

Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Public Relations 1: Functions and Applications

Unit code: D7M8 34

Unit purpose: This Unit is about studying and analysing the key functions of Public Relations as a part of a corporate communications strategy. This Unit may be used with a wide range of candidate groups to introduce them to the theory and practice of Public Relations.

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

1. Demonstrate an understanding of Public Relations services
2. Evaluate the contribution of corporate identity programmes to the success of the organisation
3. Analyse strategies for customer care

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

SCQF (the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) brings Scottish qualifications into a single framework of 12 levels ranging from SQA Access 1 to doctorates. The SCQF includes degrees; HNC/Ds; SQA National Qualifications; and SVQs. Each SQA Unit is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at a specific level. 1 SCQF point = 10 hours of learning. HN candidates are normally expected to input a further number of hours, matched to the credit value of the Unit, of non-contact time or candidate-led effort to consolidate and reinforce learning.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Access to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre. It would be beneficial if the candidate had skills in communication as shown by possession of at least one of the following:

- National Unit EE3T 12 (7110055) *Communication (NC)*
- Higher *English and Communication* or its component Units

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.

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 Support Pack (ASP) for this unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable and practicable assessment. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the ASP to ensure a comparable standard. A list of existing ASPs is available to download from SQA's website (<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/46233.2769.html>).

Higher National Unit specification: General information for centres (cont)

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Assessment: This Unit could be assessed with one set of structured questions, one project involving written analysis and a written assignment. Because of the introductory nature of this Unit it does not lend itself to either a holistic approach or a project that combines all the Outcomes.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Public Relations 1: Functions and Applications

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

Demonstrate an understanding of Public Relations services

Knowledge and/or skills

- The definitions of Public Relations, Advertising and Marketing
- How Public Relations functions as part of the marketing mix
- The different operations used by a particular organisation on its internal and external publics
- Types of specialist agencies and typical range of services

Evidence requirements

The candidate will need evidence to demonstrate his/her knowledge and/or skills by showing that he/she can:

- describe the differences between Public Relations, Advertising and Marketing
- explain using examples of genuine organisations how Public Relations functions as part of the marketing mix
- describe the different strategies used for internal and external publics by a particular organisation
- describe the types of specialist agencies and their range and types of service

Written evidence of a minimum of 800 words will be generated under closed-book, supervised conditions. Oral evidence should last for a minimum of ten minutes.

Assessment guidelines

Structured questions will enable the candidate to demonstrate that he/she can provide a clear, detailed and correct understanding of Public Relations Services.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Public Relations 1: Functions and Applications

Outcome 2

Evaluate the contribution of corporate identity programmes to the success of the organisation

Knowledge and/or skills

- The various elements of corporate identity
- Corporate identity and its relationship with the various elements of a corporate communications programme
- Reasons for altering corporate identity

Evidence requirements

The candidate will need evidence to demonstrate his/her knowledge and/or skills by showing that he/she can:

- understand the purpose of corporate identity
- identify various elements of the corporate identity
- present evidence of a clear and accurate evaluation of the Public Relations function of Corporate Identity and its place in the Corporate Communications Strategy.

Evidence will take the form of an analysis of a situation in which a particular organisation has altered its corporate identity.

Assessment guidelines

Ideally the candidate should analyse a recent real life case but it is equally acceptable to use a well constructed case study.

Outcome 3

Analyse strategies for customer care

Knowledge and/or skills

- Communication theory
- Communication skills
- Customer care policies
- Establishing and maintaining client relationships
- Internal and external complaints procedures of an organisation

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Public Relations 1: Functions and Applications

Evidence requirements

The candidate will need evidence to demonstrate his/her knowledge and/or skills by showing that he/she can:

- analyse the impact of complaints on organisations
- analyse the impact of customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction
- analyse the potential impact of an organisation's reputation and profitability of its customer care policies and procedure
- identify strategies for customer care
- evaluate methods used by a particular organisation in dealing with external and internal publics.

Evidence will take the form of an analysis of the customer care strategies of an organisation.

Assessment guidelines

Ideally, the candidate should analyse a recent real life case but it is equally acceptable to use a well constructed case study.

Administrative Information

Unit code: D7M8 34

Unit title: Public Relations 1: Functions and Applications

Superclass category: BA

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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Public Relations 1: Functions and Applications

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 is a specialist Unit, based on the theory of public relations in an integrated corporate communications context.

The Unit encourages candidates to study and analyse how the theory of Public Relations is applied in different organisations.

The Unit should not be seen as purely theoretical. The ability to analyse and evaluate are also key skills of the Public Relations practitioner used to control the Public Relations function and measure Public Relations activity.

Candidates may be familiar with definitions of Public Relations, Advertising and Marketing from other related Units. It is important that in this Unit, Public Relations is not just seen as part of the promotional mix identified in the marketing mix, but as a holistic strategic function in itself.

The corporate function of Public Relations is emphasised in Outcome 2 when the concept of identity is studied. Candidates need to understand identity and how it supports external and internal communications. Identity today must also apply to electronic media.

Candidates should relate identity to the mission statement of an organisation and the market in which it works.

Building relations with individuals as well as groups is the responsibility of all employees in an organisation. Equally employees must feel valued by management. Public Relations practitioners are being asked to use their specialism to devise procedures for internal and external complaints. Often, the most effective are based on open two-way communication.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

Case studies of organisations and their use of corporate communications will allow candidates to explore the theory of Public Relations. Although each Outcome is distinct, continuity can be achieved by studying an organisation's communications activities.

Candidates require a theoretical understanding of Public Relations activity and where it fits into a typical corporate structure in order to answer closed-book questions to complete Outcome 1.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Public Relations 1: Functions and Applications

Candidates also require an understanding of distinctive publics and their different communications needs. They must be able to match a message to a medium and a public. Candidates should be encouraged to research specialist agencies for themselves.

Before completing Outcome 2 it is preferable that candidates have studied the identity of organisations in both the profit and non-profit making sectors.

In analysing the reasons for a change of identity candidates should be looking at internal and external factors. As well as wider technological, political, social, ecological and economic environments.

Candidates should be able to relate basic design elements to ideas on image including typography, logos, colours, slogans, and layouts. Candidates should also analyse how effective a new identity is when used in new media.

In completing Outcome 3 candidates should analyse an organisation's customer care policies and procedures.

From a consumer viewpoint special attention should be focussed on equanimity of the procedure irrespective of the values of the goods or services purchased.

Internal communication is becoming increasingly important in business and is often undertaken by those with a Public Relations background. Communication pathways for internal complaints should be evaluated for their effectiveness in delivering a solution or a response. In practice, many complaint procedures are governed by lawyers protecting a company. Communicating the status of a complaint can help smooth relations.

Open learning

This Unit is underlined by a strong theoretical base of knowledge and therefore an open learning approach is possible.

The use of case studies to explore the application of Public Relations is limited when candidates cannot participate in group discussions.

There may be some copyright issues arising from reproducing corporate logos and colours for the identity question.

For further information and advice, please see *Assessment and Quality Assurance for Open and Distance Learning* (SQA, February 2001 – publication code A1030).

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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Special needs

This Unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. Special needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering special alternative Outcomes for Units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Special Assessment and Certification Arrangements for Candidates with Special Needs and Candidates for whom English is an Additional Language* (SQA, 2000).

General information for candidates

Unit title: Public Relations 1: Functions and Applications

This Unit introduces you to the functions and applications of Public Relations. You will study Public Relations as it relates to Advertising and Marketing as part of a corporate communications strategy. You will become familiar with Public Relations services and strategy, the role of corporate identity and customer care policies and procedures.

Case studies relating to actual situations will be used to illustrate and explore the theory of Public Relations. Corporate identity in both the profit and non-profit making sectors will be examined, and practical work and your own research will develop and enhance your understanding of the theoretical concepts of Public Relations.

On completion of the Unit you should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of Public Relations services
2. Evaluate the contribution of corporate identity programmes to the success of the organisation
3. Analyse strategies for customer care