

Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Interview Skills

Unit code: D7XH 35

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to develop candidates' sophisticated skills of analysis, interaction and self-presentation in the context of the interview, through preparation for and participation in simulated interviews.

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

1. Analyse the interview process
2. Produce documentation for interviews
3. Manage the role of interviewer
4. Manage the role of interviewee

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

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. However, it would be beneficial if the candidate had competence 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 Skill Communication at Higher

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 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.

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

Unit title: Interview Skills

Assessment: This Unit could be assessed in four parts. In the Outcome 1, the candidate will respond to a set of questions based on a videotaped interview. It is desirable to complete this Outcome first, providing the candidate with the underpinning knowledge required to complete Outcomes 2, 3 and 4. Assessment should take place in supervised conditions. In Outcome 2, the candidate will compile a folio of relevant interview documentation. In Outcomes 3 and 4 the candidate will take part in interviews as interviewer and interviewee, using the information prepared in Outcome 2.

This may be achieved by:

- candidates working in pairs role playing interviewer and interviewee
- the candidate conducting an actual or simulated interview.

An Assessment Exemplar pack for this Unit has been produced to indicate the national standard of achievement required at SCQF level 8.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Interview Skills

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

Analyse the interview process

Knowledge and/or skills

- Types, structures and salient features of interviews
- Purposes of interviews
- Advantages and disadvantages of interviews
- Environmental factors
- Perceptual factors
- Appropriate vocabulary, tone, register and style
- Use of non-verbal communication
- Evaluation of the use of these factors

Evidence requirements

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

- identify accurately a specific type of interview
- explain in detail the characteristic features, advantages and disadvantages
- evaluate the verbal and non-verbal communication in an interview
- comment critically on the interview as a strategy.

The candidate will view a video of an interview and answer a series of structured questions in supervised, open-book conditions. Responses may be written and/or oral.

Assessment guidelines

The candidate's response could be formed in any vocational context, such as interviewing clients or services in a Marketing or PR case study, for example, or in selecting or appraising.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Interview Skills

Outcome 2

Produce documentation for interviews

Knowledge and/or skills

- Setting goals
- Selection and editing of complex data
- Preparation of questions and responses
- Anticipation of questions and responses
- Application of appropriate format
- Use of appropriate tone
- Conventions of documentation for a range of interview types
- Presentation of documents to a professional standard
- Word processing skills

Evidence requirements

The candidate will need evidence to demonstrate his/her knowledge and/or skills by showing that he/she can produce a minimum of three written texts to support interviews.

The folio should comprise the documentation required for interviews to be conducted in Outcomes 3 and/or 4.

Assessment guidelines

Documentation for a selection interview, for example, could include a CV, a job description, a person specification and a set of questions based on the criteria set by the specification. Other interview types will require similar levels of support. The texts presented should be the original work of the candidate.

Outcome 3

Manage the role of interviewer

Knowledge and/or skills

- Welcoming
- Structuring of interview
- Clear and fluent verbal communication
- Application of appropriate questioning technique
- Use of language to control interaction
- Management of own attitudes
- Use of non-verbal communication and paralanguage
- Motivating

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Interview Skills

- Note-taking
- Summarising
- Closing
- Evaluating

Evidence requirements

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

- achieve the purpose of a given interview
- control the interview process
- interact effectively with the interviewee
- analyse and evaluate the performance of the interviewee
- record the results of the interview process accurately
- evaluate own performance.

Assessment guidelines

The candidate will be required to take part in an interview within the context of selection (role play) or investigation/information gathering, simulated or real. The candidate will be asked to complete a selected type of interview within a given period, to conduct the interview and to evaluate his/her performance. A video recording and/or use of a detailed observation checklist is recommended.

Outcome 4

Manage the role of interviewee

Knowledge and/or skills

- Use of language for effective self-presentation
- Use of non-verbal communication and paralanguage for effective self-presentation
- Response to signals
- Use of questions

Evidence requirements

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

- present himself/herself positively in interview
- contribute fully to the interview process
- evaluate own performance.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Interview Skills

Interviews must be recorded on videotape. Each candidate should produce a brief written or oral evaluation of his/her own performance in the interview.

Assessment guidelines

The candidate will be required to take part in an interview within the context of selection (role play) or investigation/information gathering, simulated or real. The candidate will be asked to undergo a selected type of interview within a given period, to respond to the interviewer and to evaluate his/her performance.

Administrative Information

Unit code: D7XH 35

Unit title: Interview Skills

Superclass category: KB

Date of publication: December 2001

Source: SQA

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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Interview Skills

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

One approach to this Unit is through the selection interview, where candidates analyse the interview process, then prepare for and conduct simulated interviews, alternating in the roles of interviewer and interviewee. Delivering the Unit in this way allows centres the opportunity to assess Outcomes 3 and 4 simultaneously, since candidates can alternate the roles of interviewer and interviewee, which they have prepared for in Outcome 2. Candidates must of course participate on a minimum of two occasions, as interviewer and interviewee, to cover Outcomes 3 and 4.

However, centres may wish to use the Unit for other purposes, such as investigative interviewing, in which case it is likely that candidates will set up real encounters with external figures. In such a case, an opportunity must still be provided in which candidates have the opportunity to be interviewed, fulfilling the requirements of Outcome 4. If an external interview is held, an assessor must be present to assess the candidate.

A helpful introduction to this Unit is to encourage candidates to recount personal experiences of interview. Not only is this entirely natural, but it also allows spontaneous discussion of shortcomings in the interview process and may prompt suggestions (to be developed) as to how these might be improved.

To prepare for Outcome 1 candidates should be introduced to various types and purposes of interviewing, including investigative and media, research and information gathering, coaching and counselling, selection, appraisal, disciplinary, grievance and termination.

Any of these options, simulated or real, is appropriate to this Unit, depending on the experience and interest of the candidate.

Candidates should be made aware of characteristic features of interviews, and of the critical factors which can influence their effect. Environmental factors include lighting, seating and positioning. Perceptual factors include the halo effect, negative bias and stereotyping. It should be clear that conventional interviews can vary in structure and approach. Questions may, for example, be biographical, based on critical incidents in a person's development, or criterion-based around a specification or remit.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Interview Skills

Candidates should also be aware of the effects of non-verbal communication and paralanguage on the success of the interviewing process. Issues such as the interviewer's management of his or her attitudes and the interviewer's use of language and paralanguage to structure and control the interview process should be considered.

In the context of the selection interview, candidates should be introduced to the many options available to employers, such as group interviews or forms of assessment in which selection interviewing itself plays a very minor role. Interviewing may be used merely for filtration, with more stringent selection methods to come. Nonetheless, candidates should realise that selection interviewing is the choice of the majority of employers, accounting for nine out of ten filled vacancies, and is perhaps the only selection method offering a two-way exchange.

While candidates should conclude Outcome 1 with a sound understanding of the possible range of interviews, candidate interest in the work to follow is most likely to be stimulated by practice in selection interviewing others, for market research or information purposes.

Even a very able candidate may have difficulty in recognising that good interview practice demands more than common sense and a pleasant manner. The emphasis throughout should be on developing sound organisational skills and respect for procedure.

Candidates should, wherever possible, negotiate the type of interview to be conducted and, if a selection interview is chosen, the type of post to interview for. The post should ideally be of a nature appropriate to the course being undertaken by candidates.

A folio of documents for Outcome 2 could include:

- a job description or brief
- a person specification describing the characteristics of the ideal candidate
- a set of questions based on the person specification
- a CV
- a decision form allowing candidates to explain whether or not the applicant has been selected and why
- a questionnaire
- an evaluation form

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Interview Skills

Practice in developing job and person specifications based on employment advertising is obviously desirable, as is distributing real life examples of these.

Candidates should be made familiar with the so-called Seven Point Plan, the standard checklist of desirable characteristics which recruitment interviewers are likely to favour and with which all designated personnel staff are familiar. Briefly, these cover applicants' suitability on the grounds of qualifications, experience, apparent intelligence, health, attitude, interests and availability.

Candidates should be introduced to CV writing software and/or CV templates in MS Word or similar office programmes.

The Internet offers very many sites dealing with interview strategy and presentation, and candidates should become familiar with these.

In the context of information gathering or investigative interviewing, candidates should have the opportunity to consider the various advantages and disadvantages of tape-recording, shorthand and note-taking, and, in real situations, should use follow-up questions at a later date where necessary.

Candidates should be made aware of question types including open, closed and probing questions, and to distinguish between constructive responses and those which depend on deflecting or fogging techniques. Candidates conducting investigative or information-gathering interviews should be particularly aware of the distinction between questions designed to elicit facts and those which are designed to obtain explanations, opinion and interpretation.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

Ideally, this Unit builds upon skills developed in HN Unit D7LP 34 *Complex Oral Presentation*, and on an understanding of perception problems in communications covered in HN Unit D7XF 35: *Interpersonal and Group Skills*. It is also useful preparation for the HN Unit A6PG 04 *Feature Writing 2*, which requires interviewing of sources.

An essential preparation for Outcome 4 is discussion of the extent to which behaviours projecting a specific impression of the interviewee can be selected and maintained. In particular, candidates should control non-verbal communication in such a way as to convey attitude, respond to signals, and, to the extent appropriate, regulate interaction.

While keeping a record on videotape for assessment purposes forms part of evidence requirements, opportunities to review on video formative work in interviewing are clearly desirable. Some sensitivity is naturally required in the extent to which footage will be for individual, small group or whole class consumption.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Interview Skills

Open learning

Delivering this Unit on an open learning basis is possible, though complicated. Outcome 2 may be completed without class attendance. Outcomes 1, 3 and 4 must be assessed in a supervised environment, under conditions where arrangements have been put in place to assure the authenticity of the candidate's work. The assessor must view performance.

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

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: Interview Skills

This Unit shows you why interviews are used, how they are conducted and how they are prepared. It gives you the opportunity to interview and be interviewed formally.

In Outcome 1, you will demonstrate your awareness of the factors that contribute to an effective interview. You will have to consider the type of interview selected, and be ready to comment on its structure and tone. You will observe a taped interview and analyse the contribution of each of these factors, evaluating its success.

Outcome 2 requires you to prepare for interviews as interviewer and/or interviewee. This involves deciding the purpose of an interview and producing the appropriate documentation.

In Outcome 3 you will conduct the interview. You will need to manage the interview throughout, structuring the interview and asking appropriate and different styles of question. You will have to take notes and evaluate the effectiveness of your performance.

Outcome 4 requires you to take the other role in an interview, that of the interviewee. You will contribute fully to the interview, and evaluate your performance – you will be recorded on video tape.

On completion of the Unit you should be able to:

1. Analyse the interview process
2. Produce documentation for interviews
3. Manage the role of interviewer
4. Manage the role of interviewee