.

Core skills: There are opportunities to develop the core skills of *Communication*, *Working with Others* and *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6 in this unit, although there is no automatic certification of core skills or core skills components.

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.

Assessment: The knowledge and skills elements of this unit are predominantly practical and workplace based. Therefore, it is recommended that the outcomes be assessed by means of the development of project proposal documentation, covering all of the requirements of the three outcomes, for a real project for which the candidate has responsibility. Alternatively, a simulated or case-study based project that derives from the workplace can be provided by the centre. Whether this is delivered as a single assessment or as a series of several assessments matching the progression of the outcomes, is at the discretion of the centre.

All assessments are assignment or portfolio based. Assessors should assure themselves of the authenticity of each candidate's submission.

SQA Advanced 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

Produce the rationale for a project

Knowledge and/or Skills

♦ Rationale
♦ Project context
♦ Lessons learned
♦ Project objectives
♦ Project scope
♦ Measures of success

Evidence requirements

The candidate must provide evidence to demonstrate all knowledge and/or skills above by producing project documentation which provides the rationale for a project. In addition to a description of the scope and objectives this will include a justification for the organisational fit and need for the project. This should be sufficient to enable a decision to be made about whether or not the project should advance to the next stage of business case development.

In creating the evidence in support of the rationale for a project the candidate should:

♦ explain the reasons for the project and the benefits expected from it
♦ describe the relevant context in terms of political, business, economic and/or programme factors
♦ define the objectives and scope of the project in a comprehensive manner
♦ describe the interdependencies with other projects
♦ select one aspect of the rationale that has been influenced by previous learning and explain how this should be beneficial to the project
♦ give an assessment of measures of success, based on recognised criteria

Assessment guidelines

Ideally the assessment for this outcome should be based on a real workplace project for which the candidate has responsibility. If this is not possible or the project is not suitable for assessment purposes then a simulated or case study-based project that derives from the workplace can be provided by the centre.

Where a candidate wishes to use a real workplace project, selection should be made in consultation with their line manager and tutor. Suitability of the project for assessment purposes will be determined by the centre.

It is recommended that the candidate use the same project for all unit outcomes.

The centre may choose to simulate an organisation's phased approval process for project development by ensuring that the candidate successfully completes Outcome 1 before proceeding to Outcome 2. Alternatively the centre might want to consider a cross-assessment of all three unit outcomes.

Outcome 2

Assess the viability of a project proposal

Knowledge and/or skills

♦ Sources of project funding
♦ Project costs and budget forecasting
♦ Value of benefits
♦ Project risk assessment
♦ Options appraisal

Evidence requirements

The candidate must provide evidence to cover all knowledge and/or skills above by producing project documentation which demonstrates the viability of a project through the application of a process of options appraisal. This documentation will include data and analysis for a number of options followed by the candidate's recommendation for a preferred option with a justification for project affordability and value for money.

In creating the evidence in support of the viability of a project the candidate should:

♦ describe two project delivery options
♦ based on construction of a set of appraisal criteria, provide data and analysis for each project option including:
  — estimated project costs
  — funding sources
  — project budget, constructed in accordance with recognised budgetary principles
  — estimated value of project benefits
  — key risks
♦ make a recommendation, with reasons, for the preferred option based on comparative costs, benefits and risk ratings

Assessment guidelines

It is recommended that the candidate continue with the same project as used for Outcome 1. If this is not possible or the project is not suitable for assessment purposes then a simulated or case-study based project that derives from the workplace can be provided by the centre.

Although this outcome can be assessed independently of the other outcomes, the centre might want to consider a cross-assessment of all three unit outcomes.

Outcome 3

Prepare for project implementation

Knowledge and/or skills

♦ Project management processes
♦ Project organisation structures
♦ Project reporting arrangements
♦ Record keeping and audit requirements
♦ Project planning techniques

Evidence requirements

The candidate must provide evidence to cover all knowledge and/or skills above by producing project documentation which describes the future operating environment of a project and presents an outline project plan. This will include a description of the project management processes, proposals for the project organisation structure and reporting arrangements, and the record keeping and audit requirements for the project.

In creating the evidence to demonstrate adequate preparation prior to delivery of a project the candidate should:

♦ create a project plan which presents a timeline identifying key project tasks, resources, milestones and deliverables
♦ describe the sequence of project management processes and associated activities that will be followed throughout the life of the project
♦ propose a suitable project organisation structure including key roles and responsibilities
♦ describe the project reporting arrangements including the regularity and nature of communications between the key roles and individuals
♦ identify and justify the performance measures, record keeping and audit requirements of the project

Candidate's work should be compatible with recognised project standards or with standards relevant to the context in which the project is being undertaken.

Assessment guidelines

The candidate should continue with the same project as used in previous outcomes. If this is not possible or the project is not suitable for assessment purposes then a simulated or case-study based project that derives from the workplace can be provided by the centre.

The knowledge and skills covered by this outcome represent the final elements in the development of a project business case. The outputs of Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 together should offer sufficient justification to ensure the readiness of a project to progress to implementation.

Although this outcome can be assessed independently of the other outcomes, the centre might want to consider a cross-assessment of all three unit outcomes.

Administrative information

Unit code: HV58 48

Unit title: Project Management: Project Justification and Planning

Superclass category: AG

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Version	Description of change	Date

Source: SQA

SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution that Scotland's colleges have made to the development of SQA Advanced qualifications.

For further information, please call SQA's Customer Contact Centre on 44 (0) 141 500 5030 or 0345 279 1000. Alternatively, complete our Centre Feedback Form.

SQA Advanced Unit Specification: support notes

Unit title: Project Management: Project Justification and 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

Project management plays a growing and increasingly important role in the development of a wide range of organisational needs and requirements in all situations such as government, construction, engineering, medicine, science, research and computing. The management of projects differs greatly from the management of day-to-day routine and repetitive systems and procedures, with constraints such as fixed start and finish dates, time schedules to be adhered to, budgets to be closely followed and managed as well as a team of highly skilled professionals to be co-ordinated and managed to achieve project goals and meet the quality standards and requirements of the client. There is therefore great pressure on project managers in all areas to plan for the efficient and effective management of all of these resources.

The use of HM Treasury Green Book is referred to in these support notes. It is not compulsory to use this — it should only be used where appropriate. Candidates should use an appropriate justification template instead. Where candidates are not able to identify an appropriate work-related project, it is possible to use case studies and/or projects from their personal lives (eg planning a wedding; building a house; development of a business plan for a business start-up etc). These can be supplemented by discussions with the candidate, eg 'what if scenarios' to meet evidence requirements. The production of a plan (eg a business plan for a start-up company) can be the implementation of a project. If the organisation already uses a template this should be used ensuring that the rigour required to produce full and appropriate project management documentation is met.

To increase the likelihood of success of a project this unit places an emphasis on the rigour required to ensure the organisational and financial justification for a project is encompassed within a sound business case prior to approval to proceed to implementation.

This unit is intended for project managers working in the public, private or voluntary sectors. They will be experts in their field of operation but without any formal project management qualifications. This unit is designed to provide the project managers with the knowledge and skills to seek and gain approval for a project proposal based on a well-developed business case and outline project plan.

The unit is written in generic terms; the concepts involved are applicable and valid in all project management contexts. The terminology should be adapted to suit the relevant workplace situation.

Sample templates and example PID

Sample templates for a project initiation document can be found at:

♦ https://community.jisc.ac.uk/library/janet-services-documentation/project-initiation-document-template-moving-single-service-ssid.
♦ Blank Project Management Templates. Please feel free to copy any of the attached documents — you can alter any of them to suit the needs of your specific project or organisation. http://www.businessballs.com/project%20management%20templates.pdf

The completion of the 'Status Update Report' material and the 'Lessons Learned and Recommendations' material required in the Unit *Project Management: Managing the Implementation of a Project* HR0T 48, could be used to cover the need for the 'what if scenarios' requirement where projects may not be able to deliver the full evidence requirements.

This unit has been designed to be delivered to employees who work in organisations which implement processes based on the government's best practice guidelines and adopt practices that demonstrate good corporate governance. In this context, it is expected that support materials be compatible with the HM Treasury's Green Book guidance on appraisal and evaluation and reference the Gateway Review system, or similar, to assess project progress. Candidates may be encouraged to access the wide range of project management tools and guidance available through the UK Office of Government Commerce (OGC) website (http://www.ogc.gov.uk).

Although the unit includes a range of concepts, knowledge and skills, which will require that candidates be provided with a suitable and sufficiently wide range of exercises to practice with, a holistic approach should still be considered by means of a single project approach for the summative assessment.

This unit provides candidates with a natural progression route to other widely recognised professional project management qualifications such as PRINCE2 and the Diploma in Programme and Project Management.

Outcome 1

This outcome covers the knowledge and skills required to develop an initial project idea through to production of a rationale for a project which provides sufficient justification for a project to be given approval to proceed to a fuller development of the business case. This includes the ability to investigate and articulate the context in which the project is to be developed and delivered.

Outcome 2

This outcome progresses onto the development of a case to support the viability of a project through the application of a process of options appraisal. Included in this process is the valuing of costs and benefits and assessing risks for each of a number of project options. In addition to identifying and quantifying sources of funding or income to the project the candidate will use budgeting techniques to calculate the costs of resources during the lifetime of the project. This will be followed by calculating the value of the project benefits and allow for the analysis of costs against benefits. Using the risk assessments and costing techniques the candidate will be able to provide data for each option which will enable an appraisal of the options, aid the selection and recommendation of a preferred option and demonstrate affordability and value for money.

Outcome 3

The purpose of this outcome is to enable the candidate to establish a project operating environment and to present an outline project plan. This includes selecting and describing the processes that will be adopted for the management of the project. Decisions at this stage include the organisation structure for the project and identification of key roles and responsibilities. Reporting arrangements, including the regularity and nature of communications between the key roles and individuals, need to be clarified. As do the specific performance measurement, record keeping and audit requirements of the project. Project planning techniques will be used to produce a project plan which presents a timeline identifying key project tasks, milestones and deliverables.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this unit

This unit provides the candidate with the knowledge and skills required to produce a project proposal in the form a business case suitable for submission to a formal approval process, if required, prior to project implementation.

As the candidate is expected to be in employment with current project management responsibility, it is recommended that a suitable project be selected at their place of work which can be used as the basis of development and assessment for all three outcomes. A live project may offer a more substantive experience for the candidate. If this is not possible or the project is not suitable for assessment purposes then a simulated or case-study based project can be provided by the centre. Where a candidate wishes to use a real workplace project, selection should be made in consultation with their line manager and tutor. Suitability of the project for assessment purposes will be determined by the centre.

This unit consists of three outcomes, which develop progressively the knowledge and skills required to manage the development of a project business case. As such, it is recommended that a single project be used to assess the candidate's competence in the requirements of all three outcomes. It is at the discretion of the centre however whether a single assessment is used or whether several assessments are used, in stages, matching the sequence of the outcomes.

It is intended that delivery of this unit be based on practice with a suitable and sufficiently wide range of exercises, simulations and case studies to support this approach. Where possible all assessments should be based on real project requirements and developments. Where this is not possible or there is a shortfall in the scope for assessment purposes then this can be replaced or supplemented with case-study material provided by the centre. Candidates should be given project management experiences which are as real as possible.

Centres and candidates may find the HM Treasury's Green Book guidance on appraisal and evaluation a useful reference source for this unit. It is particularly relevant to project managers operating in the public sector.

The choice of project management methodology, eg PRINCE2, DSDM is at the discretion of the centre. However the project management processes and techniques taught within this unit should provide a straightforward and practical approach for managing and controlling projects. The methodology selected should provide a consistent approach and enable candidates to maintain sufficient management control and determine facts about progress, risks and achievements.

In-depth study and application of project planning and scheduling techniques is not required for this unit. Straightforward techniques should be used to produce an initial project plan which presents a timeline identifying key project tasks, milestones and deliverables. For example, the project plan could be produced using spreadsheet software and presented as a Gantt chart. For candidates who wish to progress to develop the skills to develop and manage a project plan using commercially available project management software such as MS Project there are other units in the SQA Advanced portfolio specifically designed for this purpose.

Opportunities for developing core skills

There may be opportunities to gather evidence towards core skills in this unit, although there is no automatic certification of core skills or core skills components.

All practical teaching and learning activities provide a context for developing and enhancing all five core skills, in particular some of the core skills components in *Communication*, *Working with Others* and *Problem Solving*. For example, many discrete core skill elements can be developed within the context of assessment. For example, the use of technology as a tool to support budgeting, planning, record keeping and presentation of reports is central to the award. Also, planning, organising and evaluating work and listening and talking with a wide range of people is essential.

IT and Numeracy may feature strongly depending on the nature of the project selected and on the sector of commerce or industry of relevance to the candidate.

Open learning

This unit is suitable for delivery by open or distance learning methods provided that any necessary additional planning and resources are made available 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. For further information and advice, please see *Assessment and Quality Assurance for Open and Distance Learning* (SQA, February 2001 — publication code A1030.

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

Unit title: Project Management: Project Justification and Planning

The purpose of this unit is to provide you with an introduction to the knowledge and skills required to develop an initial project idea through to production of a sound business case for the project which can, if required, be presented to your organisation's senior decision makers for approval prior to implementation.

It is recommended that you, in agreement with your line manager and tutor, select a suitable project at your place of work which can be used as the basis of development and assessment across all three outcomes of this unit. If this is not possible or the project is not suitable for assessment purposes then a simulated or case-study based project will be provided by the centre.

In Outcome 1 you will learn how to develop an initial project idea through to production of a rationale for a project which provides sufficient justification for the project to be given approval to proceed to a fuller development of the business case. This includes your ability to investigate and articulate the context in which the project is to be developed and delivered.

In Outcome 2 you will progress onto the development of a case to support the viability of a project proposal. You will do this through the application of a process of options appraisal. Included in this process is the valuing of costs and benefits and assessing risks for each of a number of project options. In addition to identifying and quantifying sources of funding or income to the project you will use budgeting techniques to calculate the costs of resources during the lifetime of the project. This will be followed by calculating the value of the project benefits and enable you to analyse costs against benefits. Using the risk assessments and costing techniques you will be able to provide data for each option which will enable an appraisal of the options, aid your selection and recommendation of a preferred option and demonstrate affordability and value for money.

Finally Outcome 3 will enable you to establish the project operating environment and to present an outline project plan. This includes selecting and describing the processes that you will adopt for the management of a project. Decisions at this stage include the organisation structure for the project and identification of key roles and responsibilities. Reporting arrangements, including regularity and nature of communications between the key roles and individuals, need to be clarified. As do the specific performance measurement, record keeping and audit requirements of your project. Project planning techniques will be used to produce a project plan which presents a timeline identifying key project tasks, milestones and deliverables.

You will learn these skills by means of formative practical exercises throughout, and be assessed either at the end of each outcome or with summative assessments incorporating two or more of the three outcomes. In order to complete this unit successfully you will be required to achieve a satisfactory level of performance in all assessed work.

This unit is designed to support you in your current project management role. It may provide you with the first steps in the development of your project management skills and enable you to progress in due course to other widely recognised professional project management qualifications such as PRINCE2 and the Diploma in Programme and Project Management.