



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Public Relations: Principles and Practice

Unit code: FK8N 34

Superclass: BA

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Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to provide candidates with the knowledge and understanding of public relations (PR) media and techniques. The Unit also introduces candidates to the structure of the industry and the role of PR and distinguishes it clearly from other promotional elements by theory, design and application. This is an introductory Unit which can also be undertaken by candidates who may wish to progress to a more specialised PR Unit.

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

- 1 Explain the role of Public Relations (PR) in marketing communications.
- 2 Produce Public Relations (PR) materials.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

Access to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, but it would be beneficial if the candidate had competence in communications.

Credit points and level

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

**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, Problem Solving and Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 6 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

General information (cont)

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

Outcome 1 could take the form of a set of structured questions, requiring extended responses and could be completed under controlled conditions. In Outcome 2, the candidate is required to design and produce a range of PR materials from a specified brief. These materials must adhere to professional and current industry practice.

It should be noted that Outcome 1 refers to the underpinning knowledge and skills within the PR business and organisation. The evidence generated from Outcome 1 can also be assessed in Outcome 2, which requires the knowledge and skills to be developed towards a more practical Unit thus encouraging a more holistic assessment process.

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

Explain the role of Public Relations (PR) in marketing communications.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Differences between PR, advertising and marketing
- ◆ PR functions as part of the marketing communications mix
- ◆ Nature and structure of the PR industry
- ◆ PR techniques and media used to communicate to internal and external publics

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ explain the differences between PR, advertising and marketing
- ◆ explain, using examples of genuine organisations, how PR operates as part of the marketing communications mix
- ◆ describe the structure of the PR industry and the range of services provided
- ◆ describe the different techniques and media used by a particular organisation for communicating with:
 - internal publics
 - external publics.

Assessment Guidelines

Outcome 1 could take the form of a set of structured questions requiring extended responses and could be completed under controlled conditions where candidates may refer to their class information, eg hand-outs or notes in order to develop their response sufficiently to cover all the Evidence Requirements.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Public Relations: Principles and Practice

Outcome 2

Produce PR materials.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ PR objectives
- ◆ Press releases
- ◆ Press conferences
- ◆ Feature articles
- ◆ Sponsorship
- ◆ Exhibitions
- ◆ Meetings
- ◆ Media Sources
- ◆ Evaluation methods

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ design and produce a press release
- ◆ design and produce a promotional or information leaflet
- ◆ design and produce an in-house communication
- ◆ identify methods of evaluating PR materials, including qualitative and quantitative methods.

Assessment Guidelines

Outcome 2 requires candidates to produce a range of practical PR examples, which meet a variety of objectives and different publics. A case study could be used to allow candidates to generate the materials and information outlined in the Evidence Requirements. The candidate could then complete a portfolio of evidence, eg a title page, list of contents and the presentation materials. Scheduled submission dates could be issued to candidates to assist them to complete the assessment in a timely fashion. This assessment may be completed under self-direction and outwith the classroom due to its nature and the use of computers. The assessment for this Outcome forms the major part of the assessment for the whole Unit.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Public Relations: Principles and Practice

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 is a mandatory Unit within the Group Award in HNC/HND Advertising and PR and it may also form part of other Higher National programmes. It is intended for candidates who wish to pursue a career in the PR and media business. Examples include employment in in-house PR/communications departments in medium to larger enterprises that devise their own strategies. Other opportunities lie in full-service advertising agencies, promotions, organisations and PR Consultancies themselves. PR professions can be found in both commercial and not-for profit organisations.

The main purpose of this Unit is to provide a knowledge and understanding of how PR practitioners, organisations and the media operate in this profession. It will provide an underpinning knowledge in Outcome 1 that can be developed to a more practical application in Outcome 2. The Outcome topics should reflect contemporary PR issues in order to impose a strong sense of reality in the learning process. The content and context of this Unit must take all these factors into account.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This Unit is designed to be holistic so it is envisaged that an integrated approach to teaching the Unit will be adopted whereby the candidates will appreciate the strong link between Outcome 1 and its influence on Outcome 2.

Outcome 1 requires the candidate to explain the role of Public Relations in the marketing communications mix and to explain and interpret the chief differences between marketing, advertising and PR. It is important that the role of PR is also seen in the broader organisational context and not purely as part of a promotional mix. The structure of the industry should be explored and candidates should be encouraged to identify different types of PR organisations and the processes operating in the industry. Candidates should understand the concept of target audience, be knowledgeable on current PR techniques and be aware of the impact of the new electronic media on PR communications. Differences in the techniques and media used to communicate with internal and external publics should also be covered.

The Knowledge and Skills developed in Outcome 1 will be transferred to Outcome 2.

Assessment for this Outcome could take a variety of forms such as a set of structured questions requiring extended responses, which could be completed under controlled conditions where candidates may refer to their class information, eg hand-outs or notes, in order to develop their answer.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Public Relations: Principles and Practice

For **Outcome 2** candidates could be presented with an organisation, event or issue that would require the production of the PR materials outlined in the Evidence Requirements. It is important that the materials are designed to communicate different objectives for different publics. Ideally, the case subject should be a contemporary PR topic to install a sense of reality in the case study brief.

The press release will require a lay-out/template that is acceptable to industry standards. Examples of press releases are now available on many company web-sites. Various organisations with in-house PR departments/facilities plus PR Consultancies are usually supportive in sending recent press releases to centres when requested as a teaching aid. These examples should be circulated to show the variety in newsworthy content and presentation available. Formats are available in many PR books and from IPR. It would be helpful if candidates were able to practice producing press releases in class from a variety of briefs prior to their assessment.

Outcome 2 may also refer to news releases and news conferences. Feature articles may be exclusive or syndicated. Press sources should range across tabloid, broadsheet, local, regional, national, daily and weekly publications to illustrate the variety of media in this field. Similarly, magazine sources should aim to cover professional, trade, business and consumer examples. Broadcast sources should include internet, radio and television. In-house media may include annual reports, house journals, newsletters, bulletins and notices. Informative and promotional literature could include brochures, leaflets, fliers, direct mail etc. Evaluation methods may consider audience numbers, ratings, objectives, media coverage, enquiries or opinion polls.

Additional teaching resources for this Unit include:

- ◆ Websites of the IPR and the PRCA and other organisations' websites, as they now contain press and media pages.
- ◆ PR books by Frank Jefkins are recommended and professional publications (eg, 'PR Week').
- ◆ Accessible publications, such as broadsheet newspapers for articles across specialist areas (eg, business, finance, consumer etc) and examples of positive and negative PR situations.
- ◆ Current affairs television programmes and documentaries as these include contemporary examples that can be recorded for the class.

It is expected that 40% of the class time will focus on Outcome 1 allowing more time to produce materials for Outcome 2.

If checklists for assessment are produced, these should clearly state the Evidence Requirements and include the opportunity to add comments and appropriate feedback to candidates. The checklist for Outcome 2 should also state the specifics for each PR material, (eg lay-out, contacts, details, logos, sponsors) and any other mandatory inclusions regarding presentation and content.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Public Relations: Principles and Practice

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Communication, Problem Solving* and *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 6 in this Unit.

As they undertake this Unit, candidates will be required to analyse and seek solutions to a range of theoretical and practical problems and issues in PR. Formative work in which they identify and consider the variables in situations (including all available resources) and analyse the significance of each before identifying and justifying an appropriate strategic approach will provide opportunities to develop problem solving skills to SCQF level 6.

Evaluation which examines all stages of proposed solutions and their potential and actual impact will be on-going.

Candidates will also need to produce and present materials to a standard which would be acceptable in industry and appropriate for wide distribution. Current examples of campaign materials will be available as models and for evaluation as to content and impact on potential readership. As indicated, access to a range of websites, including those of the IPR and the PRCA and newspaper archives will be essential to underpinning Unit delivery. Resources available would also include appropriate software packages to support technical accuracy and the effective presentation of information.

Formative opportunities to create materials and designs with appropriate use of a range of presentation styles may be useful for candidates in order to maximise the effectiveness and impact of information and presentation in the most appropriate format to meet a given brief.

Open learning

This Unit could be delivered by open learning. However, it would require planning by the centre to ensure the sufficiency and authenticity of candidate evidence. Further information and advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk.

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

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General information for candidates

Unit title: Public Relations: Principles and Practice

This Unit helps you to develop knowledge and understanding of Public Relations (PR). It shows how PR achieves specific marketing objectives and compares its use to the other elements of the promotional mix, chiefly advertising, as an effective communication technique. By comparing PR against advertising you will identify not only the differences but also the distinctive elements that are involved in PR strategy and planning, eg, PR communication purposes, audience (publics), media and finance.

You will learn where PR originates in industry, from in-house departments of medium to larger enterprises to PR Consultancies. Here PR organisation will be outlined, along with the various internal and external PR media utilised. Reference to the Professional Bodies, the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) and the Public Relations Consultants Association (PRCA) will highlight good practice and their Codes of Conduct. Positive and negative PR situations across specialist areas, eg, local/national government, corporate identity/branding, finance, business, sales etc will be referred to.

On achieving this Unit, you will be able to:

- 1 Explain the role of Public Relations (PR) in marketing communications.
- 2 Produce Public Relations (PR) materials.

In Outcome 1, you will explore the role of PR in the marketing communications mix, the structure of the industry and different types of PR organisations and the processes operating in the industry. You will cover the concept of target audience, be knowledgeable on current PR techniques and be aware of the impact of the new electronic media on PR communications. The assessment for this Outcome could be along the lines of responses to structured questions but your tutor/lecturer will confirm the exact assessment arrangements.

In Outcome 2, you will produce PR materials, including a press release, an information leaflet, a promotional leaflet and an in-house communication (such as a memorandum/circular, bulletin or notice). This could be from a mini-case study of an organisation's contemporary PR needs. The material you produce will be designed to meet various PR objectives and publics. If your responses are written, it is important that all grammar and spelling is accurate. However, your tutor/lecturer will also confirm the agreed assessment arrangements for this Outcome.