



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Geography D: Geography Today

Unit code: FJ3C 35

Superclass: RF

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Unit purpose

This unit is designed to develop candidates' research and evaluation skills. Candidates will be able to analyse a theory and/or article and evaluate its relevance to geography today. This unit is intended for candidates who have a basis and knowledge of Geography and wish to further develop this in a practical way.

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

- 1 Critically evaluate a relevant geographical theory/article.
- 2 Explain the relevance of the theory/article to geography today.

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*, HN Unit *Geography B: Urban Geography* and HN Unit *Geography C: Environmental Geography*.

Ultimately, entry is at the discretion of the centre.

General information (cont)

Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit credit at SCQF level 8: (8 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 Skill of *Communication* at SCQF level 6 and the Core Skill of *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5, 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

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).

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

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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

Critically evaluate a relevant geographical theory/article.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Ability to select an appropriate geographical theory/article
- ◆ Critical evaluation skills in relation to the geographical theory/article

Outcome 2

Explain the relevance of the theory/article to geography today.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ relevant and appropriate geographical knowledge to set the theory/article in context
- ◆ the relevance of the geographical theory/article to geographical knowledge today.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Geography D: Geography Today

Evidence Requirements for Outcomes 1 and 2

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

- ◆ select an appropriate article/theory
- ◆ explain the overview of the article/theory
- ◆ contextualize the theory/article
- ◆ analyse and critically evaluate the content of the theory/article
- ◆ describe the relevance of the theory/article to geography today, include the use of other theories/articles
- ◆ report the findings and conclusions

Note: the geographical theory/article must cover a geographical topic that the candidate has studied in previous Higher National Geography Units

This is an open book assessment completed according to a prescribed format set in advance. The format chosen will provide evidence of all items listed under the knowledge and skills section. The candidate should choose an appropriate geographical article/theory and setting it in context of previous studies, analyse its content. This should then be evaluated in terms of its relevance to geography today. Other geographical theories/articles should be used which either support the chosen article/theory or which provide an alternative viewpoint.

In response to the task set, candidates must convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent form.

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

The report must contain evidence of all aspects of the knowledge and skills sections for Outcomes 1 and 2.

Assessment Guidelines for Outcomes 1 and 2

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 exercise should test critical and evaluative skills. A feedback session with the candidate should ensure the authenticity of the candidate's work, as this is open book.

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.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Geography D: Geography Today

This assessment could take the form of an open book report with an expected candidate response of approximately 2000 words *or* an individual oral presentation *or* a poster exhibition with expected candidate's response of 15 minutes in presentation or explanation of poster *or* any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements. Candidates could also provide the evidence requirements in the form of an individual Blog or creation of a website, with approximately 2000 words. It is important that it is designed with an agreed format to meet all knowledge and skills required across all Outcomes.

It is possible to combine the oral presentation with the poster exhibition, where candidate outlines one or two areas in a poster and covers the others in an oral presentation on the same occasion. Where this occurs, the total time for all aspects would be 15 minutes (rather than 15 minutes each). See 'Guidance on delivery and assessment' for further details. It is recommended that oral presentations are recorded in some form.

Tutors should make candidates aware of the importance of the judicious selection of appropriate academic sources, as they prepare for production of their response.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Geography D: Geography Today

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

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*, *Geography B: Urban Geography* and *Geography C: Environmental Geography*. The Unit can be delivered as a free-standing Unit or as part of the HND Social Sciences Group Award.

This unit is designed to give candidates the opportunity to evaluate in depth one geographical article/theory. The **topic** of the article/theory should be negotiated with the candidate and should come from previous HN Geography units (Geography A, B or C). It could be, for example, an article on:

Global Warming

Urban Regeneration

Shanty Towns

Globalisation (if a global context was chosen in Geography A: The Geography of Inequality)

UK Inner City deprivation (if a UK context was chosen in Geography A: The Geography of Inequality)

Or any other suitable topic covered in previous units.

If centres/candidates would prefer to examine a specific theory, there are many suitable examples including: Christaller's central place theory, urban models (Burgess, Hoyt, Mann etc), Malthus' theories on population growth and food supply etc.

Regardless of whether an article or theory is chosen, candidates would set this in context of previous studies and examine its relevance to geography today.

Depending on the availability of resources and/or the needs and preferences of the group, the same topic and/or theory/article could be chosen by everyone but it is expected that each candidate would use a different selection of articles/theories to support their findings.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

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

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Geography D: Geography Today

Given that the purpose of the Unit is to critically evaluate and assess a geographical theory/article it would be appropriate for delivering lecturers to draw up a short list of suitable topics for investigation from which candidates would make a choice. Candidates should make their choice in discussion with their lecturer. This will allow for both candidate '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.

After initial briefing sessions, candidates would be expected to undertake most of the work themselves with the tutor providing advice and support. Once the topic has been chosen, a suitable article/theory must be selected. The tutor should ensure that the article/theory is sufficiently complex/in-depth to allow the candidate to successfully complete the given task.

Once the candidates have outlined their theory/article and set it in context of previous studies, it should be analysed, for example if it is a theory, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the theory, in what contexts can it be applied, is it still applicable today? If it is an article, is there any particular viewpoint, what is the author's stance, does it appear to be biased in any way etc.?

In order to support their findings, candidates should try to find articles/ theories with similar/differing viewpoints. These should be used to examine the relevance to geography today.

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 more confident of information, particularly as this Unit is at SCQF level 8.

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.

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 a candidate's work for this Unit (open book). This may be done by questioning a candidate about their work, by seeing drafts of work under construction, by having partial write-up in presence of assessor or by using an anti-plagiarism tool, such as Turnitin or SafeAssign, which checks Internet sites.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Geography D: Geography Today

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 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.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

The delivery and assessment of this Unit may contribute towards the development the Core Skills of *Communication* and *ICT*. 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.

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. It is part of the evidence requirements for the Unit to ensure candidates 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 candidates could be tasked with producing a written communication, such as a report, 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 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.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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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 reports. Referencing, citation and bibliography skills are best developed using the vehicle of formative essay or report writing. It is hoped candidates will have been introduced to these skills by undertaking Geography A, B or C Units. This Unit is useful for consolidation of the skills. The assessment for the Unit could be a written report 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 candidate 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 candidates to work in a small group, with a few people contributing to the presentation. This could be on a specific theory/article agreed by the whole group. 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).

As it is important that candidates 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.

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.

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.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Geography D: Geography Today

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 topic(s) chosen in Geography 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 lend to the emergence of a **Confident Individual**, particularly if they gain success in the achievement of the Unit.

Geography D can also contribute to learners becoming **Responsible Citizens** by allowing the opportunity to develop in-depth knowledge and understanding of a key geographical issues relevant to the world today. Candidates will be encouraged to develop a clearer understanding of how the issue(s) 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 their chosen topic.

Open learning

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

For the Unit assessment a written response in the form of a report could be posted or emailed to the assessor or uploaded onto a VLE. An oral presentation could be delivered and recorded on DVD and sent to the assessor, or could be done using video-conferencing or web-link and observed by the assessor.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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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 requirements.	13/11/12

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General information for candidates

Unit title: Geography D: Geography Today

This Unit aims to develop your research and evaluation skills. You will choose a particular Geographical theory/article on a topic already studied in HN Unit *Geography A: The Geography of Inequality*; HN Unit *Geography B: Urban Geography* or HN Unit *Geography C: Environmental Geography*. You will analyse the theory/article and evaluate its relevance to geography today.

Your tutor will work closely with you to identify appropriate material and to provide on-going support.

The task 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 (e.g. text books, notes, VLE).

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 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 approximately 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 2000 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.

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 and the Core Skill of *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5.

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.