



Higher National Graded Unit specification

General information for centres

This Graded Unit has been validated as part of the HNC in Rural Business Management. 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: Rural Business Management: Graded Unit 1

Graded Unit code: F6C6 34

Type of Graded Unit: Project

Assessment Instrument: Investigation

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.*

Purpose: This Graded Unit is designed to provide evidence that the candidate has achieved the following principal aims of the HNC in Rural Business Management:

- ◆ To provide specific business knowledge to enhance candidates' career prospects for rural business.
- ◆ To develop in candidates the required skills and knowledge in business, economics, human resource management, health and safety, marketing and financial record keeping in an integrative manner and to develop the ability to complete and maintain appropriate records and documents.
- ◆ To provide a business based programme involving examples and visits to rural businesses which enable candidates to work within and understand the running of a rural enterprise.
- ◆ To ensure that candidates have a broad appreciation of environmental issues affecting rural businesses.
- ◆ To enable progression to the Higher National Diploma and other higher level programmes.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: It is recommended that the candidate should have completed or be in the process of completing all of the mandatory Units in the HNC in Rural Business Management:

Unit code	Unit
D75X 34	IT Applications Software 1
DF4E 34	Developing Skills for Personal Effectiveness
F26G 34	Financial Records for Small Business
DN78 34	Human Resource Management: An Introduction
DE3A 34	Economic Issues: An Introduction
DE3C 34	Marketing: An introduction
DJ42 34	Creating a Culture of Customer Care
F1RJ 34	Business Management: An Introduction
F3ST 34	Rural Land Use in Scotland

Core Skills: There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Problem Solving Numeracy*, and *Communication* all 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 an Investigation. The completed investigation 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.

Administrative Information

Graded Unit code: F6C6 34

Graded Unit title: Rural Business Management: Graded Unit 1

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Version: 01

History of changes:

Version	Description of change	Date

Source: SQA

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

Graded Unit title: Rural Business Management Graded Unit 1

Conditions of assessment

The candidate should be given a date for completion of the Investigation. However, 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. The assessment task should be marked as soon as possible after the completion date. The final grading given should reflect the quality of the candidate's evidence at the time of the completion date.

It is the responsibility of the centre to take reasonable steps to ensure that the project is the work of the candidate. For example, centres may wish to informally question candidates at various stages on their knowledge and understanding.

The evidence for the project is generated over time and involves three distinct stages, where each stage has to be achieved before the next is undertaken. Thus any re-assessment of stages must be undertaken before proceeding to the next stage.

If a candidate fails the project overall or wishes to upgrade, then this must be done using a *substantially different* project, ie all stages are undertaken using a new project, assignment, case study, etc. In this case, a candidate's grade will be based on the achievement in the re-assessment, if this results in a higher grade.

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:

- ◆ analyse the task and decide on a course of action for undertaking the project
- ◆ gather information
- ◆ 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 an investigation requiring the candidate to carry out a review of a business with a view to adding value. The candidate must gather, interpret and analyse information about a rural business enterprise, research the market and respond to the project brief by making recommendations in a report on the possibilities for adding value to the business. The report must be suitable for presentation to a business manager.

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

Hence the Investigation may include a scene-setting site visit organized by the tutor prior to the planning stage.

The project must be based on a rural business which has the following characteristics:

- ◆ already involved in responding to customer demand
- ◆ managerial and operational activities data and information which is made available to candidates
- ◆ participates in marketing and retailing of produce

The candidate must be asked to consider all aspects of the business, evaluate the business's activities and, when drawing up their recommendations, the possible impact on adding value to production must be the theme of the report. Access to financial statements, market development plans and background information on the business's products and markets must be made available. Financial, human resource and marketing implications of any changes must be identified.

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

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
Is a seamless, coherent piece of work which:	Is a co-ordinated piece of work which:
◆ has comprehensive evidence for each of the three essential phase of the project that is produced to a high standard and is clearly inter-related	◆ provides evidence of the three essential phases of the project
◆ demonstrates an insightful interpretation of the project investigation	◆ demonstrates an acceptable interpretation of the project investigation
◆ provides a project timetable containing a comprehensive list of project activities as well as milestones to be reached	◆ provides a project timetable containing the project activities and milestones
◆ demonstrates clear evidence of an original and innovative approach to the case study	◆ demonstrates some evidence of originality and innovation
◆ is clear and well structured throughout with language of a high standard. in terms of level, accuracy and technical content used	◆ is structured using appropriate language in terms of level, accuracy and technical content used
◆ effectively consolidates and integrates required knowledge and skills and produces credible recommendations	◆ consolidates and integrates required knowledge and skills, making limited reference to concepts and topics in the HNC
◆ demonstrates a thorough and comprehensive use of research materials and tools to back up recommendations	◆ demonstrates the use of research materials and tools
◆ demonstrates a high level of self motivation throughout the case study by the candidate who completes the stages of the project with minimal tutor support	◆ seeks tutor affirmation to keep the investigation on track
◆ clearly articulates possible future areas for improvement or modification to increase added value goal	◆ recognises some areas for improvement or modification

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

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%

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 — Plan of action 20%	Action Plan which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Objectives of the Project ◆ The identification and justification of the tasks to be undertaken ◆ Identification of the sources of data to be used and explanation of why they have been selected ◆ Description of how the investigation will be conducted with reasons ◆ Identification of the stages (milestones) involved in the case study and the timescales for completion of each stage <p><i>The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the Planning stage.</i></p>

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

Project stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements
Stage 2 — Developing 60%	<p>A report that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Identification and assessment of any constraints ◆ Presentation of evidence collected ◆ Analysis of data collected ◆ Recommendations which should be supported by evidence gathered ◆ Consideration of financial, human resource and marketing implications ◆ A statement of conclusion <p>The case study report must be produced under the following headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Contents page ◆ Review of current up to date literature relevant to the investigation ◆ Presentation of data collected ◆ Conclusions drawn from analysis of the data ◆ Recommendations ◆ Acknowledgements ◆ Reference listing of material used in literature review <p><i>The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the Developing stage.</i></p>
Stage 3 — Evaluating 20%	<p>The candidate must produce an evaluation report that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reflection on the Outcomes of Stage 1 and 2 and the effectiveness of the action plan ◆ Evaluation of the progress compared to the timescales in the action plan ◆ Assessment of the effectiveness of the research methods used ◆ Evaluation of the Outcomes against the objectives ◆ Reflection on the negative and positive aspects of the project experience to include time management, research abilities ◆ Areas for improvement for future projects ◆ Identification of knowledge and skills gained to inform future similar tasks and any areas for improvement <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

This Unit is based on an investigation of a rural business enterprise. It is suggested that this project is run throughout the academic year with the majority of the work in the final term, to allow the candidates the opportunity to study the underpinning skills over a significant proportion of the year. It is suggested that in order to introduce this project more effectively, candidates should visit the rural business selected early in the academic year. This initial visit should be followed by the development of an action plan. In turn this could lead to a return visit or support session with the business owner, which may be done via telephone for example, to collect relevant data for subsequent analysis and culminating in a report that provides recommendations for adding value to the rural business. It is suggested that candidates look at enterprise opportunities within the selected rural business. Records such as production costs and market prices could be analysed by candidates and used in any market development projections which they may recommend.

Candidates should record the range of tasks carried out in the rural business, to include the use of mechanisation, production methods, marketing and sales. Candidates could identify good practice at the rural business and compare the performance of that business with published benchmark standards and suggest valid and practicable improvements. Candidates should report on the possibilities for adding value to the business and may support these recommendations with diagrams, drawings, schedules, calculations, specifications etc.

The project is divided into 3 distinct stages, and these could form the basis of a planning report or Action Plan (including the format of research to be gathered), a development report (including data analysis) which details findings and recommendations and an Evaluation Report which is a self-assessment indicating strengths and weaknesses of the Action Plan and Investigation Report.

Candidates should work independently within the context of a typical working environment. It is possible for candidates to co-operate, for example, in the collection of site data, but the planning, development and evaluation should be undertaken individually. Each candidate has to meet the Evidence Requirements as each individual's grading is based upon his/her evidence for each stage of the project. The reports should be appropriately structured, presented and referenced (circa 2,000 words or equivalent including the evaluation section but excluding references and appendices). The Evaluation Report may be undertaken as an oral interview. 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 for the Graded Unit, based on the following grade boundaries.

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

Candidates will need to achieve all of the minimum evidence specified for each stage of the project in order to achieve the Graded Unit.

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

Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements

General information for candidates

This is a single credit Graded Unit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7)

This Graded Unit is a project (investigation) and will be submitted towards the end of your HNC course. It is designed to assess your ability to integrate and apply knowledge and understanding from the mandatory Units in order to meet the principal aims of the HNC Rural Business Management award.

You will be assessed in this Unit by means of producing a report that considers how value could be added to a rural business.

You will be required to produce an Action Plan indicating the types of information you need to source, along with timescales for production of the report. You will learn to collect data from the business; some of this data will be collected “live” during a scene setting visit while other data will be retrospectively collected through continued contact with the rural business owner or from information supplied in the case study brief. You may re-visit the selected rural business and collect supplementary data and information for your report if time permits. The report must include proposals for adding value to the business’s production.

It is likely that this Unit will start early through the academic year.

Your report will compare your findings with published benchmarks and you will identify good practice within the selected business. You will suggest improvements that can be made to the rural business to give added value to a production issue.

You will present findings and proposals in a structured report. There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Problem Solving*, *Numeracy*, and *Communication* all 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.

If you fail the project overall or wish to upgrade, then this must be done using a *substantially different* project, ie all stages are undertaken using a new case study. In this case, your grade will be based on the achievement in the re-assessment.