Higher National Unit Specification

General information

Unit title: Philosophy D: Normative Ethics (SCQF level 8)

Unit code: FKY7 35

Superclass:	DE
Publication date:	November 2018
Source:	Scottish Qualifications Authority
Version:	02

Unit purpose

This unit is intended for learners who have a basis and knowledge of philosophy and wish to further develop this in a practical way. This unit is designed to develop learners' knowledge of moral philosophy by examining a number of classic normative ethical theories. The unit will look at key concepts of these theories and apply them to contemporary ethical issues. This unit requires learners to develop their independent learning skills further in investigating a chosen issue and in researching contemporary contributions to the debate.

Outcomes

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

1 Explain contrasting normative ethical theories.
2 Evaluate contrasting normative ethical theories.

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 would benefit from achievement of HN unit *Philosophy A: An Introduction to Philosophical Debate,* HN unit *Philosophy B: Classic Texts in Philosophy,* and HN unit *Philosophy C: An Introduction to Logical Analysis*.

Ultimately, entry is at the discretion of the centre.

Higher National Unit Specification: General information (cont)

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Core Skills

Achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following Core Skills component:

Core Skill component   Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6

There are also opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills which are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit specification.

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

Explain contrasting normative ethical theories.

Knowledge and/or skills

♦   Key concepts of contrasting normative ethical theories
♦   Strengths and weaknesses of the contrasting normative ethical theories

Suggested normative theories can be found in the *Guidance on the content and context for this unit* section.

Outcome 2

Evaluate contrasting normative ethical theories.

Knowledge and/or skills

♦   Contemporary ethical problem or issue
♦   Possible responses to the problem or issue by the contrasting normative theories
♦   Evaluation of the responses to the problem or issue

Suggested ethical problems or issues can be found in the *Guidance on the content and context for this unit* section.

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:

♦   Identify key concepts of contrasting normative ethical theories
♦   Explain key concepts of contrasting normative ethical theories
♦   Apply contrasting normative theories to a contemporary ethical problem or issue
♦   Identify possible responses to the problem or issue by the contrasting normative theories
♦   Evaluate possible responses to the problem or issue by the contrasting normative theories

For Outcomes 1 and 2, the assessment will be open-book and should be completed according to a prescribed format set in advance. The format chosen will provide evidence of all items listed under the knowledge and/or skills section for both outcomes.

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

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.
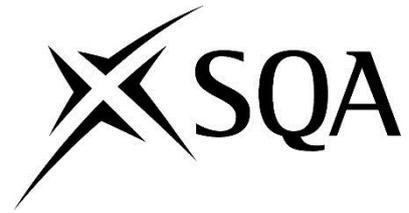
Higher National Unit Support Notes

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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 is one of a suite of units that covers philosophy within HNC/D Social Sciences Group Awards. The unit can be taught as a stand-alone unit or as part of the HND Social Sciences Group Award along with the units *Philosophy A: An Introduction to Philosophical Debate, Philosophy B: Classic Texts in Philosophy* and *Philosophy C: An Introduction to Logical Analysis.*

The aim of this unit is to introduce learners to a range of moral theories and evaluate them by applying them to a chosen moral problem or issue. This will require learners to study at least two contrasting normative theories. The choice of these theories is at the discretion of the centre but suggested normative theories could be:

♦ Utilitarianism
♦ Kantian moral theory
♦ Virtue theory
♦ Ethical egoism

Each theory taught should be illustrated in terms of its major exponents, component concepts, and common criticisms. It is also expected that tutors explore variations of the theories (eg, Neo-Kantianism or Preference Utilitarianism) and contemporary supporters (eg, Peter Singer). Learners should be permitted some choice in their selection of the moral issue: either suggesting their own or choosing one from a restricted list. To meet the requirements of the level of the unit they should also work as independently as possible. Suggested moral problems or issues could be:

♦ war
♦ animal rights
♦ punishment
♦ abortion
♦ environmental ethics
♦ euthanasia

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this unit

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.

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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.

Tutors should make learners aware of the importance of the judicious selection of appropriate academic sources. 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 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. 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.

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 the moral issue and would cover the application of theory to the issue in an oral presentation using PPT or a mind map as a visual aid. 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 each learner's work. This may be done by questioning the 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.

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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 Core Skills in *Communication* and *Information and Communication Technology*. 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 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.

The learners 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 moral theories or on a moral issue, without being formally assessed for certification of the Core Skill. The tasks are complex, so should easily fit with SCQF level 6.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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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, for any formative or summative essays. Referencing, citation and bibliography skills are best developed using the vehicle of formative essay writing.

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 moral theories studied, possibly in the context of a seminar. 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 or in an oral explanation of a poster exhibition. 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. 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 a choice).

For the Core Skill of *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* 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.

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. 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 philosophy 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**.

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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 *Philosophy D* should allow the learner to develop their own views with regard to a number of ethical debates, 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.

Philosophy D can also contribute to learners becoming **Responsible Citizens** by allowing the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of moral issues of major importance to society. For example, the discussion of issues such as abortion, euthanasia or animal rights will give learners the chance to develop their own personal responses to these issues and express them in a clear and articulate way.

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.

The Critical Thinking component of Problem Solving at SCQF level 6 is embedded in this unit. When a learner achieves the unit, their Core Skills profile will also be updated to include this component.

History of changes to unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Core Skills Component Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6 embedded.	30/11/18

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.

This unit is designed to develop your knowledge of moral philosophy by examining a number of classic normative ethical theories. The unit will look at key concepts of these theories and apply them to contemporary ethical issues, such as euthanasia or animal rights. In this unit you will further develop your independent learning skills in investigating a chosen issue and in researching contemporary contributions to the debate.

At the end of the unit you will undertake an assessment which will focus on a moral problem or issue of your choosing. 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 2,000 words or a set of structured questions with an expected response of approximately 2,000 words or an oral presentation of 12–15 minutes or a poster exhibition of 12–15 minutes' oral explanation or another method decided by your centre. Your centre will inform you of the chosen method, which will be open-book. You will be allowed access to materials (eg, text books, notes, VLE).

In undertaking this unit, you will have the opportunity to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* and *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*. You will also develop other transferable skills, such as, essay writing, referencing, citation and bibliography skills and thinking, analytical and critical skills.

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

The Critical Thinking component of Problem Solving at SCQF level 6 is embedded in this unit. When a learner achieves the unit, their Core Skills profile will also be updated to include this component.