



Higher National Unit Specification

General information

Unit title: Economics A: Introduction to Economics (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: FJ34 34

Superclass: EB

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Version: 01

Unit purpose

This unit is designed to introduce learners to economics as a Social Science by examining different approaches to the nature of economic study and examining the key ideas of economic thinkers from history. It is also intended to prepare learners for subsequent study of economics by introducing and explaining the main methods used in the study of economics. It is intended for learners who have a general interest in Economics as well as those who would use it as the basis for further study.

Outcomes

On successful completion of the unit the learner will be able to:

- 1 Explain different approaches to economics and examine the key ideas of economic thinkers from history.
- 2 Explain the main methods used in the study of economics.

Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit credit(s) at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7)

Recommended entry to the unit

Learners should possess good communication skills. Other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the unit would also be beneficial.

The previous study of Economics through units and National Qualifications at SCQF levels 5 or 6, or other similar qualifications, is desirable but not essential.

Ultimately, entry is at the discretion of the centre.

Higher National Unit Specification: General information (cont)

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Core Skills

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the support notes for this unit specification.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components in this unit.

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.

This unit is in the optional section of the HNC/D Social Sciences awards. It can also be offered as a stand-alone unit.

Equality and inclusion

This unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Higher National Unit Specification: Statement of standards

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Acceptable performance in this unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

Outcome 1

Explain different approaches to economics and examine the key ideas of economic thinkers from history.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Positive and normative approaches to economics
- ◆ The basic economic problem
- ◆ The choices the basic economic problem leads to
- ◆ Key ideas of economic thinkers from history

Outcome 2

Explain the main methods used in the study of economics.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Economic models
- ◆ Use of statistical data in economics
- ◆ Positive and normative statements

Evidence requirements for this unit

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills across all outcomes by showing that they can:

- ◆ explain positive and normative approaches to economics.
- ◆ explain the basic economic problem.
- ◆ explain the choices the basic economic problem leads to.
- ◆ examine the key ideas of two economic thinkers from history.
- ◆ explain the main methods used in the study of economics, which will involve explaining two economic models using words and, for each, a diagram or graph as appropriate, describing how and why economists use statistics and distinguishing between positive and normative statements.

This unit will be holistically assessed by a single open-book instrument of assessment covering all unit outcomes.

Learners should be given the task at an appropriate point of delivery of the unit. In response to the task set, learners must convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent form. A written response should be 1,500 words approximately; an oral response should be 10–12 minutes in duration. Regardless of the assessment method chosen, the learner must submit a bibliography presented in a standard referencing format, such as Harvard.



Higher National Unit Support Notes

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Unit support notes are offered as guidance and 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

This is one of a suite of Economics units within the HNC/D Social Sciences Group Awards. This unit prepares learners for *Economics B: Economic Theory and Application*. The unit can be taught as a free-standing unit or as part of the HNC/D Social Sciences Group Awards.

The aim of this unit is to provide an interesting and engaging introduction to economics that will serve as a foundation for subsequent economics units. The unit provides an overview of the nature of economics by introducing learners to the general approaches taken in the discipline, the main methods deployed in the study of economics and some of the political economic thinking that underpins the discipline.

In Outcome 1 definitions of economics should include content based and methods based definitions. The idea is to provide and discuss a wide range of definitions to stimulate learners into thinking about how broad, interesting and engaging economics is. Introducing positive and normative approaches will allow discussion of economic topics such as markets, income and welfare and environmental issues, illustrating that the discipline of economics has a wide and varied application within every-day life. When discussing the basic economic problem and the choices that it leads to, factors of production, their incomes, the three fundamental choices of what, how and for whom and opportunity cost are all involved to provide a basic introduction.

With respect to economic thinkers it should be remembered that although learners need only examine two for assessment purposes, more than two can be covered in the teaching to allow for learner choice and interest. Key economic thinkers could include Adam Smith, Karl Marx, John Maynard Keynes, Alfred Marshall, Thorstein Veblen, Frederick Hayek and Wilfred Pareto. When examining the key ideas of chosen thinkers, it would be useful to set their thinking in historical and cultural context. It may also be useful to make comparisons between thinkers though this is not necessary for assessment purposes. The unit is designed to provide time for developing skills beyond those that are specifically being assessed.

Outcome 2 is concerned with economic methodology and can be used as a vehicle to look at economics as a social science. The ideas of this outcome can be exemplified in the definitions, approaches, issues and key ideas of thinkers used in Outcome 1. Models that might be examined are the circular flow of income model, the production possibility model or the perfect competition model. Again, all three models could be taught allowing learner choice in the assessment. The models should be described in words and in diagrammatic/graphical form as appropriate. Statistical data is also important in economics. The learners could be introduced to the Office of National Statistics website and could be directed to other useful websites such as the EU gateway and the OECD website. This will enable them to investigate a wide variety of statistical information. In studying statistical information learners should be encouraged to look for trends and possible relationships in the data.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Guidance on approaches to delivery of this unit

The delivery of this unit should be learner-centred, and the lecturer should ensure that teaching methods are employed that will fully engage all learners with the topic.

A questioning approach is useful as it gets the learners to think like social scientists and be analytical and enquiring, rather than passively accepting.

Centres should structure the teaching programme to allow time for development of Core Skills and other transferable skills and for assessment practice within the notional hours suggested.

Guidance on approaches to assessment of this unit

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

This assessment could take the form of an open-book essay *or* a set of structured questions with an expected learner response of approximately 1,500 words *or* an individual oral presentation *or* poster exhibition with expected learner's response of 10–12 minutes in presentation or explanation of poster *or* any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements. Learners could also provide the evidence requirements in the form of an individual blog or creation of a website, with approximately 1,500 words.

NB: It is important that the language used in the assessment instrument reflects SCQF level 7 in each type of task.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

Centres should design an appropriate assessment instrument based on a method that is suitable in allowing learners to meet the evidence requirements. This can be written or oral (depending on the needs of the learners and the organisational aspects for the centre in choosing particular methods). If an oral method is chosen, it is recommended that centres record this (either by DVD or digital recorder, etc) or provide assessor notes on the presentation for external verification purposes. Oral presentations (or poster exhibitions) must be done individually as each learner has to show evidence of meeting all evidence requirements, so a group presentation would not be suitable. It is recommended that oral presentations are recorded in some form for external verification purposes.

Tutors should make learners aware of the importance of the judicious selection of appropriate academic sources, as they prepare for production of their response. They should be encouraged to choose academic sources rather than generic search engines, to enable them to be more confident of information and to be more equipped to progress to SCQF level 8 units or further study.

If the centre is using a blog or creation of a website as the way of gathering evidence, this should not be in the public domain. Rather it should be on an intranet or private area of a VLE to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism. Authenticating a learner's work is essential. It would be helpful to collect notes or PPT presentation materials from a learner as further evidence of meeting SCQF level 7 in the presentation.

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A centre can choose to use a mixture of methods across a cohort, as it may be more suitable for some learners to give a written response and for others to use an oral method or to create a blog, etc. It is possible to combine the poster exhibition with an oral presentation, where, for example, a learner may produce a detailed poster of two economic thinkers' key ideas and would cover the other evidence requirements in an oral presentation using PPT or a mind map as a visual aid. The time for both would be 10–12 minutes (not 10–12 minutes each for the poster and for the oral presentation, but rather combining both in the time). They should also be done on the same occasion. Whichever method is chosen the learners should be allowed access to notes, text books or other materials, as the assessment must be conducted open-book.

Centres should make sure they can authenticate a learner's work. This may be done by questioning a learner about their work, by seeing drafts of work under construction, by having partial write-up in presence of the assessor or by using an anti-plagiarism tool, such as Turnitin or SafeAssign, which checks internet sites.

Remediation should be done by a review of the original work. Learners should be asked to hand in a complete piece of work, with amendments incorporated in the appropriate context, rather than a large add-on at the end, or asked to fully rewrite their work to a prescribed format if it did not meet requirements. Oral clarification could be used for minor omissions or to clarify minor detail. If it is thought appropriate that a learner tackle a different topic or question, then that new submission would count as a reassessment.

In oral work, learners can be questioned by the assessor at the end of their presentation or explanation, where minor omissions occur, or where clarity is required. This would help to reduce the need for reassessment. However, where more work is required to meet the evidence requirements (eg, where the quality of evidence is poor in a presentation) another presentation of the same duration, on the same topic or question as the original would be required. Only where a different topic or question is attempted would this be classed as reassessment.

Opportunities for e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the evidence requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment.

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

The delivery and assessment of this unit may contribute towards the development of Core Skills. It can also support the development of other transferable skills, such as, essay writing, referencing, citation and bibliography skills and thinking, analytical and critical skills.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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The **Core Skill of Communication** can be developed through the delivery and assessment of this unit. If the assessment is an essay it may contribute towards the component Written Communication at SCQF level 6. **For Written Communication at SCQF level 6 the skill is: 'Produce well-structured written communication on complex topics'**. In addition, the reading component may be developed through the interpretation of stimulus material. **The general skill for this component of communication is 'Read and understand complex written communication'**. Opportunity also exists for the development of the **oral component of communication 'Produce and respond to oral communication on a complex topic'** through oral presentation assessment or by setting tasks for group activity and arranging joint information feedback sessions.

In both formative and summative assessment, the learner should be encouraged to present all essential ideas/information and supporting detail in a logical and effective order; use a structure that takes account of purpose and audience and links major and minor points in ways which assist the clarity and impact of the writing; use conventions which are effective in achieving the purpose and adapted as necessary for the target audience and use spelling, punctuation and sentence structures which are consistently accurate. These skills can be developed through formative activities, such as short essays, without being formally assessed for Core Skill certification. The topic of examining the key ideas of economic thinkers is complex, so should easily fit with SCQF level 6.

It is important to develop essay-writing skills for learners' future progression. In doing this, learners should also be encouraged to use an appropriate referencing method, such as Harvard or citation, for any formative or summative essays. Referencing, citation and bibliography skills are best developed using the vehicle of formative essay writing.

For the Core Skill of Information and Communication Technology at SCQF level 5 the skills are: 'Accessing Information, use ICT independently, effectively, and responsibly to access information within a range of tasks' and 'Providing/Creating Information, use ICT independently, effectively, and responsibly to carry out a range of processing tasks'. This unit can help to develop such skills by the use of mini formative presentations using PowerPoint or other ICT presentation tool that will also support the development of oral communication. A summative assessment using ICT presentation methods is also possible. Specific areas of accessing information using internet searches or VLE use and providing and creating information can be developed in such tasks. Creating a blog or a website for the summative assessment is another way in which this Core Skill can be developed. This could be used where learners (and their lecturer) have particular skills and interest in ICT.

The Core Skill of Problem Solving can be developed at **SCQF level 6** throughout this unit particularly in planning the tasks. Assessors should encourage learners to explore appropriate strategies for managing their time and evaluating the considerable amount of data available on the topics contained in this unit. Assessors may actively choose to further develop this skill by setting tasks for group activity and arranging joint information feedback sessions. This could contribute towards the component **Critical Thinking** where the general skill of **'analysing a complex situation or issue'** will be developed, the component **Planning and Organising** where the general skill of **'planning, organising and completing a complex task'** and the component **Reviewing and Evaluating** where the general skill of **'reviewing and evaluating a complex problem solving activity'** can be developed. This Core Skill could be developed without formal certification.

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The **Core Skill of Working with Others** can be developed at **SCQF level 5**. The general skills are '**Working Co-operatively with Others**, in interactions, work with others co-operatively on an activity and/or activities and **Reviewing Co-operative Contribution**, review work with others in a co-operative activity and/or activities. An assessor could set tasks for group activity and arrange joint information feedback sessions. Learners could be encouraged to collaborate at the early stages of their search activities for assessment purposes.

The **Core Skill of Numeracy at SCQF level 5** can be developed in the following ways. The component **Using Number** could be developed without formal certification within the teaching, learning and assessment contributing to Outcome 2. The component **Using Graphical Information** could be developed. The general skill of '**Interpreting and communicating graphical information in everyday situations**' could be developed when considering economic models and statistics.

Thinking, analytical and critical skills could be developed by posing questions at appropriate points in the delivery, enabling discussion and promoting the need for learners to take responsibility for learning by encouraging the development of research skills via the internet or using text books.

The Curriculum for Excellence aspires to place learners at the centre of the curriculum and develop their capacities as Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors. All four capacities will be developed throughout this unit. This unit will develop the literacy and communication skills of the learners by way of formative and summative assessments. Independent learning is required throughout this unit, whilst the opportunity is available for group learning through formative tasks. The subject of economics demands independent thinking, and through reasoned evaluation encourages learners to reach satisfactory conclusions. Further opportunity is offered to develop technological skills by way of researching via the internet, the production of word documents, PowerPoint presentations, blogs and/or the creation of a website. Collectively these skills contribute towards the creation of a **Successful Learner**.

Time management skills should improve during the delivery of this unit, as should the ability to relate to others through formative tasks. The topics in *Economics A* should allow the learner to develop their own thoughts of the world around them, and they will be given the opportunity to express these views within the classroom setting. This should lead to the emergence of a **Confident Individual**, particularly if they gain success in the achievement of the unit.

Economics A can also contribute to learners becoming **Responsible Citizens** by allowing the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of the key ideas that underpin modern economies/societies.

Learners can become **Effective Contributors** to society by learning to work together effectively in teams within the class setting. This can be achieved through group-work where they can apply critical thinking within new contexts. In planning group tasks, evaluating data and presenting their findings, learners will also develop problem solving skills. Both Oral and Written Communication skills will also be developed. This can be achieved through written work, individual PowerPoint presentations, and the creation of blogs and websites.

All these skills can be developed within the unit.

History of changes to unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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General information for learners

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This section will help you decide whether this is the unit for you by explaining what the unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

The unit provides an overview of the nature of economics by introducing you to the general approaches taken in the discipline, the main methods used in the study of economics and some of the political economic thinking that underpins the discipline.

At the end of the unit you will undertake an assessment. You will be given the task/question at an appropriate point in the delivery of the unit. The assessment may be a written essay of approximately 1,500 words or a set of structured questions with an expected response of approximately 1,500 words or an oral presentation of 10–12 minutes or a poster exhibition of 10–12 minutes' oral explanation or another method decided by your centre. Your centre will inform you of the chosen method, which will be *open-book*. This means that you will be allowed access to materials (eg, text books, notes, VLE).

As you progress through the unit material, you will be encouraged to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6, *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5, *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6, *Working with Others* at SCQF level 5 and *Numeracy* at SCQF level 5 by the types of activities you will experience.

You will also be given opportunities throughout the unit to develop as a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.