



Higher National Unit specification

General information for centres

Unit title: An Investigation in the Social Sciences

Unit code: F6NE 34

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to provide evidence that the candidate has achieved the following principal aims of the HNC in Social Sciences:

- ◆ Develop a high level of research and investigation techniques central to the methodology of social science research and presentation.
- ◆ Provide candidates with the opportunity to develop a high degree of insight, knowledge and critical understanding of a specific social science theme or issue relating to one social science discipline.
- ◆ Develop an independent approach to social science studies through planning, organisational and interpersonal skills and self awareness through investigation activities.

The Unit will prepare candidates for higher education modes of research and study in the social sciences at both undergraduate and HND Year 2 level.

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

- 1 Develop a research plan of action on a particular social science theme or issue related to one social science discipline.
- 2 Develop a report that investigates and analyses a particular social science theme or issue using different perspectives from one social science discipline.
- 3 Evaluate the effectiveness of the investigation approach and findings.

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.*

General information for centres (cont)

Recommended prior knowledge and skills:

It is recommended that the candidate should have completed or be in the process of completing the following mandatory and appropriate optional Units relating to the above specific aims of the HNC in Social Sciences.

Mandatory Units

- ◆ DP59 34: *Social Science: Research and Methodology*
- ◆ DP43 34: *Psychology A: History and Development of Psychology*
- ◆ DP3R 34: *Sociology A: Introducing Sociological Concepts and Theories*
- ◆ DP3T 34: *Sociology B: Application and Analysis of Sociological Theory to Sociological Topics*
- ◆ DW90 34: *Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1*

Social Sciences optional Units

- ◆ DP3Y 34: *Economics A: An Introduction to Economics*
- ◆ DP40 34: *Economics B: Micro and Macro Economic Theory and Applications*
- ◆ DP4G 34: *Geography A: Introducing a Geographical Perspective*
- ◆ DP4H 34: *Geography B: Urban Geography*
- ◆ DP4C 34: *History A: Introducing Topics within a Historical Period*
- ◆ DP4D 34: *History B: Analysing Topics within a Historical Period*
- ◆ DP47 34: *Philosophy A: Evaluating Philosophical Issues in the Social Sciences*
- ◆ DP48 34: *Philosophy B: Aspects of the History and Development of Western Philosophy*
- ◆ DP55 34: *Politics A: Political theories of the State and the Individual*
- ◆ DP56 34: *Politics B: The Governance of the United Kingdom*
- ◆ DP44 34: *Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics*

Core Skills: There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Communication, Information and Communication Technology*, and *Problem Solving* in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components. Further detail can be found in the Support Notes.

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.

Assessment: This Unit will be assessed by a single instrument of assessment in the form of an investigation and report. The research plan, developed discussion and evaluation should provide the candidate with the opportunity to produce evidence that demonstrates she/he has met the aims of the Unit.

Please note that candidates must achieve all the minimum evidence specified for the Unit as a whole to pass the Unit.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: An Investigation in the Social Sciences

Unit code: F6NE 34

The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, Knowledge and/or Skills, and Evidence Requirements are mandatory.

Outcome 1

Develop a research plan of action on a particular social science theme or issue related to one social science discipline

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Information retrieval skills
- ◆ Planning and organisational skills
- ◆ Information, communication and technology skills
- ◆ Organisation and time management skills
- ◆ Knowledge of a particular social science theme or issue

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can develop a strategy to carry out the project in the form of a 500-750 word plan of action which includes:

- ◆ A section that sets out a clear rationale for selecting the social science theme/issue to be researched, ie why the theme/issue is relevant to the specific social science discipline and clarification of the main aspects to be researched.
- ◆ A research question or hypothesis that clearly relates to the chosen social science theme or issue.
- ◆ Clear aims and objectives of the investigation including research, development and evaluation.
- ◆ Timescales for achieving these aims and objectives.
- ◆ Research methods and resources statement that clarifies whether primary or secondary sources of data collection are to be used and the reasons why. This statement should include the identification of any resources required to carry out the investigation, eg sources of data, selection of texts and studies based on preliminary analysis, procedures to be followed, people, equipment and other physical resources.
- ◆ A bibliography in a standard Harvard System format that will constitute a preliminary literature search as evidence of identifying text based resources covering the particular social science theme/issue.

Note: It is not mandatory that the candidate undertakes primary research methods to carry out this investigation.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: An Investigation in the Social Sciences

Assessment Guidelines

The candidate should be given a date for completion of the Investigation Plan. However, the instructions for the assessment task should be distributed to allow the candidate sufficient time to assess task instructions and the completion date. Assessors may answer questions, provide clarification, guidance and reasonable assistance. At this level, candidates should work independently and centres should take reasonable steps to ensure that the project is the work of the candidate. For example, centres may wish to informally question candidates at an appropriate point of the planning stage.

It would be good practice and encourage the development of ICT skills if the candidate were to word process the plan.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: An Investigation in the Social Sciences

Outcome 2

Develop a report that investigates and analyses a specific social science theme or issue using different perspectives from one social science discipline

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Information, communication and technology skills.
- ◆ Application of theoretical perspectives to chosen theme or issue
- ◆ Application of research studies to chosen theme or issue
- ◆ Critical analysis
- ◆ Evaluation

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can produce a developed report of approximately 1,500-2,000 words which investigates a particular social science theme or issue using different theoretical perspectives and studies from one social science discipline. The report should also demonstrate and include the following:

- ◆ A logical structure to the report with sub headings covering an introduction, analysis and discussion, research methods and sources, findings and conclusions.
- ◆ Key ideas, concepts and information contributing to the main aims of the investigation are expressed accurately, coherently and in a logical and effective manner.
- ◆ Collection and collation of information and data.
- ◆ Interpretation and analysis of information and data.
- ◆ Summary of findings and conclusions drawn.
- ◆ References and bibliography.
- ◆ Spelling, punctuation and syntax are consistently accurate; sentence structure, paragraphing and vocabulary are varied to suit the purpose of the investigation.

Assessment Guidelines

The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence requirements specified above in order to pass the developed report Outcome of the investigation.

It would be good practice and encourage the development of ICT skills if the candidate were to word process the report.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: An Investigation in the Social Sciences

Outcome 3

Evaluate the effectiveness of the investigation approach and findings

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Self reflection
- ◆ Evaluation

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can produce an evaluation of approximately 500 words that reflects on the effectiveness of the overall approach taken throughout the investigation, including all stages of the investigation, ie planning and organisation of the investigation, analysis and carrying the plan through to completion and outcome of the investigation. The evaluation should also demonstrate and include the following:

- ◆ Suggest modifications to the approach or consider alternative approaches and methods.
- ◆ Recommendations drawn from conclusions of the investigation that could include suggestions for improvement, further work, more investigation and/or additional evidence.
- ◆ Identify any skills which have been gained and/or developed.
- ◆ Assess the effectiveness of the research methods used and/or information retrieval skills.
- ◆ Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the main body of the investigation report.

Assessment Guidelines

The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence requirements in order to pass the evaluation Outcome of the investigation.

It would be good practice and encourage the development of ICT skills if the candidate were to word process the evaluation.

Administrative Information

Unit code: F6NE 34

Unit title: An Investigation in the Social Sciences

Superclass category: ED

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History of changes:

| Version | Description of change | Date |
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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: An Investigation in the Social Sciences

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 Unit is primarily intended to provide candidates with the opportunity to develop an in depth knowledge and understanding of a particular social science theme or issue, related to one social science discipline on their course. The Unit has three outcomes which correspond to the three main stages of the investigation. The planning stage involves candidates developing a number of 'soft' and Core Skills as they choose a suitable social science theme or issue and carry out a preliminary literature search. Candidates are required to have a clear rationale for choosing their particular theme or issue demonstrating the relevance to the chosen social science discipline. Although the Unit is expressed in generic terms, it should be related to a social science discipline that is familiar to candidates as part of their HNC or HND studies in the social sciences. The candidate will aim to provide a response to a formulated research question or hypothesis.

Through developing clear aims and objectives for the investigation the candidate must demonstrate an organised and structured approach to the investigation, including a timescale for achieving the aims and objectives. Candidates may adopt to carry out primary research using established social science research methods, however, this is not mandatory and an effective investigation can still be carried out using secondary sources of data that should include different theoretical perspectives and existing studies. A bibliography of the preliminary literature search in the standard Harvard format must be submitted with the completed plan.

Having completed the planning stage and achieved the outcome, the candidate must then produce a report for Outcome 2 that consists of a discussion that critically analyses the investigation's data and findings as they relate to the research question or hypothesis. The report should have a clear structure that includes the following sub headings of, introduction, analysis and discussion, research methods and sources, findings and conclusions. The report provides an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of relevant theoretical perspectives and studies relating to their chosen social science discipline and theme or issue that have been identified through the research process. Any findings from primary research can also be analysed and discussed as they relate to the research question or hypothesis.

Finally, the candidate must reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of the investigation's approach and findings. This outcome will provide the candidate with an opportunity to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their contribution to the investigation and to establish any recommendations for alternative approaches and sources of evidence.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: An Investigation in the Social Sciences

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This Unit is likely to form part of an HNC or HND Group Award in Social Sciences. The Unit will provide candidates at HNC or HND Year 1 level to undertake a similar social science investigation to the Graded Unit: *Project* that is a mandatory Unit on the HND Award in Social Sciences.

As this Unit involves an investigation into a particular social science theme or issue in one social science discipline, it is advised that the Unit is delivered once the 'A' Units have been achieved and progress on delivery of the 'B' Units has begun to allow sufficient knowledge and understanding of the social science discipline to be established.

Assessment will be by one instrument of assessment that covers three outcomes in the form of a planned investigation, report and evaluation. Candidates must pass the planning stage in Outcome 1 before starting on the report in Outcome 2.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

This Unit offers an opportunity for a number of Core Skills to be developed including *Communication* and *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6 and *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5. All candidate evidence should be word processed and demonstrate that the candidate has completed a complex task which involves variables that are unfamiliar.

Communication

Reading can be developed through reading materials that deal with topics and use vocabulary which candidates may reasonably have been expected to encounter through a general awareness of social science disciplines and topics, but will also include aspects that may sometimes feature unfamiliar, abstract ideas and complexity in tone, point of view or central argument. Candidates are required to access academic texts such as books and journals which may combine factual content with analysis, or present a sustained point of view. The text may use some complex vocabulary and sentence structures which allow for exemplification. It may also include images (eg diagrams, maps, tables, sketches or photographs) as well as words.

Writing can be developed through a number of specific skills that include presenting all essential ideas/information and supporting detail in a logical and effective order, using a structure which takes account of purpose and audience and links major and minor points in ways which assist the clarity and impact of the writing. Use of spelling, punctuation and sentence structure is required to be consistently accurate. The report format of this investigation will require variety in sentence structure, paragraphing and vocabulary to suit the purpose and target audience. Information will be presented, analysed and evaluated, and/or ideas and opinions will be developed in relation to an issue which is explored in depth and considered from several perspectives, taking account of and refuting challenges. Appropriate complex topics may involve a large number of related ideas, large amounts of detail (which the candidate must present clearly), or discussion of abstract or technical concepts.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: An Investigation in the Social Sciences

Information and Communication Technology

Opportunities to develop this Core Skill at SCQF level 5 are incorporated into the delivery of the Unit through the candidate carrying out information searches using efficient and effective search strategies. Searches can include accessing relevant web sites but also access to academic journals and periodicals through gateways. It would be good practice and encourage the development of ICT skills if the candidate word processed the plan, final report and evaluation section.

Problem Solving

This Core Skill will be developed at SCQF level 6 throughout this Unit, particularly in the planning stage. Candidates will be encouraged to consider an appropriate strategy for managing their time and analysing and evaluating the considerable amount of data available on their chosen topic.

The component Critical Thinking will be developed. The general skill for this component is 'identifying and analysing the factors affecting a situation or issue'. The component Planning and Organising, where the general skill is 'developing an action plan to deal with the factors affecting the situation or issue' will be developed. The component Reviewing and Evaluating will also be developed where 'learners will decide on criteria to judge how effective each stage of the problem solving activity has been'.

Open learning

Although this Unit could be delivered by distance learning, it would require a considerable degree of planning by the centre to ensure the sufficiency and authenticity of candidate evidence.

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

Unit title: An Investigation in the Social Sciences

In this Unit you will have the opportunity to undertake a social science investigation in a discipline of your choice. The Unit requires you to plan your investigation through developing a clear rationale which explains why your chosen topic is a worthwhile and relevant area for social science investigation using a chosen social science discipline. You will formulate a research question or hypothesis and outline clear aims and objectives for carrying out your investigation. Carrying out the research and meeting your objectives will be achieved within a timescale for the investigation. Once you have implemented your plan and carried out your research, you will analyse your findings and write up a developed report. The final part of the investigation involves reflecting on what you have done and evaluating the overall process.

Your assessment will be in the form of an investigation and report. Your research plan, developed discussion and evaluation should allow you to produce evidence that you have met the aims of the Unit.

You will have opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* and *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6 and *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5.