



Higher National Graded Unit specification

General information for centres

This Graded Unit has been validated as part of the Countryside and Environmental Management HNC. Centres are required to develop the assessment instrument in accordance with this validated specification. Centres wishing to use another type of Graded Unit or assessment instrument are required to submit proposals detailing the justification for change for validation.

Graded Unit title: Countryside and Environmental Management:
Graded Unit 1

Graded Unit code: F4BP 34

Type of Graded Unit: Project

Assessment Instrument: Case Study

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 National 1 to Doctorates.*

Purpose: This Graded Unit is designed to provide evidence that the candidate has achieved the principal aims of the HNC Countryside and Environmental Management. These are to:

- ◆ provide candidates with a good understanding of different land uses and their role in the countryside
- ◆ investigate factors which have influenced the development of current land use
- ◆ introduce candidates to policies and issues which will influence countryside management in the future
- ◆ introduce candidates to the concept of sustainable land management through a greater awareness of their environment
- ◆ develop ecological and environmental knowledge
- ◆ develop Core Skills
- ◆ enable candidates to exercise some initiative in carrying out defined activities at a professional level

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: It is recommended that the candidate should have completed or be in the process of completing the following Units relating to the above specific aims prior to undertaking this Graded Unit:

- ◆ *Biodiversity Conservation* F430 34
- ◆ *Ecology and Ecosystems* DN37 34
- ◆ *Geology and Geomorphology* F3SL 34
- ◆ *Environmental Awareness* F2G8 34
- ◆ *Rural Land Use in Scotland* F3ST 34
- ◆ *Using Software Application Packages* D85F 34
- ◆ *Information Technology: Application Software 1* D75X 34

General information for centres (cont)

Core Skills: There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Problem Solving, Numeracy* and *Communication* at SCQF level 5, and *Information Technology* at SCQF level 6 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

Assessment: This Graded Unit will be assessed by the use of a Case Study. The Case Study details should provide the candidate with the opportunity to produce evidence that demonstrates she/he has met the aims of the Graded Unit that it covers and present this in a report.

Administrative Information

Graded Unit code: F4BP 34

Graded Unit title: Countryside and Environmental Management: Graded Unit 1

Original date of publication: August 2008

Version: 03

History of changes:

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Unit <i>F3SJ 34 Biology: An Introduction</i> removed. Unit <i>D85F 34 Using Software Application Packages</i> removed. Unit <i>D75X 34 Information Technology: Application Software I</i> added	16/01/2017
03	Update of Conditions of Assessment	13/07/18

Source: SQA

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Higher National Graded Unit specification: instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates

Graded Unit title: Countryside and Environmental Management: Graded Unit 1

Conditions of assessment

The instructions for the assessment task should be distributed to allow the candidate sufficient time to assimilate the details and carry out the assessment task. During the time between the distribution of the assessment task instructions and the completion date, assessors may answer questions, provide clarification, guidance and reasonable assistance.

Reasonable assistance is the term used by SQA to describe the difference between providing candidates with some direction to generate the required evidence for assessment and providing too much support which would compromise the integrity of the assessment. Reasonable assistance is part of all learning and teaching processes.

In relation to the assessment of Higher National Project-based Graded Units, assessors may provide advice, clarification, and guidance during the time between the distribution of the project instructions and the completion date, ie at each stage of the project.

Remediation allows an assessor to clarify candidate responses, either by requiring a written amendment or by oral questioning, where there is a minor shortfall or omission in evidence requirements. In either case, such instances must be formally noted by the assessor, either in writing or recording, and be made available to the internal and external verifier.

In relation to Higher National Project-based Graded Units, candidates must be given the opportunity for remediation at each stage of the project.

The evidence for a Higher National Project-based Graded Unit is generated over time and involves three distinct stages, each of which has to be achieved before the next is undertaken. This means that any re-assessment of stages must be undertaken before proceeding to the next stage. The overall grade is derived from the total number of marks *across all* sections, and should reflect the ability of the candidate to work autonomously and the amount of support required. In relation to Higher National Project-based Graded Units, candidates who have failed any stage of the project and have been unable to provide the necessary evidence through remediation must be given the opportunity for re-assessment of that stage.

Any candidate who has failed their graded unit or wishes to upgrade their award must be given a re-assessment opportunity, or in exceptional circumstances, two re-assessment opportunities. In the case of project-based graded units, this must be done using a substantially different project.

The final grading given must reflect the quality of the candidate's evidence at the time of the completion of the graded unit. Candidates must be awarded the highest grade achieved — whether through first submission or through any re-assessment, remediation, and/or reasonable assistance provided.

Higher National Graded Unit specification: instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Graded Unit title: Countryside and Environmental Management: Graded Unit 1

Instructions for designing the assessment task

The assessment task is a project. The project undertaken by the candidate must be a complex task which involves:

- ◆ variables which are complex or unfamiliar
- ◆ relationships which need to be clarified
- ◆ a context which may be familiar or unfamiliar to the candidate

The assessment task must require the candidate to:

- ◆ gather information
- ◆ analyse the task and decide on a course of action for undertaking the project
- ◆ plan and organise work and carry it through to completion
- ◆ reflect on what has been done and draw conclusions for the future
- ◆ produce evidence of meeting the aims which this Graded Unit has been designed to cover

The assessment task must be a Case Study requiring the candidate to act as an independent advisor and gather, interpret and analyse information about Countryside and Environmental Management. They will then respond to findings by making recommendations in a report, presented to a client. The Case Study task must be based on the management of an area of land such as an estate or a catchment. The area should have multiple land uses including agriculture and informal recreation, and have some biodiversity conservation interest. The candidate must be required to consider the characteristics of the area, how these interact with each other and their sustainable, environmental and ecological impact when drawing up their recommendations. The candidate must be asked to make recommendations in relation to better use of the land, possible diversity/multi-use of land, and incorporate any policy, legal, financial, health and safety issues as appropriate. The candidate must provide all evidence detailed for the three stages of the project.

Higher National Graded Unit specification: instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Graded Unit title: Countryside and Environmental Management: Graded Unit 1

Guidance on grading candidates

Candidates who meet the minimum Evidence Requirements will have their achievement graded as C — competent, or A — highly competent or B somewhere between A and C. The grade related criteria to be used to judge candidate performance for this Graded Unit is specified in the following table.

Grade A	Grade C
<p>Is a seamless, coherent piece of work which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ provides comprehensive evidence for each of the three essential phases of the project that is produced to a high standard and is clearly inter-related ◆ demonstrates an accurate and insightful interpretation of the project Case Study ◆ provides a project timetable containing a comprehensive list of project activities as well as milestones to be reached ◆ demonstrates clear evidence of an original and innovative approach to the Case Study ◆ is clear and well structured throughout with language of a high standard in terms of level, accuracy and technical content used. ◆ effectively consolidates and integrates required knowledge and skills ◆ demonstrates a thorough and comprehensive use of research materials and tools by the candidate ◆ demonstrates a high level of self motivation throughout the Case Study by the candidate who completes all stages of the project with minimal tutor support ◆ clearly articulates possible future improvement or modifications across all project areas 	<p>Is a co-ordinated piece of work which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ provides evidence of the three essential phases of the project ◆ demonstrates interpretation of the project Case Study ◆ provides a project timetable containing the essential project activities and milestones ◆ demonstrates evidence of originality and innovation ◆ is structured and language is clear in terms of level, accuracy and technical content ◆ consolidates and integrates required knowledge and skills ◆ demonstrates the use of research materials and tools ◆ requires tutor intervention to keep the investigation on track ◆ contains recognition of areas for improvement or modification

The project will be marked out of 100. Assessors will mark each stage of the project, taking into account the criteria outlined. The marks will then be aggregated to arrive at an overall mark for the project. Assessors will then assign an overall grade to the candidate for this Graded Unit based on the following grade boundaries.

- A = 70% — 100%
- B = 60% — 69%
- C = 50% — 59%

Higher National Graded Unit specification: instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Note: the candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified below for each stage of the project in order to achieve the Graded Unit.

Evidence Requirements

The project consists of three stages: planning; developing; and evaluating. The following table specifies the minimum evidence required to pass each stage.

Note: The candidate must achieve **all of the minimum evidence** specified below for each stage of the project in order to pass the Graded Unit.

Project stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements
Stage 1 — Planning 20%	<p>Plan of action to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the aims of the case study ◆ the identification and justification of the tasks to be undertaken ◆ identification of the research methods required to make recommendations with appropriate detail and possible implications ◆ identification of resources ◆ a time line action plan to manage and complete subsequent stages within the requisite timescale <p><i>The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the Planning stage.</i></p>
Stage 2 — Developing 60%	<p>A case study report to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ aims of the case study ◆ identification, and where appropriate, scope of the recommendations ◆ further research required to underpin recommendations ◆ identification and analysis of significant data ◆ presentation of evidence in the form of recommendations, justified by supporting evidence in the report ◆ consideration of financial, legal and Health and Safety implications <p>The case study report must follow this format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ contents page ◆ scope of report ◆ recommendations ◆ conclusions ◆ acknowledgements (if appropriate) ◆ references <p><i>The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the Developing stage.</i></p>

Higher National Graded Unit specification: instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Project stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements
Stage 3 — Evaluating 20%	<p>An evaluation report to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ reflection on the Outcomes of Stages 1 and 2 ◆ reflection on research methods ◆ critical evaluation of the case study effectiveness compared to the time line and action plan ◆ critical evaluation of the case study Outcome against the objectives ◆ positive aspects of the case study ◆ areas for improvement ◆ identification of knowledge and skills gained or developed to inform future similar tasks <p><i>The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the Evaluating stage.</i></p>

Higher National Graded Unit specification: instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Support notes

The candidate may be asked to develop recommendations for the future of an area of land such as an estate or a catchment. The area should have multiple land uses including agriculture and informal recreation and have some biodiversity conservation interest. The project would require candidates to consider the characteristics of the area, how these interact with each other and their impact on the wider environment, whilst drawing up their recommendations.

Therefore, the case study may include a scene-setting site visit, followed by the development of a case study plan. In turn, this could lead to a return visit to collect relevant data for subsequent analysis, culminating in a report that identifies a development plan that may include such features as the establishment of a renewable energy scheme.

The case study recommendations could refer to policies, issues relating to sustainability, ecology and environmental conflict and financial implications. Within the report, the candidate may include diagrams, drawings, schedules, calculations, and specifications to justify recommendations.

Candidates should work independently within the context of a typical working environment. It is possible for candidates to co-operate, for example, in the interpretation of site data, but the planning, developing and evaluating should be undertaken individually. Each candidate has to meet the Evidence Requirements, as each grading is based on their individual contribution.

Candidates should be encouraged to complete an activity log or to keep a diary of the progress and tasks completed such that the exercise is completed in a businesslike environment and to facilitate the reflective component. It is recommended that there are regular scheduled meetings between the tutor and candidates to review progress, and to provide appropriate guidance. The guidance must not be such that it influences the final grading, but pointing out the consequences of significant deviation from original plans during the development phase, for example, would be legitimate. It is desirable for notes of meetings to be made for the purposes of clarity and to further simulate the working environment. Notes should be agreed upon by both parties.

Tutor questions may be used to ascertain candidates' understanding of the issues contained in the Case Study report and to probe the validity of the report and its recommendations. A recommended length for the report is 2,000 words or equivalent.

Equality and inclusion

This graded unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Equality and inclusion*, which is available on SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk.

General information for candidates

This is a single credit Graded Unit at SCQF level 7. This Graded Unit is a Project (Case Study) to be completed towards the end of your HNC. It is designed to assess your ability to integrate and apply knowledge and understanding from the following defined Units in order to meet the principal aims of the Countryside and Environmental Management HNC. It should integrate knowledge and skills gained in the following HNC Units:

- ◆ *Biodiversity Conservation* F430 34
- ◆ *Ecology and Ecosystems* DN37 34
- ◆ *Geology and Geomorphology* F3SL 34
- ◆ *Environmental Awareness* F2G8 34
- ◆ *Rural Land Use in Scotland* F3ST 34
- ◆ *Using Software Application Packages* D85F 34
- ◆ *Information Technology: Application Software 1* D75X 34

You will be given a Case Study brief containing outline information and which may require you to undertake a scene-setting visit and gather more information using appropriate sources. You could, for example, be asked to produce a report containing recommendations for the future management of an area of land with multiple land uses which need to be integrated and be environmentally sustainable.

This will require you to provide an action planning document, prepare a development plan and evaluate your management and effectiveness in producing the final recommendations. You will be given a high degree of autonomy during all stages of the Case Study; however your tutor is available for guidance and support at the initial stage of each part of the project. After submission of your Case Study report, your tutor may interview you to probe your understanding of the issues contained in your report and the validity of your proposal.

The project (Case Study) will be assessed in three stages:

1	Planning	20% of marks
2	Developing	60% of marks
3	Evaluating	20% of marks

You will need to pass all three stage of your Case Study by achieving at least 50% of the marks available. You must pass each separate stage before progressing to the next stage.

The project will be marked out of 100%. Assessors will mark each stage of your Case Study, taking into account the criteria outlined. The marks will then be aggregated to arrive at an overall mark for your project. Assessors will then assign an overall grade for the Graded Unit based on the following grade boundaries. To pass you must achieve 50% of the total marks and all the minimum Evidence Requirements for each of the three phases of the work. You may be required to answer questions from the assessor to validate the evidence.

A	=	70%	—	100%
B	=	60%	—	69%
C	=	50%	—	59%

There are opportunities to develop Core Skills in *Problem Solving*, *Numeracy*, and *Communication*, at SCQF level 5 and *Information Technology* at SCQF level 6 in this Unit.