



Higher National Unit Specification

General information

Unit title: Economics D: Economics Today (SCQF level 8)

Unit code: FJ35 35

Superclass: EB

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Unit purpose

This unit is designed to enable learners to critically evaluate a recent economics article, making reference to economic theory and to assess its contribution to the development of economic knowledge. This unit is intended for learners who have a basis and knowledge of economics and of research methods and wish to further develop this in a practical way.

Outcomes

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

- 1 Critically evaluate a recent economics theory/article.
- 2 Evaluate the contribution of a recent economics theory/article to the development of economic knowledge.

Credit points and level

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

Recommended entry to the unit

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

In addition, learners would benefit from achievement of HN Unit *Economics A: Introduction to Economics*, HN Unit *Economics B: Economic Theory and Application* and HN Unit *Economics C: Economics — The Global Perspective*.

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 HND Social Sciences award. 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

Critically evaluate a recent economics theory/article.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Research recent economics theory/articles
- ◆ Understanding of one recent economics theory/article
- ◆ Critical evaluation of one recent economics theory/article

Outcome 2

Evaluate the contribution of a recent economics theory/article to the development of economic knowledge.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ The ability to set the theory/article in context
- ◆ The ability to evaluate the contribution of the recent economics theory/article to the development of economic knowledge

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:

- ◆ Critically evaluate one recent economics theory/article
- ◆ Set the selected economics theory/article in the context of appropriate economic knowledge and theory
- ◆ Critically evaluate the contribution of the selected economics theory/article to economic knowledge

This unit will be holistically assessed by a single instrument of assessment covering all unit outcomes. This will take the form of one open-book assessment handed out or negotiated at an appropriate point in the delivery of the unit (generally near the start of the unit) and a submission date set. The format chosen will provide evidence of all items listed under the knowledge and skills section.

A written response should be 2,000 words approximately; an oral response should be 12–15 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 unit is designed to be studied in progression after the HN Unit *Economics A: Introduction to Economics*, HN Unit *Economics B: Economic Theory and Application* and HN Unit *Economics C — The Global Perspective*. The unit is part of the HND Social Sciences Group Award. It could be studied as a stand-alone unit but learners will have to read the background theory relating to the article chosen.

This unit aims to develop the learner's critical analysis and evaluative skills. Learners will have an opportunity to choose a recent economics article with guidance from a tutor. The tutor may provide a range of articles for the learners to choose from or guide learners as to the appropriateness of an article of their own choice. The purpose of this unit is to enable learners to develop their knowledge and understanding of the contextualisation and contribution of economics articles to economic knowledge.

The unit is designed to ensure that learners have an appreciation of the dynamic nature of economics and an understanding of the contribution of a recent economics publication. Learners will require access to a number of recent economics publications. These could either be in the same topic area or cover a variety of topics but should relate to an area of economics studied in one of the previous HN Economics units. Appropriate material could be identified in consultation with colleagues in the FE/HE sector.

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this unit

Learners should be taught how to select an appropriate article and appropriate economic theory should be discussed with learners. Articles could be from any area of economics, so for instance from economic thought, environmental economics, public sector, private sector, government policies or international issues.

Given that the purpose of the unit is to critically evaluate and assess a recent economic article it would be appropriate for delivering lecturers to draw up a short list of suitable topics for investigation from which learners would make a choice. Learners should make their choice in discussion with their lecturer. This will allow for both learner 'freedom' to choose a particular area of interest, and lecturer input, guidance and support to be achieved. Given the higher order nature of this task there will need to be a degree of 'structured guidance' from tutors. Given that access to and selection of appropriate material are crucial to successful completion of the assignment it may be appropriate for FE centres to liaise and consult with colleagues in Higher Education centres. Moreover, it would also be most helpful for FE centres to liaise and consult with each other on this matter given the limited resources at their disposal.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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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 report with an expected learner response of approximately 2,000 words *or* an individual oral presentation *or* poster exhibition with expected learner's response of 12–15 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 2,000 words. It is important that it is designed with an agreed format to meet all knowledge and skills required across all outcomes.

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.

Learners should be taught how to select an appropriate article and appropriate economic theory should be discussed with learners. Articles could be from any area of economics, so for instance from economic thought, environmental economics, public sector, private sector, government policies or international issues.

Tutors should make learners aware of the importance of the judicious selection of appropriate academic sources, which will be used to support or refute claims the learners make in the course of their critical analysis of a chosen article. They should be encouraged to choose academic sources rather than generic search engines, to enable them to be more confident of information, particularly as this unit is at SCQF level 8.

While this is an intellectually challenging and stimulating unit it is, however, also one that presents learners with the opportunity to expand and develop critical economic skills appropriate for higher level study.

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 must be done individually as each learner has to show evidence of meeting all evidence requirements, so a group presentation would not be suitable.

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. Authentication of the learner's work is essential. It would be helpful to collect notes or PPT presentation materials from the learner as further evidence of meeting SCQF level 8 in the presentation.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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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. The time across all the evidence requirements covered would be 12–15 minutes (not 12–15 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 for this unit (open-book). This may be done by questioning a learner about their work, by seeing drafts of work under construction, by having a partial write-up in the 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 re-assessment.

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 re-assessment. 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 re-assessment.

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 all five Core Skills. It can also support the development of other transferable skills, such as, essay/report writing, referencing, citation and bibliography skills and thinking, analytical and critical skills.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Economics D: Economics Today (SCQF level 8)

It is possible to develop **Communication at SCQF level 6** if the assessment takes the form of an essay/report or oral presentation. **For written communication at SCQF level 6 the skill is: produce well-structured written communication on complex topics.** To develop this skill learners can be encouraged in both formative and summative assessment to present all essential ideas/information and supporting detail in a logical and effective order; use a structure that is organised and use paragraphing to make distinctions between facts, opinions, arguments and conclusion, use a format, layout, and word choice which are appropriate to the content and context, and use spelling, punctuation, vocabulary and sentence structures which are consistently accurate. It is part of the evidence requirements for the unit to ensure learners convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent way. This can be stressed in delivery and in formative work, as well as being considered in summative assessment.

The learners could be tasked with producing a written communication, such as a report or essay, which presents, analyses, and evaluates a substantial body of information. These skills can be developed through formative activities, such as providing an essay on the background to the chosen topic or on a major related study, without being formally assessed for certification of the Core Skill. The articles that learners choose should be sufficiently complex to easily fit with SCQF level 6.

In developing report or essay writing skills learners should also be encouraged to use an appropriate referencing method, such as Harvard, for any formative or summative reports. Referencing, citation and bibliography skills are best developed using the vehicle of formative essay or report writing. It is hoped learners will have been introduced to these skills by undertaking *Economics A, B or C* units. This unit is useful for consolidation of the skills. The assessment for the unit could be a written report or essay that would be to a prescribed format but would include the need for referencing and citation skills.

For Oral Communication at SCQF level 6 the skill is: produce and respond to oral communication on a complex topic. In both formative and summative assessment, the learner could be encouraged to give a detailed oral presentation on the topic chosen for summative assessment of this unit as this would be sufficiently complex. The specific skills of using an appropriate level of vocabulary, consistent spoken language structures and formality, conveying all essential information, opinions, or ideas with supporting detail accurately and coherently, and with varied emphasis as appropriate and responding to others, taking account of their contributions would be developed in an oral presentation. Although a summative assessment would require individual work and individual presentation, a formative assessment could be constructed that would encourage learners to work in a small group, with a few people contributing to the presentation on their evaluation of an article. This may allow a learner to experience the demands of oral presentation before choosing this as an option for summative assessment of the unit (if the centre is able to give that choice).

As it is important that learners submit a bibliography (or reference section) in a standard format, such as Harvard, for the summative assessment, even oral assessment methods should incorporate an appropriate bibliography.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Economics D: Economics Today (SCQF level 8)

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.

For the Core Skill of *Numeracy* at SCQF level 5 the skills are: ‘Using Number, apply a range of numerical skills in various everyday situations’ and ‘Using Graphical Information, interpret and communicate graphical information in everyday situations. The development of this Core Skill will very much depend on the article chosen for evaluation. There are many economics articles which do include tables and graphs.

For the Core Skills of *Working with Others* at SCQF level 6, the skills are ‘Working Co-operatively with Others, in complex interactions, work with others co-operatively on an activity and/or activities’, and ‘Review Co-operative Contribution, review work with others in a co-operative activity and/or activities’ Formatively, learners may be involved in complex interactions and working with others co-operatively on an activity and/or activities. It would be appropriate to encourage learners to reflect on their own contribution to any group activity.

For the Core Skills of *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6, the skills are ‘Critical Thinking’, ‘Planning and Organising’ and ‘Reviewing and Evaluating’. These skills will be developed at SCQF level 6 throughout this unit particularly in planning the tasks and the need to evaluate strategies. Tutors 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. Tutors may actively choose to further develop this skill by setting tasks for group activity and arranging joint information feedback sessions. This Core Skill could be developed without formal certification.

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.

Curriculum for Excellence

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. The four capacities will be developed throughout this unit.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Economics D: Economics Today (SCQF level 8)

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, as it is an independent research task, whilst the opportunity is available for group learning through the summative assessment. 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 and during the summative assessment task. The topics that form the basis for the research in *Economics D* 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 D* can also contribute to learners becoming **Responsible Citizens** by allowing the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of the key economic developments that underpin economies/societies.

Learners can become **Effective Contributors** to society by learning to work together effectively in teams within the class setting or outwith in carrying out their research task. 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

Unit title: Economics D: Economics Today

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.

This unit is designed to enable you to critically evaluate a recent economics article, making reference to economic theory and to assess its contribution to the development of economic knowledge. Your work will build upon economic theory and applications already studied in HN Unit *Economics A: Introduction to Economics*, HN Unit *Economics B: Economic Theory and Application* and HN Unit *Economics C: Applied Economics — The Global Perspective*. You will learn how to critically analyse and evaluate up-to-date economics literature and how such literature is contextualised with economic theory.

The evaluation will be conducted partly in structured class time and partly in your own time and will be detailed work. The assessment will be open-book. This means that you will be allowed access to materials (eg, text books, notes, VLE).

The details of the task will be handed out to be completed at a date specified by your lecturer. It should be completed according to a prescribed format and could be submitted as a written report, essay or an oral presentation based on a prescribed format given by your lecturer. It is expected that a written response will be approximately 2,000 words and an oral presentation would be 12–15 minutes in duration. You may also be allowed to provide the evidence requirements in the form of an individual blog or creation of a website, with approximately 2,000 words. It is important that it is designed with an agreed format to meet all knowledge and skills required across all outcomes. Your lecturer will inform you of which method(s) your centre will support.

As you progress through this unit you will be encouraged to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6, *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* at SCQF level 5, *Numeracy* at SCQF level 5, *Working with Others* at SCQF level 6 and *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6 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.