



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Management: Develop Strategic Plans

Unit code: H1S7 35

Superclass: AG

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Unit purpose

The purpose of this Unit is to enable candidates to contribute to the strategic management of an organisation. It enables them to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to develop a strategic plan which will enable an organisation to implement a suitable strategy. It emphasises a range of strategic planning tools and looks at both the development of a plan and ways in which the plan can be monitored and controlled to ensure that it meets its objectives and continues to meet organisational requirements.

The Unit is aimed at candidates who have current experience of working in a position with management responsibilities or who are returning to management after a break. It is also suitable for those who do not presently have current management experience but have undertaken previous study of management and have realistic aspirations of taking up a management role in the future. Successful completion of this Unit will provide a foundation for further study of management at SCQF level 8 or above.

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

- 1 Develop a plan for the implementation of strategy in an organisation.
- 2 Analyse the operation of a strategic plan.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

It is recommended that candidates undertaking this Unit possess good communication skills to a level equivalent to at least SCQF level 6. It would be beneficial also if candidates had some knowledge of management and business principles. This could be evidenced by achievement of HN Units in *Management* at SCQF level 7 and SCQF level 8 such as the HN Units *Management: Leadership at Work* and *Management: Plan, Lead and Implement Change*.

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

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit specification.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components in this Unit.

Context for delivery

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

The assessment exemplar for this Unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable and practicable instrument of assessment. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the assessment exemplar to ensure a comparable standard. Assessment exemplars are available on SQA's secure website.

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.

Please refer to *Knowledge and/or Skills for the Unit* and *Evidence Requirements for the Unit* after the Outcomes.

Outcome 1

Develop a plan for the implementation of strategy in an organisation.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Strategic planning tools
- ◆ Objectives
- ◆ Resources
- ◆ Gaining agreement and commitment

Outcome 2

Analyse the operation of a strategic plan.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Success criteria
- ◆ Monitoring and control techniques

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to meet all Knowledge and/or Skills items of both Outcomes. Candidates will be expected to relate their evidence to a specific organisation although the organisation may be real or hypothetical.

Candidates should develop a plan for the implementation of strategy in the organisation which is directly related to the current strategic situation of the organisation. This should be developed using recognised tools of strategic planning and should:

- ◆ contain objectives which are SMART and explicitly consistent with the organisation's overall objectives
- ◆ make use of recognised techniques to identify the resources needed by the plan and give reasons to show that the organisation can obtain the necessary resources
- ◆ include practical and convincing methods to gain the commitment of those affected by the plan
- ◆ include suitable and valid criteria which can be used to measure the success of the plan
- ◆ suggest practical, cost effective methods which can be used to monitor and control the implementation of the plan

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Management: Develop Strategic Plans

Candidates should provide a justification for each of the above bullets. In doing so, they should take into account recognised models and approaches to strategic planning implementation and the context of the particular organisation involved. Candidates should also provide specific examples to illustrate their points.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Management: Develop Strategic Plans

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

The Unit may be part of a Group Award such as the Diploma in Management and Leadership, designed to provide candidates with knowledge and understanding of management concepts, principles and practice. It is suitable for candidates who wish to develop their management capabilities and/or prepare themselves for a new managerial role. It may, therefore, be undertaken on a stand-alone basis or in combination with other Units as part of a management development programme designed for a particular situation.

Where candidates are employed, they will be able to apply their analysis to real work situations. This Unit is also suitable for candidates who may not yet be in an occupational role which involves them in strategic management but who hope to assume such responsibilities at some point in the future.

The Unit concentrates on strategic planning in an organisation. It is not concerned with the process of assessing an organisation's strategic situation. Effectively, it proceeds on the basis that the organisation has analysed its various environments and come up with what it considers is a valid and viable strategy. This Unit, then, is about how the organisation devises and monitors a strategic plan to bring about the strategic outcome that it wishes to achieve. In doing this, the Unit highlights the critical role of strategic planning in particular and strategic management in general in the development and progress of an organisation. Strategic plans which set a future direction for the organisation can be vital in ensuring its future competitiveness and survival. However, strategic planning has some recognised drawbacks, eg it is vulnerable to changes in the external environment and the Unit also emphasises the dynamic aspects of strategic development. This Unit covers two aspects of developing strategic plans and is designed to:

- ◆ enable candidates to devise a strategic plan for an organisation which will enable them to develop practical skills in strategic management and, thereby, contribute positively to strategic management
- ◆ enable candidates to explore how a strategic plan can be monitored and controlled

The Unit covers strategic management in all types of organisations and thus includes organisations of different size, public and private organisations, and organisations operating in different markets. For this Unit, an 'organisation' can refer to a significant operating Unit, with a relative degree of autonomy, within a larger organisation.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Management: Develop Strategic Plans

The Unit is very closely linked to the Unit *Management: Strategic Change*. In many respects the two are complementary. This Unit deals with developing a strategic plan to implement a given strategic option. *Management: Strategic Change* is about the prior process of analysing an organisation's current strategic position and, from this, identifying and assessing potential strategic options. Candidates attempting both Units could begin with *Management: Strategic Change* and use their conclusions from the Unit as the starting point for *Management: Develop Strategic Plans*. Candidates who are only attempting this Unit should begin with a specific strategic option for an organisation and build a plan around it. They can assume that this is a viable option and that it is consistent with the organisation's current strategic situation. They are not required to justify the strategic option in any way.

Throughout the Unit the emphasis should be on the practical aspects of strategic planning and the various techniques and models which underpin it. The following gives some guidance on suitable content. It is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive.

Outcome 1

This Outcome deals with the development of a strategic plan in an organisation. It is intended to give candidates an introduction to this aspect of strategic management and the vocabulary associated with it. Candidates should be aware that strategic planning is frequently associated with a particular approach to strategy. However, they should recognise also that organisations must make provision for the longer term and this may involve some kind of strategic plan although it may not always be in great detail especially if it projects a reasonable time into the future.

The theme of the Unit is that a strategic plan is about managers focusing on the future and providing a clear vision of where the organisation is going and the route it is going to follow to get there. Candidates can explore the significance of different time frames and consider the merits of short, medium term and long term strategic plans.

Candidates should recognise the importance of a strategic plan to organisations. It can, for instance, communicate to a wider audience the objectives of the organisation and the future direction it intends to take. The plan must therefore be comprehensive in its coverage, yet be concisely written. A strategic programme should itself have clear objectives which should link closely to the organisation's overall objectives and intentions for the future.

A key purpose of this Outcome is to make candidates aware that strategic planning can be important and that there are a number of well-known tools and techniques associated with it. These can include techniques such as:

- ◆ the PIMS (Profit Impact on Marketing Strategy) model
- ◆ the Growth-Share Matrix
- ◆ the Scenario/vision-building approach
- ◆ models of assessing Capital Expenditure (Discounted Cash Flow, etc)

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Management: Develop Strategic Plans

Any plan must take into account organisational resources and ensure that suitable resources are available for it to be implemented successfully. The plan should take into account organisational resources such as:

- ◆ Fixed assets
- ◆ Human resource
- ◆ Financial resources
- ◆ Knowledge management
- ◆ Product/service portfolio
- ◆ Infrastructure

The commitment of stakeholders is critical to the success of the implementation phase. Stakeholder groups who could be affected include:

- 1 Customers/suppliers
- 2 Management
- 3 Employees
- 4 Shareholders
- 5 Lenders

Outcome 2

This Outcome covers the operation of a strategic plan. In particular it examines ways in which a plan could be monitored and controlled. It is not expected that candidates will look at the operation of an actual plan. The intention is that they should examine these issues as part of the planning process. In this way they should appreciate the importance of considering all aspects of planning before the plan actually commences. This can help to ensure the plan is successful but it also highlights that, in a dynamic environment, plans should be flexible and capable of being adapted to changing circumstances.

Candidates should recommend mechanisms for monitoring and controlling a strategic programme. These could include financial control systems (budgetary control) and human resource management systems as well as regular reviews of all information through meetings. Candidates should recognise that developing a strategic plan can be an iterative process with the success, or otherwise, of one part of the programme influencing the stated objectives of succeeding phases. This emphasises the importance of monitoring and control so that strategic management continues to be valid, realistic and relevant to the organisation.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Management: Develop Strategic Plans

Guidance on the delivery of this Unit

This Unit can be delivered through lecturer-mediated discussion. This may be in a traditional face-to-face environment or using a virtual learning environment or by various combinations of the two such as classroom interaction augmented by an on-line forum.

The choice of delivery methods for the Unit is particularly important as the Unit lends itself to learning and teaching approaches which make it possible for candidates to produce suitable assessment evidence as they work through the Unit. Candidates could, for example, be encouraged to write a blog or maintain a learning diary. They could, as an integral part of the learning and teaching process, be given guidance on how to structure and organise their material so that it is in a form which can easily be presented for assessment purposes.

Hence, in devising suitable delivery methods, it may be helpful to bear in mind that evidence for assessment can be generated in many different ways, including:

- ◆ presentations and other non-written assessments, eg group presentation; individual presentation; production of artefact, eg poster, video, audio; role play; debate and discussion; residential periods
- ◆ writing assignments, eg e-portfolios, learning journals, project documentation, diaries, reading logs, blogs and reflexive notebooks
- ◆ collaborative work, eg projects; posters; events; work experiences; residential exercises and field events
- ◆ making use of new technology, eg blogs; wikis; social media tools; VLE, e-portfolios

Methods such as those above link learning and teaching methods directly with the generation of assessment evidence so that they become part and parcel of the same thing. The categories are not mutually exclusive, eg a VLE may be used as a vehicle for debate and discussion.

Delivery should enable candidates to become familiar with the main techniques of strategic planning and the issues associated with it. It can make use of examples and case studies from UK and international organisations. Candidate input can help to develop analytical skills and should be encouraged. Discussion can be based on candidates' own organisations particularly where candidates have direct experience of strategic planning management or have been affected by the implementation of a strategic plan. Candidates could, for example, share information by responding to a stimulus posted on an on-line forum or make short presentations to their class group.

Candidates should be encouraged to relate theory and practice at all times. There is a substantial literature on strategic planning and candidates should be encouraged to consult this and make use of it in their own plan. Candidates could, for example, be encouraged to apply particular strategic planning techniques and show how they are suitable in the particular case they are considering. In this way candidates can develop their analytical skills whilst adopting good habits of substantiated reasoned arguments for their work.

The Unit aims to merge theory and practice with the focus being on the practical aspects of strategic planning its impact on the way organisations operate.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Management: Develop Strategic Plans

Guidance on the assessment of this Unit

This Unit lends itself to holistic assessment. The two Outcomes and their associated Knowledge and/or Skills items in this Unit are very closely linked and, if at all possible, the method of assessment should take both of them together.

Candidates may generate evidence for this Unit in a number of different ways and should be encouraged to provide evidence in a format which suits their particular situation.

This Unit lends itself to an assessment approach whereby candidates generate evidence during the delivery of the Unit and gather it together in a portfolio. If they have access to suitable systems, they could develop an e-portfolio. A portfolio based approach like this can facilitate combined assessment between this Unit and other Units particularly with Management: Strategic Change.

Sources of suitable evidence for portfolios could include:

- ◆ personal statements by candidates in response to learning and teaching exercises
- ◆ contributions by candidates to discussion forums and/or to social networking sites
- ◆ wikis developed by candidates
- ◆ extracts from a blog or blogs written by candidates
- ◆ a strategic development plan
- ◆ organisational audits such as a human resource audit

The above could stem directly from the learning and teaching programme but evidence may also be available from a candidate's place of work or from other sources. It might be possible also to generate evidence through residential periods or 'away days'. A viva or mini-viva could be used to supplement and/or augment portfolio evidence which could also incorporate peer assessment and evidence generated through collaborative work, eg a poster display of strategy paradigms.

Candidates could be given a set of questions or headings to assist them in structuring their response. This could help them to ensure that their work generated sufficient and suitable evidence to meet the Evidence Requirements. It may be possible, for example, to split the questions into two broad categories corresponding to preparing a strategic plan and analysing its operation.

Candidates could base responses on strategic plans which they are familiar with currently or that have experienced in the past. Alternatively they could work with case study material. This could refer to one or more organisations which may be real or hypothetical.

If desired, it would be possible to assess this Unit by generating assessment towards the end of the Unit. This could be achieved by presenting a strategic plan which is supported by a commentary justifying the various aspects of the strategic plan. Again, candidates could base this on a situation with which they are familiar from their place of work. However, candidates may, if appropriate, base their analysis on a case study which could refer to a hypothetical or an actual situation. Any case study should state clearly that the strategic plan relates to a given strategic option which is assumed to be valid and realistic.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Management: Develop Strategic Plans

Candidates could present their work in a traditional report format but they do not have to do this. They could, for example, organise their evidence in an electronic slide presentation which could include video and audio.

Assessment Guidelines

Outcomes 1 and 2

It is recommended that both Outcomes in this Unit be assessed holistically. There should be negotiation with the candidate to agree the venture details. A timeline may be agreed with, deadlines set for submission of different sections. The assessment may be undertaken in the candidates' own time, with arrangements in place to ensure authenticity of work produced.

If written as a report, as a guide, it is likely to be around 2,000–2,500 words. However, the key is to ensure that all the Evidence Requirements for the Unit are met.

Online and Distance Learning

The above guidance on delivery and assessment indicates there are considerable opportunities for Online and Distance Learning and Assessment in this Unit. In addition material prepared by the SQA to support this Unit is available in electronic format.

It is possible, therefore, to co-ordinate a learning and teaching/assessment programme through a VLE which would, if desired, also allow geographically dispersed candidates to initiate, develop and maintain contact with each other. The SQA support material also allows for a more traditional distance learning approach for candidates who prefer to learn in this way.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

Depending on the learning and teaching/assessment approaches adopted, both Outcomes of this Unit provide opportunities for developing the three components of the Core Skill of *Communication* at SCQF level 6 and two components of *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6.

Communication: Oral Communication at SCQF level 6

Candidates may be asked to give a presentation on strategic planning techniques used by organisations, including examples known to them, perhaps, to other members of the group in a manner which conveys essential information and ideas. This can be a very complex topic which may involve considering pros and cons of different techniques and linking them to suitable theoretical approaches. Candidates may also respond to questions or queries from others. Candidates may also contribute to debates and discussions or participate in a viva, all of which will require them to use vocabulary, register and sentence structure appropriate to the audience involved.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Management: Develop Strategic Plans

Communication: Written Communication (Reading) at SCQF level 6

In order to complete the Unit, candidates will have to become familiar with current thinking on strategic planning and how to prepare and analyse a strategic plan. This will require them to read written text which explores, for example, different planning techniques and assesses the overall value of strategic planning which can be a contentious issue. Candidates will, therefore, be exposed to structured, detailed argument for or against particular approaches. They may well summarise their understanding by posting messages to others through a VLE or in a blog or in a written report produced for assessment purposes.

Communication: Written Communication (Writing) at SCQF level 6

In order to complete the Unit, candidates will have to generate evidence to demonstrate that they have achieved both Outcomes. This could take the form of a management report which presents a strategic plan and justifies the way it has been put together. Hence, candidates will be expected to make use of a recognised format in the form of a plan. They could present their plan as part of a management report which, again, would require them to make use of a recognised format. There are alternative ways to present written evidence such as by personal reports or by contributions to an online forum. Whatever approach is adopted, candidates will be required to organise a substantial body of material and make use of complex language and specialist vocabulary.

Problem Solving: Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6

In order to complete the Unit, candidates will have to identify key factors which affect the development of a strategic plan. They will have to assess the relevance of all these factors and decide on their relative importance. On the basis of this they will then have to devise and justify a development plan to successfully implement a strategy which is suitable for the organisation. In addition, they will have to analyse the operation of the plan which, again, will involve the identification of key factors and assessing their relevance in a particular situation.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Management: Develop Strategic Plans

Problem Solving: Planning and Organising at SCQF level 6

In order to complete the Unit, candidates will have to prepare a plan which will enable a strategy to be implemented. Strategic action can be complex and the programme is likely, therefore, to involve a number of different strands. When developing their strategic programme, candidates will have to identify the resources required by the programme. This will probably involve them in some search activity to determine the type and availability of resources needed. The resources will depend on the nature of the strategy but will almost certainly include both human and physical resources as well as information.

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: Management: Develop Strategic Plans

This is a one credit (8 SCQF credit points) Unit at SCQF level 8 and is designed to enable you to develop skills and knowledge that will help you to contribute to the strategic management of an organisation. It will enable you to develop a strategic plan for an organisation and consider the issues which could arise during the operation of the plan. You will learn some techniques of strategic planning which can be helpful to all organisations when working out how they can cope with the future.

The Unit will, therefore, contribute to your development as a manager. If you have current management experience it will help you to explore and reflect on strategic management and enable you to contribute to strategic planning. If you have not yet been involved in strategic management the Unit can help prepare for a different management role which does include strategic responsibilities. If you have not yet worked as a manager but hope to do so in the future, the Unit will give you insights into an important area of management and how it can impact on the work of all managers. In this way the Unit can help you gain vital background for a management role and help you to meet the challenges and demands of it. Also, if you have worked as a manager in the past but have not done so for a little while, the Unit can help you review your experience and update it in the light of recent developments.

The Unit has two Outcomes. The first focuses on preparing a strategic plan. It introduces you to different strategic planning tools but also covers key aspects of strategic planning such as setting objectives, assessing available resources and gaining the commitment of those who may be affected by it. The second Outcome looks at the actual operation of a strategic plan. However, it does so, from the point of view of anticipating what might happen rather than reviewing what actually takes place. You will be asked to analyse the operation of a strategic plan but will treat this as part of the planning process. For example, you will have to select and justify suitable methods to monitor and control the implementation of the plan to check how it is progressing.

The content of the Unit will be kept relevant through the appropriate use of examples and by focusing the areas of study on organisations that are relevant to you. This should provide you with the flexibility required to study, as appropriate, organisations of different size, public and private organisations, and those operating in different markets. For this, Unit you may focus your work on a self-contained part of a larger organisation.

For successful completion of this Unit, you will be required to provide evidence that you can develop a plan for the implementation of strategy in an organisation and that you can analyse the operation of a strategic plan. In doing this, you will be expected to apply the concepts you have learned during the Unit. You can present your evidence in a number of ways such as a personal blog or a management report and you may well be able to generate suitable evidence from your learning as you work through the Unit. Your tutor will explain exactly what is expected of you.

You will complete the Unit if the evidence which you submit for assessment is considered satisfactory in terms of the standard set by the Unit.