

Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Professional Development: Communicating and Influencing for Effective Decision Making

Unit code: DV7V 36

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to enable candidates to develop their ability to communicate information to others, including the ability to persuade others. It provides an opportunity for them to analyse frameworks for communication and information management and to reflect on what they have learned in a way that will enable them to apply their learning to improve their future effectiveness.

On completion of the Unit candidates should be able to:

- 1 Analyse the communication patterns and processes of an organisation.
- 2 Analyse the management of information for effective decision making.
- 3 Influence the behaviour of others.
- 4 Critically evaluate own contribution to the communication process.

Credit points and level: 2 HN Credits at SCQF level 9: (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 9*).

**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 well developed communication and inter-personal skills and be able to demonstrate the ability to think analytically. They should be able to use these skills to assess what they and others do and make valid conclusions from these situations.

Core Skills: There are opportunities for developing the Core Skills of Problem Solving at SCQF level 6, Working with Others at SCQF level 6, Information Technology at SCQF level 6 and Communication at SCQF level 6 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 delivery and assessment of this Unit should relate to the professional and vocational contexts that are meaningful and relevant to candidates.

General information for centres (cont)

Assessment: This Unit is about learning by analysing a situation, taking action as a result of this and reflecting on how to apply the learning from the experience. It is suitable for holistic assessment and could be assessed in a number of ways.

One possibility is a portfolio approach. Candidates can provide a portfolio of evidence that illustrates their experience of making proposals for change based on their analysis of communication and management of information. The portfolio will probably include several different types of items covering both product and process. These could be personal reflective accounts written by candidates; records of interview(s) between the assessor and candidates; feedback from others involved in the process, such as witness testimony from persons whom candidates have tried to influence; questionnaires from recipients of information on the quality of information received; organisational documents, such as reports from management information systems. It could also include tables, charts or diagrams, such as information flows within an organisation or between particular individuals.

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

Analyse the communication patterns and processes of an organisation

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Communication patterns and processes
- ◆ Communication climate
- ◆ Sources of information
- ◆ Information flows
- ◆ Barriers to communication

Evidence Requirements

Evidence Requirements and assessment guidelines for the Unit are given after Outcome 4.

Outcome 2

Analyse the management of information for effective decision making

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Characteristics of useful information
- ◆ Information and communication technology (ICT) in managing information
- ◆ Management information systems (MIS)
- ◆ Ethical and legal factors in the management of information

Evidence Requirements

Evidence Requirements and assessment guidelines for the Unit are given after Outcome 4.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

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Outcome 3

Influence the behaviour of others

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Sources of power
- ◆ Influencing strategies
- ◆ Stages in negotiation
- ◆ Negotiating behaviours and skills

Evidence Requirements

Evidence Requirements and assessment guidelines for the Unit are given after Outcome 4.

Outcome 4

Critically evaluate own contribution to the communication process

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Methods of evaluation
- ◆ Personal reflection
- ◆ Future applications of learning

Evidence Requirements

Candidates must provide evidence that covers the knowledge and/or skills items in all four Outcomes and which shows that, with respect to a decision maker in a specific situation, they can:

- 1 Analyse the way in which information is communicated to and from the decision maker — this should make reference to all knowledge and skills items in Outcome 1 and the analysis should use a suitable model of communication to illustrate the flows and sources of information available to the decision maker. It should also take account of the impact of the communication climate, patterns and processes of the organisation and the effect and importance of relevant barriers to communication (Outcome 1).
- 2 Analyse the way in which information is managed and made available to a decision maker — this should make reference to all knowledge and skills items in Outcome 2 and include an assessment of the quality of the information with respect to how well it meets the needs of the user. It should explain how relevant ethical and legal issues are addressed and the implications of them. It should also explain the relationship between the information and management information systems and how ICT is used in the provision of the information (Outcome 2).

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

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- 3 Use the analysis in 1 and 2 above to identify current strengths and weaknesses of the way in which information is communicated and how the information is managed and use these to make suggestions for change that will improve the situation (Outcome 2).
- 4 Make at least **two** attempts to influence others to accept **one** or more of the proposals for change — these attempts will involve at least **one** influencing strategy **and** negotiation. Sources of power must be identified in each case and each attempt must involve a different individual or different group of individuals. When providing evidence on influencing, candidates must justify the use of a suitable influencing strategy. When providing evidence on negotiation they must refer to suitable negotiating skills and to the stages of a negotiation (Outcome 3).
- 5 Justify each of the attempts identified in 4 above in terms of the approach taken and its relevance to the particular individuals involved and evaluate how successful each was in encouraging others to accept the proposals for change (Outcome 3).
- 6 Reflect on their own contribution to the communication process by carrying out a before and after comparison. This will include an evaluation of the changes in their knowledge and skills that have occurred as a direct result of their analysis of communication and the management of information and their experience of influencing/negotiating (Outcome 4).
- 7 Identify and justify valid ways in which they can apply their learning in the future — this should show clearly the anticipated changes that will result from the learning and the anticipated benefits to candidates (Outcome 4).
- 8 Make use of recognised methods of evaluation and techniques of reflection in their evaluation — candidates should explain why the methods and techniques that they have chosen represent a suitable approach to their particular personal evaluation (Outcome 4).

The evidence must be presented in a logical and coherent fashion that demonstrates convincingly:

- ◆ that candidates can apply relevant models and approaches to their analysis of the process of communication and the management of information
- ◆ that candidates can make use of relevant theoretical frameworks to justify and evaluate their influencing attempts
- ◆ that candidates can reflect on their own experience and make valid conclusions from this reflection on the learning that they have achieved
- ◆ that candidates can provide a reasoned justification for their analysis, evaluation and conclusions

Assessment guidelines

Candidates should be in a position to carry out the analysis of communication processes and the management of information. This could be a one-off assignment or part of an on-going responsibility.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Professional Development: Communicating and Influencing for Effective Decision Making

A portfolio approach to assessment is likely to be particularly suitable for this Unit. Candidates can make use of their experience to analyse the communication and management of information. On the basis of this analysis they can propose changes to improve communication and information flows and try to persuade others to accept the changes. This, in turn, enables candidates to evaluate what has happened and to consider how they can apply their learning to future occasions. Candidates can be asked to prepare a portfolio that contains evidence to illustrate:

- ◆ the way in which information is communicated to and from a decision maker (which may well be the candidate her or himself) — this could make use of a suitable model of communication and cover things like the flows of information to and from the decision maker, the communication climate and barriers to information
- ◆ the way in which information is managed — this can focus on the extent to which the information is of good quality (ie how well it meets the needs of the user), how it is supplied, including the use of ICT and consider the impact of legal and ethical issues
- ◆ the current strengths and weaknesses of communication and information management
- ◆ proposals for change that will improve the way information is communicated and/or how it is managed
- ◆ **two** or more attempts to use influencing and negotiation to persuade a person or persons to accept **one** or more of the proposals for change
- ◆ an evaluation of what they have learned
- ◆ ways in which they can apply their learning in the future

The portfolio is likely to include several different types of items covering both product and process. These could be personal reflective accounts written by candidates; records of interview(s) between the assessor and candidates; feedback from others involved in the process, such as witness testimony from persons whom candidates have tried to influence, organisational documents, such as reports from management information systems. It could also include tables, charts or diagrams such as information flows within an organisation or between particular individuals.

The items of evidence in a portfolio will vary between candidates as each candidate would select those items of evidence that provide the strongest analysis of communication and information management and which illustrate most effectively their attempts to persuade others to accept proposed changes. Candidates **do** need to demonstrate that they can apply suitable techniques and models, such as models of communication, characteristics of good quality information and channels of communication. However, it will be up to them to decide which tool and/or technique is most appropriate to the analysis that they undertake and the events that flow from the analysis. The emphasis throughout the portfolio should be on recording candidates' experience and actions and how candidates have evaluated what has happened, reflected on it and learned from it.

Administrative Information

Unit code:	DV7V 36
Unit title:	Professional Development: Communicating and Influencing for Effective Decision Making
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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Professional Development: Communicating and Influencing for Effective Decision Making

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 80 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This Unit is intended for candidates in a range of occupational and professional situations who are involved in a process of developing their own personal effectiveness. It focuses specifically on the contribution that they can make to improve the communication and management of information in a particular organisational context.

Candidates must, therefore, be in a situation where they can analyse the communication process within an organisation. Normally, candidates would be expected to base the Unit around themselves and the information that they use. It would be possible, however, to use another decision maker or a recognised group of decision makers and analyse their situation. In this case, candidates could approach the situation as a type of project. It may be that candidates could be given a suitable project by their line manager.

Candidates must have an opportunity to practice influencing and negotiation in order to persuade others to accept proposals made by them. This part of the Unit is unlikely to be meaningful unless candidates are in a credible position in the organisation. This could be through candidates' own job role or be through association with someone else, such as where candidates carry out a project on someone else's behalf. Candidates must, therefore, have access to suitable individuals who have an interest in the changes. It is likely to be beneficial if those involved are sceptical, as this will make any influencing and negotiation more challenging and increase the amount of learning by candidates. It is **not** necessary that influencing and negotiation be entirely successful as the Unit concentrates on making attempts and the learning gained from this.

It is vital to remember that the Unit is designed as a vehicle for learning. Its purpose is to enable candidates to analyse information and communication in a particular situation and make suggestions for improvement. In addition, candidates must reflect on what has happened and make conclusions on applying their learning in the future.

The Unit can be seen as having four main stages:

- 1 Providing candidates with background material on communication, such as models of communication (Outcome 1) and on information management, including the role of ICT (Outcome 2). This should enable them to analyse a particular situation and identify its strengths and weaknesses.
- 2 Making proposals for change on the basis of the analysis — essentially this is applying Outcomes 1 and 2.
- 3 Making attempts to persuade others to accept the change (Outcome 3) — candidates will use influencing and negotiation.
- 4 Evaluating the experience of analysis and making proposals for change (Outcome 3) and making conclusions on what is learned from it and how this can be applied in the future.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Professional Development: Communicating and Influencing for Effective Decision Making

The following notes give additional information on the knowledge and/or skills items for each of the four Outcomes.

Outcome 1

This Outcome deals with communication patterns and the communication process within an organisation and to those outside it, principally customers, although similar principles apply to any group of stakeholders, such as shareholders or others with an interest in the organisation's progress and performance. Essentially, this Outcome sets the context for the Unit as a whole. A major emphasis should be that information should meet the needs of users.

Communication patterns and processes: Candidates should recognise that there are different approaches or models of communication, such as the one-way process (Shannon-Weaver model) and the two-way process (eg Schramm; Deaux *et al*). Communication can involve facts, feelings, values and opinions and candidates should recognise the importance of distinguishing between these.

Communication climate: This refers to the extent to which the environment of an organisation is conducive to open communication — whether the climate is open or closed.

Sources of information: Information is available from many different sources. Candidates should be aware of the basic distinctions between primary, secondary, internal and external information. However, they should build on these to consider specific sources that may yield information for a particular purpose and how valuable the information from each source may be.

Information flows: Candidates should be aware of the ways in which information flows within an organisation — ie upwards, downwards, laterally — and how this affects which information is transmitted and by what methods. They should also recognise information flows to and from an organisation, so that there are both internal and external audiences for information and internal and external sources of information. Flows of information encompasses channels (or vehicles) of communication, such as many-to-many or impersonal (eg newsletter); one-to-one or personal (eg telephone conversation); one-to-many (tailored to the recipient, such as a website). Some channels are face-to-face, while others are remote and may not involve simultaneous interaction. Candidates should be able to assess the effectiveness of information flows and the costs and benefits of particular channels. This should include reference to some of the problems of communication, such as information overload, insufficient information and/or inappropriate choice of channel.

When looking at flows of information it may be helpful to also highlight different types of information, such as written, verbal, pictorial, graphical and tabular. Some types of information may be more suited to some users than others, while different types may require different channels of communication.

Barriers to communication: These should cover all channels and types of communication, although some are more likely with some types than with others. They are factors that can prevent the intended message being received and include: external and internal distractions ('noise'); language (what is said — meta-language — and how it is said — para-language); emotive language; distortion (eg when messages are transmitted through several people); stress; inappropriate skills (eg poor listening); non-verbal communication; perception and prejudice.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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Outcome 2

This Outcome enables candidates to consider the information that is available to them and others and to judge how valuable it is likely to be in making effective decisions. It involves judging the information itself and how it is made available. It may be helpful to begin by clarifying the distinction between raw data and information — information is data that has been organised in some way to meet the needs of the user. This can help candidates to recognise the part that they can play in transforming data into information and thereby create information for themselves and for others.

It overlaps with Outcome 1, which provides a context within which information can be evaluated and the processes and system used to make it available can be analysed and assessed. In some cases, it may be appropriate to combine aspects of Outcomes 1 and 2. For example, flows of information in an organisation may inform the development of management information systems.

Characteristics of useful information: These are important because they suggest criteria that can be used to evaluate how useful information is — its fitness for purpose to the user. An initial distinction can be made between hard and soft information, but all information can be judged against criteria, such as relevance; clarity; accuracy; completeness; trustworthiness; concision; timeliness; objectivity; whether it is communicated to the right person; whether an appropriate channel of communication is used; whether the value of it outweighs the cost of providing it. The implications are that, for information to meet these criteria, there will have been an attempt to assess the requirements that end users have, which could include consultation with them and collaboration with others in providing the information.

Information and communication technology (ICT) in managing information: This is not an ICT Unit and candidates are **not** expected to have relevant technical knowledge. This Unit concentrates on how ICT can be used in gathering and processing data and information. Relevant factors may be meeting the information needs of the user; updating information; methods of sending information (eg synchronous or asynchronous); relative merits of ICT compared to paper based or systems where information is managed by people. This is closely related to qualities of information. For example, the costs of obtaining information compared to the benefits gained from it may be particularly relevant when using ICT.

Management information systems (MIS): This is not an MIS Unit and, as with ICT, candidates are **not** expected to possess detailed knowledge of management information systems. Relevant factors for this Unit are the purpose of a management information system (including data capture; data processing; information communication; feedback from users); what MIS can do (initiate automatic actions; record actions; process data into reports; respond to enquiries); involving users in the design of systems; developments in systems such as expert systems and knowledge management.

Ethical and legal factors in the management of information: Privacy; confidentiality; accessibility; ownership; accountability (eg for accuracy of information); legislation on freedom of information.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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Outcome 3

This is a practical Outcome and candidates must make attempts at **both** influencing **and** negotiation. It is important that candidates choose which influencing strategy to attempt on the basis of the situation(s) that they face and what is likely to work with those who need to be persuaded to accept proposals for change.

Sources of power: These can be described in several ways, one of which is that provided by French and Raven, who identify five types of power — reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, expert. Other classifications add sources such as control of information, resource power and social connections. For this Outcome, candidates should examine the power balance between themselves and another party with whom they wish to negotiate or who they wish to try to influence.

Influencing strategies: These can be classified in several ways, one of which is to describe them as reason; assertion; exchange; courting favour; coercion; partnership. In this case, exchange can be seen as similar to negotiation. Other classifications distinguish between push and pull strategies and preparatory and preventative strategies. Candidates should recognise that the strategy used is likely to be influenced by the balance of power between the parties. This may also affect the way influencing is attempted and the skills that may be used. Clearly, for example, assertion may require assertive behaviour while listening may be much more important in reason than in coercion.

Stages in negotiation process: Preparation; opening phase; movement towards agreement; closure.

Negotiating behaviours and skills: Behaviours that successful negotiators demonstrate can include clarity of focus; flexibility of approach; establishing common ground; win-win focus. Good negotiators tend to use skills like making use of testing understanding and summarising, asking questions, commenting on motives and behaviour labelling. They tend to avoid using irritating words, defend/attack spirals, counter proposals and argument dilution.

Outcome 4

This Outcome requires candidates to evaluate their personal contribution. Primarily, this involves them in considering their analysis of the situation, the associated proposals for change and their attempts at influencing others. They should reflect on what has happened and make some conclusions from it about their own personal learning and development. A key aspect of evaluation is comparing before and after and any discussion should do this.

Methods of evaluation: These will vary between situations and between candidates. Whichever methods are used, they should help candidates to make a reflective appraisal of what has taken place and given them a basis on which to make recommendations for the future. Candidates could also make use of methods like keeping a reflective diary, maintaining a personal learning journal or reviewing events after they have happened (backwards review). It may be possible to gather information from others through questionnaires or discussions with those who have been able to observe candidates' actions. These people could be involved in providing information to candidates, be recipients of information or be those involved in some aspect of managing relevant information. They could include those who have been party to the influencing attempts by candidates. Candidates may be able to make use of organisational data (such as management reports) to inform their evaluation.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Professional Development: Communicating and Influencing for Effective Decision Making

Personal reflection: These will depend on individual candidates and what they bring to the situation. The evaluation should focus on changed knowledge and skills. The latter lends itself particularly well to external feedback from those involved in the influencing attempts.

Future applications of learning: These will vary between candidates. The critical factor, though, is to ensure that there is a direct and explicit connection between candidates' analysis of their experience and the applications which they suggest.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This Unit is one in which candidates are expected to analyse a specific situation and explore the communication and management of information. They are expected to use this analysis to identify strengths and weaknesses of the way information is communicated and managed and, on the basis of these, make proposals for change to improve the situation. They must then persuade others to accept one or more of the changes. Finally, they have to evaluate their experience and consider how to apply their learning to their future behaviour.

The delivery of the Unit should take account of the practical nature of the Unit. Candidates will have to be in a position to conduct an analysis of the communication and management of information. Normally, candidates would analyse their own situation. However, it would be possible for candidates to gather evidence for the Unit by undertaking a specific project to improve the communication and management of information. This could be a brief to improve communication between the organisation and particular external customers or between different parts of an organisation. This could be done as part of a development programme, for example.

The Unit is ideally suited to candidates with employment experience and delivery should take account of the occupational and professional background of candidates. Delivery should also recognise that communication and information management problems are often a symptom of deeper, underlying issues. This Unit concentrates on communication and candidates should be discouraged for the purposes of this Unit from moving too far away from its subject matter. It is quite possible, however, that candidates may be able to combine work on this Unit with that for other related Units, which would provide an opportunity to explore other related issues.

Delivery of this Unit is largely about facilitating candidates through the process of analysing communication and information management in a specific situation and helping them to take advantage of opportunities to produce and gather suitable evidence.

Candidates may require some input on the underpinning knowledge in Outcomes 1, 2 and 3. The underpinning knowledge for Outcomes 1 and 2 could be done at the outset of the Unit, after which candidates could carry out their analysis and make proposals for change. Candidates could then be introduced to influencing and negotiating so that the relevant principles were fresh in their minds, before they prepare for actually attempting to influence others.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Professional Development: Communicating and Influencing for Effective Decision Making

It is possible that some candidates may be conversant with the underpinning knowledge through previous study or training. For this reason, it may be helpful to begin by encouraging candidates to make a plan for the completion of the Unit. Part of the plan could involve identifying gaps in knowledge. The delivery programme could then be developed on the basis of this information. A number of options are available, including formal inputs by the deliverer, using distance learning material, setting small scale research projects for candidates, encouraging candidates with prior knowledge to pass it on to others and so on.

Inputs on influencing and negotiation could be supplemented by questionnaires, such as Tony Manning's 'Influencing Strategies and Styles Profile', which encourage users to reflect on their approach in these situations.

A significant aspect of the delivery for the Unit will involve supporting candidates in applying their underpinning knowledge and understanding. Suitable arrangements to provide this should be made. These could involve regular meetings with candidates both individually and as a group. In some cases, candidates may benefit from specific guidance and advice, perhaps on what might constitute a suitable method of influencing or who might be a suitable individual to approach. Candidates may also need support if persuasion does not result in acceptance of proposed change. If this is the case, candidates may need reassurance that this will not prejudice their success in this Unit as long as they learn from the experience and suggest ways to apply this learning in future.

Candidates will also benefit from advice on assessment. The Unit takes a holistic approach to assessment and all four Outcomes are closely connected to each other. Candidates should be able to generate evidence during all phases of the delivery of the Unit and could be encouraged to make notes and retain records of events as they proceed through the Unit.

There are no specific guidelines on what evidence candidates should present for the Unit, but it is likely that it will include items covering both product and process, such as the following:

- ◆ a narrative linking the various pieces of evidence together
- ◆ personal reflective accounts by candidates
- ◆ witness testimony from others involved, such as recipients of information or those who may be affected by proposals for change
- ◆ other feedback eg from a line manager on changes in candidates' performance or from someone candidates have tried to persuade
- ◆ records of interviews between candidates and their assessor
- ◆ notes of discussions between candidates and others, such as suppliers or recipients of information or with those involved in the management of information
- ◆ organisational documents or other records, such as company processes and procedures, examples of communication like e-mails, outputs of management information systems, records of meetings highlighting advantages and disadvantages of communication and information management, company reports
- ◆ reports produced by candidates — on proposals for change, for example
- ◆ products of reflection, such as a diagram or chart showing flows of information
- ◆ diagrams showing how theories, such as models of communication, can be used in the analysis of communication and information management

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Candidates also have a choice in how to present their evidence and, again, will benefit from advice. One possibility is to present the evidence in a portfolio. If this approach is taken, portfolios should be presented as a coherent logical whole rather than a collection of disparate items of evidence. Essentially, they are a record of the learning process that candidates have completed.

Another option is to use an extended reflective essay covering all parts of the Unit. As long as the evidence requirements are met, this can take any format with which candidates feel comfortable. Depending on the reflective style adopted, the essay could include appendices covering items such as assessments of the quality of information, communication channels, diagrams of information flows and so on.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

The Unit provides candidates with the opportunity to develop the Core Skill of Problem Solving at SCQF level 6, particularly in the areas of critical thinking and evaluating. Critical thinking can be developed through candidates' effective management of information for decision making, as well as applying appropriate strategies for influencing others. The evaluation can be developed through candidates providing an evaluation of their own contribution to the communication process.

The Unit also provides candidates with the opportunities to develop the Core Skills components of Written Communication at SCQF level 6 and Oral Communication at SCQF level 6. Written Communication can be partly developed through the use of a portfolio. Candidates will be required to read and analyse complex material, such as that related to communication patterns, processes and management. Candidates will also evaluate their own contribution to the communication process, which may come in a written form. If candidates present their evaluation orally or through a medium such as video, audio diary, etc, then they will have the opportunity to develop Oral Communication in terms of conveying an evaluation of their learning experience in a structured way. Candidates will also have opportunities throughout the Unit to develop Oral Communication in influencing the behaviour of others, which will involve seeking and responding to feedback from others.

Components of Information Technology at SCQF level 6 may be developed through using ICT systems and packages to manage information, including ensuring the security of such information.

Working with Others may also be developed at SCQF level 6 through using negotiation as a means of influencing the communication and behaviour of others. This would also involve an evaluation of candidates' personal contribution to the communication process.

Open learning

This Unit requires candidates to take responsibility for their own learning and, as such, could be delivered by Open Learning. It would be necessary to make arrangements to ensure that candidates had access to relevant material to enable them to assimilate the underpinning knowledge and understanding. Candidates may also need access to guidance and support before, during their analysis of communication and information and, particularly, when carrying out influencing and negotiation.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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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. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Alternative Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs*, which is available on SQA's website: **www.sqa.org.uk**.

General information for candidates

Unit title: Professional Development: Communicating and Influencing for Effective Decision Making

The Unit is designed to enable you to analyse the communication and information requirements of a particular situation and to make proposals for change. It also enables you to develop skills that will help you to influence the behaviour of others, particularly with respect to accepting proposals for change. You will be expected to evaluate your own experiential learning and consider how you can apply it in the future. You will be required to actually analyse a situation and propose changes that will lead to improvements in communication and/or in the way information is managed. You will then be expected to make attempts to influence people who may be affected by the change. You will use influencing **and** negotiation to do this, but you must make at least **two** attempts involving different people or different groups of people. Your evaluation will be based on your analysis and experience of influencing.

You will need to be in a situation where you can analyse the communication process within an organisation. You can base your analysis on yourself and the information you use and the communication patterns and systems associated with it. It would be possible, however, to approach the situation as a type of project and use another decision maker or a recognised group of decision makers and analyse their situation. If the opportunity arises, therefore, you could carry out an investigation within your own or another organisation. It is possible that someone could suggest a project to you.

You must make sure that the situation you analyse will enable you to practice influencing and negotiation to persuade others to accept the proposals for change that you make. Influencing and negotiation are unlikely to be meaningful unless your position is credible. Your own job role may well be sufficient to ensure that this is the case. If you carry out a project on behalf of someone else, being associated with them may well guarantee that others will take your work seriously. Clearly, for influencing and negotiation you will need access to suitable individuals who have an interest in the changes. It is likely to be beneficial if those involved are sceptical, as this will make any influencing and negotiation more challenging and increase your learning. The Unit requires that you make attempts at both influencing and negotiation. It is not necessary, therefore, that your attempts are entirely successful as you can still learn from them and consider how you can apply this learning in the future.

The assessment for the Unit requires you to produce evidence of your analysis, your proposals for change and your attempts to influence the behaviour of others as well as on your evaluation of what has happened. You must also show how you think you can apply the learning you have gained in the future.

Overall, your evidence should illustrate:

- ◆ the way in which information is communicated to and from a decision maker (which may well be you) — this could make use of a suitable model of communication and cover things like the flows of information to and from the decision maker, the communication climate and barriers to information
- ◆ the way in which information is managed — this can focus on the extent to which the information is of good quality (ie how well it meets the needs of the user), how it is supplied, including the use of ICT and consider the impact of legal and ethical issues
- ◆ the current strengths and weaknesses of communication and information management
- ◆ proposals for change that will improve the way information is communicated and/or how it is managed

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- ◆ **two** attempts or more to use influencing **and** negotiation to persuade a person or persons to accept **one** or more of the proposals for change
- ◆ an evaluation of what you have learned
- ◆ ways in which you can apply your learning in the future

There are no hard and fast guidelines on how you should present this evidence or what items of evidence you should include in it. However, your evidence is likely to consist of a number of different items relating to both the product and the process of your work as a leader.

Some examples of items of evidence that you might provide are:

- ◆ a narrative linking the various pieces of evidence together
- ◆ personal reflective accounts
- ◆ witness testimony from others involved, such as recipients of information or those who may be affected by proposals for change
- ◆ other feedback eg from a line manager on changes in your performance or from someone you have tried to persuade
- ◆ records of interviews between you and your assessor
- ◆ notes of discussions between you and others, such as suppliers or recipients of information or with those involved in the management of information
- ◆ organisational documents or other records, such as company processes and procedures, examples of communication like e-mails, outputs of management information systems, records of meetings highlighting advantages and disadvantages of communication and information management, company reports
- ◆ reports produced by you — on proposals for change, for example
- ◆ products of reflection, such as a diagram or chart showing flows of information
- ◆ diagrams showing how theories, such as models of communication, can be used in the analysis of communication and information management

You will succeed in this Unit if you present comprehensive evidence that demonstrates that you can analyse communication and information and have made attempts to influence the behaviour of others with regard to proposals you have made for change. Your evidence must also show that you can evaluate your learning and consider how to apply your learning in the future.