

SQA Advanced Unit Specification

General information

Unit title: Service Design: User Research

Unit code: J5XA 47

Superclass: BA

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Version: 01

Unit purpose

This unit provides a foundation for the study and practice of user-centred service design. It introduces the key approaches and principles of user research within a service design process. A variety of methods used in user research will be explored and evaluated, and a small research project will be completed. The unit is relevant for those who wish to develop service design skills and explore how these can be applied across public and private sector services. It is particularly relevant to those already in a professional role with some responsibility for service delivery. It is provided as an introductory unit for the Professional Development Award (PDA) in Service Design.

Outcomes

On successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- 1 explain the role of user research in service design
- 2 justify choices of user research methods for varying service design scenarios
- 3 undertake a small-scale user research project

Credit points and level

1 SQA unit credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7).

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Recommended entry to the unit

Access to this unit will be at the discretion of the centre. There are no specific requirements necessary prior to undertaking this unit.

Core Skills

Achievement of this unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Complete Core Skill Problem Solving at SCQF level 6

There are also opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills which are highlighted in the **support notes** section of this unit specification.

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.

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.

Statement of standards

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Acceptable performance in this unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

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.

Learners 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

Explain the role of user research in service design.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ research purposes
- ◆ application in professional contexts
- ◆ rationale for user research
- ◆ best practice
- ◆ bias
- ◆ examples and case studies

Outcome 2

Justify choices of user research methods for varying service design scenarios.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ visual techniques
- ◆ service field trips
- ◆ observations and walkabouts
- ◆ vox pops
- ◆ pop up research methods
- ◆ user interviews

Outcome 3

Undertake a small-scale user research project.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ planning a user research approach
- ◆ scope
- ◆ ethics
- ◆ quantitative procedures and qualitative procedures
- ◆ primary and secondary user research
- ◆ results analysis and presentation

Evidence requirements for this unit

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills across all outcomes by showing that they can create a portfolio evidencing a small-scale user research project. This portfolio of work should provide a full explanation of all stages from planning to presenting the results, and should detail the following:

- ◆ An explanation of the role of user research within the design process including an outline of primary and secondary and qualitative and quantitative research, the differences, value and benefits of each and how they can work together
- ◆ An outline of and rationale for a small-scale user research project within your professional practice
- ◆ An outline plan of your user research. This plan must include evidence of project planning considerations such as scope, environment, ethical and inclusive practices and elimination of bias.
- ◆ Description of the user research methods chosen for your project with reference to phases in the design process
- ◆ A description and analysis of the user selection
- ◆ Evaluation of and justification for the methods chosen in comparison to other possible methods with reference to phases in the design process
- ◆ An analysis of the results, outcomes or conclusions arrived at as a result of the project
- ◆ Evidence of sharing and communication throughout the project highlighting any examples of best practice
- ◆ An outline of two case studies investigating user research in relation to the chosen methods, project subject or professional practice sector
- ◆ A bibliography demonstrating research into examples of current service design practice

The portfolio can be presented in a variety of formats and include many file types. Explanations should be clear and concise with still images or video capture to highlight visual techniques used. Oral presentation is not necessary.

Evidence should be created under open-book conditions over an extended timescale. Measures should be taken to ensure the authenticity of the learner's work.

Support notes

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Unit support notes are offered as guidance and 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 specialist unit is designed to allow learners to build up knowledge and understanding of user research in service design. This research should be current, informed by best practice, and ethical.

The rationale behind the use of user research will be explored along with observational and interviewing techniques and how to communicate the results of research.

Outcome 1 is about the role of user research in service design processes. Learners can contextualise this to their own workplace. This outcome introduces the rationale for any user research, roles of user research and best practice using case study examples. The importance of eliminating bias should also be covered.

Outcome 2 focusses on various techniques which involve getting out and about and observing users. Various user research methods can be investigated and then utilised in the learner's own user design project. Walkabouts, vox pops — short and spontaneous video interviews with users — and pop up research methods are explained as a means to interviewing large numbers of users in a less formal setting.

Outcome 3 is a practical outcome where the learner undertakes a small-scale user research project implementing the knowledge and skills gained in the previous outcomes. Achievement of the evidence requirements should be demonstrated through collation of a project portfolio. Topics such as scope should be discussed, in order that the learner chooses a feasible scale of project. Guidance should also be given on ethics and inclusion.

Useful texts and related media:

All links correct at time of publication.

Stickdorn, M. et al. (2018) *This is Service Design Doing*, Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, Inc, Chapter 5

Hall, E. (2013) *Just Enough Research*, A Book Apart

Nielsen, L. (2014) *Personas*, Interaction Design Foundation

<https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/book/the-encyclopedia-of-human-computer-interaction-2nd-ed/personas>

Polaine, A., Lovlie, L., Reason, B. (2013) *Service Design: from Insight to Implementation*, Rosenfeld Media, Chapters 3 and 4

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Portugal, S. (2013) *Interviewing users: How to Uncover Compelling Insights*, Rosenfield Media

Travers, A. (2013) *Interviewing for Research* <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/interviewing-for-research/InterviewingForResearch.pdf>

Video: Understanding Personas- An Interview with Alan Cooper
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7ljzXB40hw>

Empathy Maps: A Complete Guide to Crawling Inside Your Customer's Head
<http://www.copyblogger.com/empathy-maps/>

Sharing User Research Findings
<https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/user-research/sharing-user-research-findings>

User Research for Government Services: 8 Strategies that Worked for Us
<https://userresearch.blog.gov.uk/2015/01/21/user-research-for-government-services-8-strategies-that-worked-for-us/>

Guidance on approaches to the delivery of this unit

This unit would be best delivered in conjunction with the unit J5XB 47 *Service Design: Tools and Methods*, which covers closely related topics such as personas and empathy mapping.

The recommended timescale for delivery of this unit is 40 hours. The optimal model for delivery is over five weeks, including an intensive 'boot camp' format over two days. This boot camp should be 'hands on', 'learn by doing' and would demonstrate the use of a range of service design tools and methods with a group of fellow learners. The practical exercises in the boot camp will be focused around a real challenge brought by a client.

Learners unable to attend the two day intensive course will be required to complete a range of activities in their own workplace in order to meet the evidence requirements for the unit. For example, they can obtain photographic evidence by holding an event to deal with a real scenario in their workplace. All learners are further supported by self-directed learning online.

This unit can be delivered and supported in a variety of ways. Examples include: online, making use of discussion forums, blogs and online project management tools; or in a blended environment partly online but with access to tutors, webinars, lectures and practical events.

Class activities will include working in small groups. Use of Interactive digital resources such as blogs, discussion forums, chat applications, social media and other interactive resources would be beneficial and can contribute to evidence gathering. Learners will achieve more by sharing and discussing ideas.

Learners will be encouraged wherever possible to use video capture, photographic images, sketches, and diagrams throughout to help them to collate a portfolio of work.

Guidance on approaches to assessment of this unit

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

This unit is best assessed in a holistic manner with the knowledge and skills developed in Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 being applied to the project in Outcome 3. There may be opportunities to integrate assessment for outcomes in this unit with those in the unit J5XB 47 *Service Design: Tools and Methods*.

The learner will complete a small project and present the process and results in a portfolio of work. The portfolio will be collated under open-book conditions over an extended timescale. The role of the tutor will be as a mentor: to provide guidance, suggestions and feedback. The tutor should monitor the project rationale, purpose and scope in the initial stages in order to ensure that it is possible for all results to be analysed in the given timescale. The project will be contextualised to the learner's workplace or an organisation that they are familiar with.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

Opportunities for e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this unit. By e-assessment, we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology, such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software. Centres wishing to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment — as specified in the evidence requirements — are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at: www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment.

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

There are opportunities throughout this unit to develop the Core Skills of *Communication, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Problem Solving* and *Working with Others*.

This unit has the Core Skill of Problem Solving SCQF level 6 embedded in this unit. When a learner achieves the unit, their Core Skills profile will also be updated to include this Core Skill.

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 learners

Unit title: Service Design: User Research

This section will help you to decide whether this is the unit for you by explaining: what the unit is about; what you should know or be able to do before you start; what you will need to do during the unit; and opportunities for further learning and employment.

This unit is part of the Professional Development Award (PDA) in Service Design at SCQF level 7 and is designed to introduce you to the practice of conducting user research for service design. The unit will provide you with the opportunity to develop an understanding of current methods and approaches of research that enable us to gain rich insights on people's needs, problems and motivations.

In this unit, there is an emphasis on appreciating and understanding the practical and professional contexts of such research, and effective ways of communicating our findings. Learners will be expected to seek out examples of practice and to engage with discussions around them in this fast changing and dynamic field.

The unit provides an opportunity to practice the methods and approaches learned in a real context, by undertaking a small-scale user research project. You will be supported and encouraged to share your insights and reflections with fellow learners in a collaborative way.

The unit will be assessed through a portfolio of evidence which you will gather as you carry out the user research project.

There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Communication*, *Problem Solving*, *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* and *Working with Others* although there is no automatic certification of these skills.

This unit has the Core Skill of Problem Solving SCQF level 6 is embedded in this unit. When a learner achieves the unit, their Core Skills profile will also be updated to include this Core Skill.