Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Learner Support: Barriers to Learning

Unit code: DP9E 34

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to develop the candidate's ability to access and evaluate information on additional support needs and barriers to learning from a variety of sources. Candidates will be able to use this ability in the planning, delivery and presentation of their research results.

It is aimed at learning facilitators/assistants who need to access and analyse information as part of their job remit and course of study.

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

1   Identify the main barriers to learning and describe a range of support needs required by learners with additional support needs.
2   Select and use complex information from a variety of sources.
3   Plan and deliver research findings on barriers to learning through a presentation.

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

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 Access 1 to Doctorates.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Candidates should have excellent interpersonal skills and written and oral communication skills. These may be demonstrated by providing evidence of achievement equivalent to SCQF level 6/7. It would also be helpful if candidates had previous experience of study skills.

Core Skills: There may be opportunities to gather evidence towards Core Skills particularly Communication at Higher, in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

Context for delivery: This is one of a series of Units intended for candidates who are following a training programme for Learning Assistants/Facilitators who will require to carry out a number of functions to support learners with additional support needs within an educational context. This Unit is one of six Units, which form the Professional Development Award Advanced Certificate: Learner Support. This Unit will normally be delivered as part of the Group Award. However, it is a free-standing Unit and may be delivered independently for Continuing Professional Development purposes.

General information for centres (cont)

Assessment: This Unit is assessed by three different assessment methods. Outcome 1 should be assessed by a short test; Outcome 2 should be assessed by a report and Outcome 3 consists of observation of the presentation and assessment of the planning and evaluation which should be presented in a research checklist.

Higher National 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

Identify the main barriers to learning and describe a range of support needs for learners with additional support needs

Knowledge and/or skills

♦ A range of barriers to learning in an educational setting (include physical, institutional, social, cultural, systematic, historical, curricular, individual influences)
♦ A range of additional support needs (include social medical model tensions)
♦ Individual, institutional, and curricular needs and how these can be addressed
♦ Analysis of the relevance, reliability and validity of information

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills by showing that they can:

♦ describe a range of barriers to learning
♦ consider the influences
♦ identify a range of support needs within an educational setting

Assessment guidelines

Outcome 1 is assessed by a series of structured questions. The questions should require candidates to identify at least 5 barriers to learning and discuss the major influences and 5 additional support needs and how these might be addressed.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Learner Support: Barriers to Learning

Outcome 2

Select and use complex information from a variety of sources

Knowledge and/or skills

This must include:

♦   Research skills
♦   Variety of sources: case studies, interviews, print and electronic media
♦   Locating and accessing a comprehensive range of primary and secondary sources of information
♦   Accessing information from a range of electronic sources including the Internet
♦   Interview skills/techniques
♦   Interpretation of written and graphical communication
♦   Accuracy and precision in note-taking and recording information
♦   Selection and use of information
♦   Analysis of the validity, reliability and relevance of information
♦   Key websites

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills by showing that they can:

♦   identify barriers to learning
♦   identify support needs to be researched
♦   present key information on each support need
♦   propose possible strategies to overcome the barriers
♦   select and use qualitative and quantitative information
♦   provide accurate analysis
♦   evaluate the evidence

Assessment guidelines

This Outcome should be assessed by a report in an appropriate format. Candidates will be required to link additional support needs and barriers to learning using a variety of resources for 5 different support needs.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Learner Support: Barriers to Learning

Outcome 3

Plan and deliver research findings on barriers to learning through a presentation

Knowledge and/or skills

- Research objectives
- Range of research methods (sampling, surveying, questionnaires, interview)
- Plan organisation of presentation (location, audience, equipment)
- Communication aids
- Delivery appropriate to audience
- Presentation conventions
- Effective communication of research findings

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills by showing that they can:

- plan the presentation using a presentation brief
- use communication aids
- use a storyboard and/or outline script
- communicate effectively

Assessment guidelines

This Outcome is assessed by observation of the presentation and by assessment of the planning brief, using an assessment checklist which should include:

- evaluation of the remit of presentation
- addressing audience needs
- use of aids – handouts, Power Point etc
- how research objectives are met
- presentation pitched appropriately for audience
- language appropriate to audience
- key aspects of topic addressed as per brief

The audience may be drawn from the candidate's place of work and could include peers, students and work colleagues. There should be a minimum of 5 people in the audience.

Administrative Information

Unit code: DP9E 34

Unit title: Learner Support: Barriers to Learning

Superclass category: GA

Original date of publication: March 2006

Version: 01

History of Changes:

Version	Description of change	Date

Source: SQA

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Learner Support: Barriers to Learning

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 development of the PDA, Advanced Certificate: Learner Support, has been initiated as a response to changes within the FE sector influenced by the amended DDA (Disability Discrimination Act 1995) and the Beattie Inclusiveness Agenda. As a result the sector has taken a pro-active approach to ensure that it both meets the needs and encourages participation of individuals with diverse needs. To do this many of the FE colleges have employed learning facilitators/learning assistants to provide, as appropriate, support to learners with additional support needs. In the main appropriate college lecturing staff have been provided with the opportunity of further training, through the BRITE Initiative (Beattie Resources for Inclusiveness in Technology and Education) to ensure that the needs of learners can be met. It has been through this activity that the need for a training course for learning facilitators has emerged. This PDA therefore formalises training for such individuals to ensure that we are delivering a quality provision for all learners.

In Outcome 1, key barriers to learning should be discussed. Candidates should become aware of the tensions which exist between the medical model, which exists for funding purposes, and the shift towards the social model. Current thinking should also be discussed and the viewpoints of the stakeholders aired. To ensure this occurs, a balanced selection of visiting speakers is recommended along with a broad selection of recommended reading materials.

Outcome 2, this Outcome considers the importance of research/investigation skills in identifying the potential barriers to access and achievement faced by students with additional learning needs. It will also develop the candidate's knowledge and understanding of a range of learning needs and how learners can be supported to overcome these.

Outcome 3, it is important that the candidate takes a broad view of the Unit for the initial research before selecting a topic of interest for presentation. The candidate should undertake a holistic view when addressing barriers to learning and recognise that no one barrier can be viewed in isolation. However, when it comes to the main viewpoint of the presentation, the educational standpoint should be the main focus of the research for the support need selected.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

As an SQA course, the PDA or single Units can be delivered by any approved centre. However, a partnership approach is envisaged. Access Centres are best placed to deliver and assess particular aspects of training. Colleges will however require to support and mentor their learning facilitators on an on-going basis ensuring that they get access to learners, facilities and materials to support the generation of evidence for the award. The award has been designed to ensure that a higher percentage of the evidence for knowledge and skills relates to real-life practice. It is candidate centred and the delivery model should ensure that candidates develop the skill of independent learning.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Learner Support: Barriers to Learning

It is recommended that the content of this Unit is delivered by a variety of methods, eg much of the information on barriers to learning and support needs will be gained by individual research, use of visiting speakers, and information from individual candidates and observation of their own workplace rather than lecture. The information required to undertake the research and presentation will be provided by lecture and demonstration. The role of the lecturer will be to advise and guide the candidate to ensure adequate research takes place, and a balanced report is presented. A suggested reading list and web list should be provided by the lecturer.

Outcome 1

The questions set should cover a broad spectrum of barriers to learning and support needs. They will require candidates to identify at least 5 barriers to learning and discuss the major influences. Candidates will also need to identify 5 additional support needs and how these might be addressed.

Outcome 2

There is no set format for the report but it should include the following sections:

♦ five additional support needs researched
♦ key information on each
♦ five relevant barriers to learning
♦ propose alternative strategies to overcome the barriers
♦ quantitative and qualitative information
♦ analysis and evaluation of the evidence

Candidates will require to research barriers to learning and support needs and deliver their findings through a report. The breadth and depth of the research should be evident in the report and the reasoning why a particular support need was selected by the candidate for further research.

Outcome 3

The presentation should be fairly short but should demonstrate the candidate's ability to select and present relevant information to meet stated objectives. The presentation methods should meet the needs of the audience and should communicate the information effectively to the audience.

The remit of the presentation brief should include the following:

♦ the objectives of the presentation
♦ target audience
♦ location and environmental factors
♦ communication aids
♦ storyboard and/or outline script

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Learner Support: Barriers to Learning

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills in this Unit. However, there are clear opportunities to develop aspects of Communication, particularly Written Communication through the assessments for all Outcomes and Oral Communication (Outcome 3). The Evidence Requirements and assessment for Outcome 2 may allow candidates to develop aspects of the Core Skill in Problem Solving, particularly that of analysis.

Open learning

This Unit is suitable for delivery in a variety of formats including open, distance and blended learning modes.

Candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (**www.sqa.org.uk**).

General information for candidates

Unit title: Learner Support: Barriers to Learning

This Unit is designed to develop your knowledge and understanding of the potential barriers to access (to learning) and achievement faced by students with additional learning needs.

You will learn about potential barriers to learning within educational settings and how these may be overcome. You will investigate a range of barriers including physical, cultural, institutional and social. The historical context will also be explored.

You will also learn how to gather and use information and how to present information in an effective way.

Assessment will be by a short question paper, a report and a short presentation.