



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Geography C: Environmental Geography

Unit code: FJ38 35

Superclass: RF

Publication date: October 2012

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: 02

Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to enable candidates to analyse and evaluate one of the most relevant and crucial issues in the world today - the impact of human activity on the environment. Local, national, EU, and global contexts will be used as appropriate. This Unit provides an opportunity to examine the impact of development on the environment and to explore the themes of sustainability and conservation.

This Unit is intended for those candidates who already have a basis of knowledge and understanding of Geography and wish to develop this further.

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

- 1 Explain the impact of human activity on the environment.
- 2 Evaluate strategies for reducing the impact of human activity on the environment.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

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

In addition, candidates would benefit from achievement of HN Unit *Geography A: The Geography of Inequality* and HN Unit *Geography B: Urban Geography*

Ultimately, entry is at the discretion of the centre.

General information (cont)

Credit points and level

2 Higher National Unit credits at SCQF level 8: (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8*)

**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.*

Core Skills

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

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

- 1 Outcome 1 will be assessed by one closed book instrument of assessment covering all evidence requirements for two issues.
- 2 Outcome 2 will be assessed by one open book assessment covering all evidence requirements for this outcome.

An exemplar instrument of assessment and marking guidelines has been produced to indicate the national standard of achievement required at SCQF level 8

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Geography C: Environmental Geography

Unit code: FJ38 35

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

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Explain the impact of human activity on the environment.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ The main environmental issues
- ◆ The interactions and inter relationships between the main environmental issues
- ◆ The positive and negative impacts of human activity on the environment with reference to local, national, EU, and global examples

Note: The main environmental issues are: Climate change/global warming, Pollution (air, sea, water etc), Deforestation (particularly tropical rainforest), Desertification/Land degradation. Others may also be appropriate, particularly in a local context.

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ explain the characteristics of one of the main environmental issues.
- ◆ analyse the interactions and inter relationships between at least two of the main environmental issues.
- ◆ identify and explain the positive and negative impact of human activity on one of the main areas/environments at risk.

This part of the Unit will be assessed by a closed book assessment, which means candidates should be assessed without the use of notes, textbooks, VLE or other materials in a supervised setting.

All issues should be taught but only two are required for assessment purposes. The issues used for assessment should be changed each year for sampling purposes.

Candidates should be prepared to be assessed on all environmental issues but would be assessed on only two.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Geography C: Environmental Geography

Assessment Guidelines

There is a wide variety of methods of assessment that would allow candidates to meet the evidence requirements. The following are suggestions and there may be other methods that would be suitable. Centres are reminded that Prior Verification would help to ensure that the national standard is being met.

This assessment could take the form of a set of unseen structured questions requiring a response of approximately 1000 words across all questions *or* an essay, also requiring 1000 words *or* an oral response to set questions requiring the candidate to respond in sustained detail for 8 minutes *or* an oral presentation of 8 minutes duration *or* any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements. As this is a closed book assessment, it would not be appropriate for candidates to use visual aids (such as Powerpoint presentations or posters) in the oral presentation, rather it would be sustained presentation without aid of notes. Broad guidance on the area to be assessed will be given one week prior to the assessment date. It is likely that if it is a written assessment it will take 90 minutes to complete.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Geography C: Environmental Geography

Outcome 2

Evaluate strategies for reducing the impact of human activity on the environment.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Definitions of sustainability
- ◆ Examples of legislation, policies and initiatives designed to conserve the environment
- ◆ Drawing valid conclusions from geographical information

Note: appropriate geographical information could include: maps, tables, models, diagrams, graphs.

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ define sustainability
- ◆ describe legislation, policies and initiatives designed to conserve the environment
- ◆ critically evaluate strategies for reducing the impact of human activity on the environment
- ◆ draw valid conclusions from geographical information

Note: Strategies should relate to one **major** environmental issue, for example Global Warming (although the strategies chosen may address several issues)

The assessment will be *open book*. This means that candidates will be allowed access to materials (e.g. text books, notes, VLE).

Regardless of the assessment method chosen, the candidate must submit a bibliography presented in a standard referencing format, such as Harvard.

Assessment Guidelines

The task will be handed out to be completed at a date specified by the Centre. It should be completed according to a prearranged format and could take the form of an open book essay *or* set of structured questions with an expected candidate response of approximately 2000 words *or* an individual oral presentation *or* poster exhibition with expected candidate's response of 15 minutes in presentation *or* explanation of poster, a pod cast *or* any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements. It is recommended that oral presentations are recorded in some form for external verification purposes. Candidates could also provide the evidence requirements in the form of an individual Blog, or creation of a website, with approximately 2000 words.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Geography C: Environmental Geography

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 80 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This Unit belongs to a suite of Geography Units within HNC and HND Social Sciences Group Awards. This Unit leads on from *Geography A: The Geography of Inequality* and *Geography B: Urban Geography* and prepares candidates for *Geography D: Geography Today*. The Unit can be delivered as a free-standing Unit or as part of the HND Social Sciences Group Award.

For Outcome 1 candidates should be given an overview of the main environmental issues. Learning and teaching at this stage should concentrate on establishing a basic understanding of the concepts and evidence relating to the issues and clarifying the key terminology. Two main issues should be selected for more detailed study in order to illustrate the inter relationships between them and the impact of human activity, eg case studies from areas of tropical rainforests allow consideration of climate change, erosion, flooding and ecosystem impact. Acid rain, global warming and ozone depletion can be used to illustrate inter relationships and the impact of human activity. Case studies of floods, storms, pollutant pathways, biodegradability and marine pollution are examples of other topics that tutors may wish to explore with candidates.

Outcome 2 requires the themes of sustainability, protection and conservation to be addressed and candidates should be encouraged to reflect on the concept of sustainability and to examine how this concept is applied in a variety of situations. Candidates will also be required to have knowledge of a range of policies/legislation/innovations applicable to different areal contexts.

One major environmental issue and a range of geographical information should be used when critically evaluating these policies/initiatives etc. in terms of reducing the impact of human activity on the environment.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

There is no single best way to deliver this Unit. The Unit can be delivered in a flexible manner to suit the learning styles of the candidates, e.g. formal lectures, group discussions, tutorial based study, field study/audio visual stimuli etc. Candidates should also be encouraged to carry out further research and should be encouraged to use articles from quality newspapers and other credible sources along with other appropriate media sources (e.g. TV documentaries, political debates on environmental issues) to ensure that they are as current and up-to-date as possible.

There are opportunities to make links with other Social Science disciplines eg. Politics/Economics

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Geography C: Environmental Geography

It is acceptable to cover the debates/issues and introduce the idea of sustainability prior to giving the open book essay to candidates. The submission date could then be given, whilst you continue exposition of the other topics not yet covered. The closed book should generally be given after all the major environmental issues have been taught.

Tutors should make candidates aware of the importance of the judicious selection of appropriate academic sources in researching the topics. They should be encouraged to choose academic sources rather than generic search engines, to enable them to be confident of information and to be equipped to progress to study at SCQF level 9.

Centres should design an appropriate assessment instrument based on a method that is suitable in allowing candidates to meet the evidence requirements. This can be written or oral (depending on the needs of the candidates 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 candidate has to show evidence of meeting all evidence requirements, so a group presentation would not be suitable.

A Centre can choose to use a mixture of methods across a cohort, as it may be more suitable for some candidates to give a written response and for others to use an oral method.

Centres should make sure they can authenticate each candidate's work for Outcome 2 (open book). This may be done by questioning each candidate about their work, by seeing drafts of work under construction, by having partial write-up in presence of an assessor or by using an anti-plagiarism tool, such as Turnitin or SafeAssign, which checks Internet sites.

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.

Remediation for Outcome 1 could be done by oral clarification for minor omissions or to clarify minor detail. If additional information is required this can be added, as long as it is in total approximately 100 words or less per outcome. If these conditions cannot be met, then the candidate should be reassessed using a different set of questions for Outcome 1.

Remediation for Outcome 2 should be done by a review of the original work. Candidates 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 candidate tackle a different topic or question, then that new submission would count as a reassessment.

In oral work, candidates 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.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Geography C: Environmental Geography

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

The delivery and assessment of this Unit may contribute towards the development of Core Skills of *Communication, Working with Others, Numeracy, Problem Solving* and *ICT*. 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.

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 candidates 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.

The candidates could be tasked with producing a written communication which presents, analyses, and evaluates a substantial body of information. These skills can be developed through formative activities, such as shorter essays on each topic or on a major theorist, without being formally assessed for certification of Core Skill. The topics that Centres can choose are complex so should easily fit with SCQF level 6.

It is important to develop report writing or essay-writing skills for candidates' future progression. In doing this candidates should also be encouraged to use an appropriate referencing method, such as Harvard, for any formative or summative essays. Referencing, citation and bibliography skills are best developed using the vehicle of formative essay writing. This may have been developed within the Geography B Unit, if that was studied previously. The development can continue in this Unit. The Assessment for Outcome 2 could be a written essay that 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 candidate could be encouraged to give a detailed oral presentation on the topic chosen for summative assessment of Outcome 1 or another topic, which could be used as formative work, as these 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 candidates to work in a small group, with a few people contributing to the presentation. This could be on a particular location/issue with associated impacts and/or strategies.. This may allow a candidate 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).

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Geography C: Environmental Geography

As it is important that candidates recognise the need to use a bibliography (or reference section) in a standard format, such as Harvard, for citation purposes then even oral assessment methods should consider incorporating an appropriate bibliography to encourage development of this skill.

For the Core Skill 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’. Candidates will be involved in complex interactions. Formative activities could be used to encourage candidates to work co-operatively with others. A group presentation task or information gathering task could be the basis of developing specific skills relevant to this Core Skill. It would be appropriate to encourage candidates to reflect on their own contribution to any group activity, whether that is a formative oral presentation or research for an issue or debate, which may be done as a group activity.

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. Specific areas of accessing information using Internet searches or VLE use and providing and creating information can be developed in such tasks.

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 using geographical information for Outcome 2 lends itself well to development of Numeracy at SCQF level 5. Candidates can be given sample calculations to work out and data presented in tables and graphs to analyse as formative work. It is possible to develop these skills alongside the work done for the Unit ‘Research and Methodology’, where calculations are part of the knowledge and skills developed. As part of the summative assessment candidates will have to work with statistical data, carry out calculations, present information in graphical form and draw conclusions based on graphs, tables, maps and data.

For the Core Skill of Problem Solving at SCQF level 6 the skills are: ‘Analysing a complex situation or issue’, ‘planning, organising and completing a complex task’ 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 for reducing the impact of human activity on the environment. 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.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Geography C: Environmental Geography

Thinking, analytical and critical skills could also be developed by posing questions at appropriate points in the delivery, enabling discussion and promoting the need for candidates 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. 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 geography demands analytical skills, independent thinking, and through reasoned evaluation encourages learners to reach satisfactory conclusions. Numerical skills are improved through analysing statistical and graphical data. 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 Geography C 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 lend to the emergence of a **Confident Individual**, particularly if they gain success in the achievement of the Unit.

Geography C can also contribute to learners becoming **Responsible Citizens** by allowing the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of the key environmental issues in both the developed and developing world today. Candidates will be encouraged to develop a clearer understanding of how the issues have arisen, the consequences for individuals and wider society and to consider possible solutions. Furthermore, informed, ethical views of complex issues can be developed, as can an understanding of different cultures.

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. As individuals some learners may even change their attitudes and behaviour as a result of having a wider understanding of the issues related to the environment.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Geography C: Environmental Geography

Open learning

This Unit could be delivered by open or distance learning; however, it would require planning by the centre to ensure sufficiency and authenticity of candidate evidence.

Arrangements would have to be made to ensure that the assessment for Outcome 1 was conducted closed book and under supervision. For Outcome 2 a written response in the form of an essay or answers to structured questions could be posted or emailed to the assessor or uploaded onto a VLE. An oral presentation could be used that would be recorded on DVD and sent to the assessor, or could be done using video-conferencing or web-link and observed by the assessor.

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.

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Clarification of remediation and reassessment statements.	23/10/12

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2011, 2012

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational purposes provided that no profit is derived from reproduction and that, if reproduced in part, the source is acknowledged.

Additional copies of this Unit specification can be purchased from the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Please contact the Customer Contact Centre, telephone 0845 279 1000.

General information for candidates

Unit title: Geography C: Environmental Geography

In this Unit you will have the opportunity to examine environmental aspects of the world in which we live and look at some of the most challenging issues that face our world today – issues such as global warming, deforestation and land degradation.

Links between these environmental issues and human activity will be explored and the concept of sustainability will be introduced. A number of global/national/local strategies and initiatives will be examined and there is a particular emphasis on evaluating strategies to reduce the implication of human activity on the environment.

In the first part of the Unit the questions will focus on the impact of human activity on the environment and will be assessed by a closed book assessment, which means you will be assessed without the use of notes, textbooks, VLE or other materials in a supervised setting. This could take the form of a set of unseen structured questions requiring a response of approximately 1000 words across all questions *or* an essay, also requiring approximately 1000 words *or* an oral response to set questions requiring you to respond in sustained detail for approximately 8 minutes *or* an oral presentation of approximately 8 minutes duration *or* another method decided by your Centre. Your centre will inform you of the chosen method in good time. You will know the broad area to be assessed one week prior to the assessment date. It is likely that if it is a written assessment it will take 90 minutes to complete.

You will also produce one open book essay/report of approximately 2000 words. In this essay/report you will analyse and evaluate the impact of human activity on the environment, and evaluate strategies for reducing the impact. The question will be handed out at an appropriate point in the delivery of the unit and a submission date set. This means that you will be allowed access to materials (e.g. text books, notes, VLE). The task will be handed out to be completed at a date specified by the Centre. It should be completed according to a prearranged format and could take the form of an open book essay *or* a set of structured questions with an expected response of approximately 2000 words *or* an individual oral presentation *or* a poster exhibition with expected response of 15 minutes in presentation or explanation of poster, a pod cast *or* any other method decided by your Centre. You may be able to provide the evidence requirements in the form of an individual Blog, or creation of a website, with approximately 2000 words. Your Centre will advise you of the methods chosen for both parts of this Unit.

A feedback session with your tutor/lecturer will ensure the authenticity of your work.

As you progress through the unit material, you will be encouraged to develop the core skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6, *Working with Others* at SCQF level 6, *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6, *Numeracy* at SCQF level 5 and *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5.

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