

SQA Advanced unit specification: general information

Unit title: Management Research

Unit code: HW8T 48

Superclass: AG

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Unit purpose

The purpose of this unit is to enable candidates to develop the research skills and underpinning knowledge required to carry out research into issues which affect the management of an organisation. It gives candidates the opportunity to gain practical experience of planning and carrying out an investigation. It also enables them to develop skills in analysing the results of their work and using these results to make realistic recommendations.

The unit is aimed at candidates who have current experience of working in a position with management responsibilities or who are returning to management after a break. It is also suitable for those who do not presently have current management experience but have undertaken previous study of management and have realistic aspirations of taking up a management role in the future. Successful completion of this unit will provide a foundation for further study of management at SCQF level 8 or above.

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

- 1 Plan and conduct a research investigation.
- 2 Analyse the results of a research investigation.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

It is recommended that candidates undertaking this unit possess good communication skills to a level equivalent to at least SCQF level 6. It would be beneficial also if candidates had some knowledge of management and business principles. This could be evidenced by achievement of SQA Advanced units in Management at SCQF level 7 and SCQF level 8 such as the SQA Advanced units *Develop Self Management Skills* and *Management: Plan, Lead and Implement Change*.

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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.*

Core Skills

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes of this unit specification.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components 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.

The assessment exemplar for this unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable and practicable instrument of assessment. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the assessment exemplar to ensure a comparable standard. Assessment exemplars are available on SQA's secure website.

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.

Please refer to *Knowledge and/or skills for the unit* and *Evidence requirements for the unit* after the outcomes.

Outcome 1

Plan and conduct a research investigation.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Formulating a research proposal
- ◆ Literature review
- ◆ Research methods
- ◆ Data collection and management

Outcome 2

Analyse the results of a research investigation.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Reliability and validity
- ◆ Data analysis
- ◆ Conclusions and recommendations

Evidence requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to meet all knowledge and/or skills items of both outcomes. Candidates will be expected to carry out research into a management issue affecting an organisation and analyse, and draw conclusions from the data which they collect. They will also be expected to make recommendations to management in the organisation on the basis of their conclusions.

The evidence should demonstrate that candidates can:

- ◆ prepare and justify a proposal for research which is practical and feasible in terms of available resources and time scales
- ◆ conduct a literature review appropriate to topic of the research investigation
- ◆ select research methods suitable for the investigation and justify the choice by considering the advantages and disadvantages of those chosen for the investigation
- ◆ make use of valid and relevant methods to gather quantitative and qualitative data and primary and secondary data
- ◆ justify the choice of methods of data collection by giving advantages and disadvantages of the methods chosen with respect to the investigation being undertaken

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- ◆ draw and justify conclusions based on an analysis of all the data collected and the evaluation of it
- ◆ put forward realistic recommendations which are based on the conclusions and which are practical and feasible for the organisation

When providing justification candidates should demonstrate that they are aware of underpinning theory relating to research methodology.

SQA Advanced unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Management Research

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

The unit may form part of a group award or be completed as a free-standing Unit.

It is suitable for candidates who wish to develop their management capabilities, specifically by enhancing their research skills. It is also suitable for candidates who wish to prepare themselves for a new managerial role, perhaps one in which they will be required to explore issues which face management in an organisation. It may therefore be undertaken on a stand-alone basis or in combination with other units as part of a management development programme designed for a particular situation.

Where candidates are employed, they may well be able to apply the unit to real work situations, perhaps by planning and carrying out an investigation which is relevant to the current situation of their organisation. However, this unit can also be taken by candidates who are not yet in a suitable occupational role but who hope to assume such a position at some point in the future. Candidates in this situation may be able to investigate an issue in an organisation on behalf of existing management.

This is essentially a practical unit and does not contain significant amount of new content for candidates with prior investigation experience. Nevertheless, candidates are likely to benefit from input on topics such as:

- ◆ idea generation
- ◆ research methodologies and strategies, eg experiment, survey, case study and action research
- ◆ reliability and validity
- ◆ different types of data — qualitative, quantitative, primary, secondary
- ◆ referencing approaches, eg Harvard
- ◆ availability of research materials — candidates could meet with library/information staff to gain understanding of the various supports available to the research process

The above underpin both outcomes of the unit.

It is common for management research to be presented in the form of a management report. Candidates are not required to present their work as a report, although they can do so if they wish. However, they should be aware of the format which management reports take. One way to structure reports is to use the following headings:

- ◆ title page — report title, author, date
- ◆ acknowledgements
- ◆ declaration of own work (centres may wish to include a signed declaration from the candidate to confirm the authenticity of the work)
- ◆ contents page

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- ◆ introduction — to include background to the organisation and the issue under investigation. Objectives of the study should also be included
- ◆ literature review — demonstrating an awareness and understanding of appropriate theories, current literature and practice
- ◆ methodology — providing a justification and outline of the methodology used
- ◆ findings — from both primary and secondary sources
- ◆ discussion of results
- ◆ conclusions
- ◆ recommendations
- ◆ action plan
- ◆ references — using standard academic conventions, eg Harvard referencing system
- ◆ bibliography
- ◆ appendices

Guidance on the delivery of this unit

This unit can be delivered through a combination of lecturer-mediated discussion and 1:1 interactions. The former can be used at the beginning of the delivery sequence to cover topics such as research methodologies. The latter are likely to take up the bulk of the delivery time and can be used to provide support to candidates and discuss work. They can also play a key part in ensuring authenticity.

Delivery can be in a traditional face-to-face environment or using a virtual learning environment or by various combinations of the two such as classroom interaction augmented by an online forum.

The choice of delivery methods for the unit is particularly important as the unit lends itself to learning and teaching approaches which make it possible for candidates to produce suitable assessment evidence as they work through the unit. Candidates could, for example, be encouraged to write a blog or maintain a learning diary. They could, as an integral part of the learning and teaching process, be given guidance on how to structure and organise their material so that it is in a form which can easily be presented for assessment purposes.

Hence, in devising suitable delivery methods, it may be helpful to bear in mind that evidence for assessment can be generated in many different ways, including:

- ◆ presentations and other non-written assessments, eg group presentation, individual presentation, production of artefact, eg poster, video, audio, role play, debate and discussion, residential periods
- ◆ writing assignments, eg e-portfolios, learning journals, project documentation, diaries, reading logs, blogs and reflexive notebooks
- ◆ collaborative work, eg projects, posters; events, work experiences, residential exercises and field events
- ◆ making use of new technology, eg blogs, wikis, social media tools, VLE, e-portfolios

Methods such as those above link learning and teaching methods directly with the generation of assessment evidence so that they become part and parcel of the same thing. The categories are not mutually exclusive, eg a VLE may be used as a vehicle for debate and discussion.

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In this unit, for example, candidates could work their way through using a number of specific items which could be used as part of an assessment portfolio. Examples include:

- ◆ research idea pro forma with tutor feedback
- ◆ a template for a research proposal — again with tutor feedback
- ◆ a brief literature review
- ◆ submission of questionnaires, survey and other data collection methods for comment (candidates could include drafts and final versions)
- ◆ comments on the reliability and validity of data as well as data quality and availability

The above can also help a tutor to check that candidates are on the right lines as well as providing opportunities to give feedback. For example, a literature review can help to ensure that the candidate has a reasonable grasp of the subject area and that the research is being conducted in an informed manner. Candidates may also be able to share information and comment on each other's work through a VLE.

Guidance on the assessment of this unit

This unit lends itself to holistic assessment. The two outcomes and their associated knowledge and/or skills items in this unit are very closely linked and, if at all possible, the method of assessment should take both of them together.

Candidates may generate evidence for this unit in a number of different ways and should be encouraged to provide evidence in a format which suits their particular situation.

This unit lends itself to an assessment approach whereby candidates generate evidence during the delivery of the unit and gather it together in a portfolio. If they have access to suitable systems, they could develop an e-portfolio. A portfolio-based approach like this can facilitate combined assessment between this unit and other units particularly those relating to strategy.

Sources of suitable evidence for portfolios could include:

- ◆ personal statements by candidates in response to learning and teaching exercises
- ◆ a research proposal on a template issued to candidates
- ◆ a literature review undertaken at an early stage of the unit
- ◆ contributions by candidates to discussion forums and/or to social networking sites
- ◆ wikis developed by candidates
- ◆ extracts from a blog or blogs written by candidates
- ◆ research diary kept by the candidate
- ◆ a set of recommendations to management based on the results of the research

The above could stem directly from the learning and teaching programme and the associated activities carried out by candidates. However, evidence may also be available from a candidate's place of work where the candidate carries out research in her/his own organisation. It might be possible also to generate evidence through residential periods or 'away days'. A viva or mini-viva could be used to supplement and/or augment portfolio evidence which could also incorporate peer assessment and evidence generated through collaborative work, eg a poster display of research methodologies or of the analysis of the investigation.

Candidates could be given a set of questions or headings to assist them in structuring their response. This could help them to ensure that their work generated

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sufficient and suitable evidence to meet the evidence requirements. The above gives some indications of how this might be done, eg through a research template.

If candidates do adopt a portfolio-based approach, it is good practice to ensure that they have the opportunity to make use of a report format. This could be done, as suggested above, by a short report to management which focuses on the recommendations. This would give candidates valuable practice in ensuring that they present reports concisely and clearly and concentrate directly on the issues with which others are concerned. This approach has the merit of enabling candidates to produce a focused management report and can avoid the danger of a report becoming artificially skewed by the need to fully incorporate all the evidence needed for the unit. It can be presented elsewhere in the candidate's portfolio.

Gathering evidence for this unit is likely to work best if candidates carry out an investigation in an organisation with which they are familiar. They do not necessarily have to hold a management position in the organisation. Candidates who are not currently in employment may be able to approach an organisation and carry out an investigation in it. Alternatively, they may be able to make use of organisations with which they have connections such as charities, voluntary organisations or sports/social clubs.

If desired, it would be possible to assess this unit by generating assessment towards the end of the unit. This could be achieved by a narrative report which incorporates all aspects of the research from initial proposal to recommendations. Essentially, candidates adopting this approach would bring all their work together in one document. When doing so, they could follow the management report format outlined above. This would cover all aspects of the research, although they may find it helpful to make use of appendices to ensure that all aspects of the Evidence Requirements are covered.

Assessment Guidelines

Outcomes 1 and 2

Candidates are required to investigate, analyse, conclude and recommend solutions to a management issue affecting an organisation with which they are familiar. The assessment places responsibility on the candidate to:

- ◆ identify a matter for research
- ◆ plan for the research
- ◆ conduct the research
- ◆ prepare a report and action plan reflecting the research findings

Support could be provided through group discussion in the early stages of delivery to help identify a research topic thereafter it is envisaged that support would consist of 1:1 tutorials to discuss work and ensure authenticity. Tutors should be alert to the level of supervision given to a candidate to ensure that the responsibility remains with the candidate.

The unit lends itself to an assessment approach whereby candidates generate evidence during the delivery of the unit and gather it together in a portfolio or e-portfolio.

Online and Distance Learning

The above guidance on delivery and assessment indicates there are considerable opportunities for Online and Distance Learning and Assessment in this unit. In addition, material prepared by the SQA to support this unit is available in electronic format.

It is possible, therefore, to co-ordinate a learning and teaching/assessment programme through a VLE which would, if desired, also allow geographically dispersed candidates to initiate, develop and maintain contact with each other. The SQA support material also allows for a more traditional distance learning approach for candidates who prefer to learn in this way.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

Depending on the learning and teaching/assessment approaches adopted, both outcomes of this unit provide opportunities for developing the three components of the Core Skill of *Communication* at SCQF level 6 and three components of *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6.

Communication: Oral Communication at SCQF level 6

Candidates may be asked to give a presentation on various aspects of their research, eg research methodology; analysis of results to other members of the group in a manner which conveys essential information and ideas. The research may be complex and candidates may also respond to questions or queries from others. In some cases, candidates may give a presentation, eg on their recommendations to senior management in an organisation. Candidates may also contribute to debates and discussions or participate in a viva, all of which will require them to use vocabulary, register and sentence structure appropriate to the audience involved.

Communication: Written Communication (Reading) at SCQF level 6

In order to complete the unit, candidates will have to become familiar with current thinking on research methodology and on their research topic, for which they have to provide a literature review. This will require them to read written text and summarise their findings in a structured and coherent fashion. The literature review is an Evidence Requirement for the unit but candidates could summarise their understanding by posting messages to others through a VLE or in a blog or in a written report produced for assessment purposes.

Communication: Written Communication (Writing) at SCQF level 6

In order to complete the unit, candidates will have to generate evidence to demonstrate that they have achieved both outcomes. This could take the form of a management report which presents the results of their analysis of their research findings, draws conclusions and makes recommendations. In this, they will be expected to present their work in a suitable manner using a recognised format. There are alternative ways to present written evidence such as by personal reports or by contributions to an online forum. Whatever approach is adopted, candidates will be required to organise a substantial body of material and make use of complex language and specialist vocabulary.

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Problem Solving: Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6

In order to complete the unit, candidates will have to identify key factors in relation to their research topic. In order to draw valid conclusions and make feasible recommendations they will have to assess the relevance of all these factors and decide on their relative importance. They will have to justify these recommendations in terms of their analysis and show how they are practical and realistic as far as the organisation is concerned.

Problem Solving: Planning and Organising at SCQF level 6

In order to complete the unit, candidates will have to plan their research. This will involve a number of different strands such as deciding on a topic, carrying out a literature review, making arrangements for collecting data and so on. Candidates will have to identify the type and availability of resources required by the research which is likely to require them to engage in some search activity. Information is likely to be a key resource requirement but candidates may also need human and physical resources.

Problem Solving: Reviewing and Evaluating at SCQF level 6

In order to complete the unit, candidates will have to draw conclusions and make recommendations. In order to do this they will have to review their work and evaluate the results of their work. Otherwise, they will not be able to make recommendations which are realistic, practical and feasible.

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.

History of changes to unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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

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

General information for candidates

Unit title: Management Research

This is a one credit (8 SCQF credit points) unit at SCQF level 8 and is designed to enable you to develop the research skills you will need to enable you to carry out research into issues which affect the management of an organisation with which you are familiar. It gives you the chance to gain practical experience of planning and carrying out an investigation into a management topic currently relevant to the way in which an organisation is managed. As well as planning and carrying out research, the unit enables you to develop skills in analysing the results of your work and using them to draw conclusions and make realistic recommendations.

The unit will, therefore, contribute to your development as a manager. If you have current management experience it will help you to explore and reflect on issues which affect management in an organisation. It will give you insights into how your organisation can tackle issues by gathering evidence which can help to suggest suitable ways forward. It may also enable you to make recommendations which could be of benefit to your organisation. If you are not yet in a management position, the unit can help to prepare you for the time when you take up management responsibilities. This unit gives you the opportunity to carry out research in an organisation and it can thus help you to see the types of issues which managers face and for which they have to find solutions. You can base your research on an organisation that you are familiar with and, again, this may enable you to make recommendations which are beneficial to it. The unit can help you gain vital background for a management role and help you to meet the challenges and demands of it. Also, if you have worked as a manager in the past but have not done so for a little while, the unit can help you review your experience and update it in the light of recent developments.

The unit has two outcomes. The first concentrates on planning and carrying out management research. It introduces you to critical aspects of good research practice such as reviewing relevant literature. It also covers different types of research methodology and techniques of data collection. If you have already undertaken research you will be able to build on and enhance the knowledge and skills you have already acquired. The second outcome moves on the later stages of research activity and looks at analysing the results you have obtained. It encourages you to explore the value of your data and to draw conclusions from it. On the basis of these conclusions you will be expected to make practical and realistic recommendations to management of the organisation in which you have undertaken your research.

This is very much a practical unit although you will be given input on research methods, techniques of data collection and so on. Mostly, however, you will be actually working on your research. You can base your work on any organisation you wish and can choose any management topic, although you do need to make sure that it has sufficient scope to enable you to generate enough evidence for the unit. Your tutor will be able to give you advice to ensure that this does happen.

For successful completion of this unit, you will be required to provide evidence that you can plan and carry out management research and, after analysing the results, draw conclusions and make recommendations based on your research work. You can present your evidence in a number of ways including a management report summarising all aspects of your research. Alternatively, you may be able to generate suitable evidence from your learning as you work through the unit. This could involve you in using other formats to present your evidence such as a personal blog or a research diary. Your tutor will explain exactly what is expected of you.

You will complete the unit if the evidence which you submit for assessment is considered satisfactory in terms of the standard set by the unit.