



## Higher National Unit specification

### General information

**Unit title:** Career Information, Advice and Guidance: Research Skills (SCQF level 8)

**Unit code:** H6X5 35

**Superclass:** GF

**Publication date:** June 2014

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 02

### Unit purpose

This Unit has been designed to enable candidates who work in the Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) sector to develop and apply their knowledge and skills to effectively research and use career-related information sources. Candidates will also develop their analytical and evaluation skills as they will carry out a review of the information sources. Candidates will develop their skills as reflective practitioners as they evaluate the effectiveness of the search strategy.

### Outcomes

On successful completion of the Unit the candidate will be able to:

- 1 Analyse current sources of information for research in a CIAG environment.
- 2 Apply research skills to provide answers to CIAG information enquiries, using a range of resources.
- 3 Evaluate the effectiveness of a search strategy for a CIAG enquiry.

### Credit points and level

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

## Higher National Unit Specification: General information (cont)

**Unit title:** Career Information, Advice and Guidance: Research Skills (SCQF level 8)

### Recommended entry to the Unit

Access to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre. However, as a minimum, candidates would be expected to have competence in communication skills at Intermediate 2 (SCQF level 5) or equivalent. It would be beneficial if the candidate has some previous knowledge and experience of the career information, advice and guidance sector and the adviser's role within it.

### Core Skills

Achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Complete Core Skills	None
Core Skill component(s)	Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5

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 forms part of the Professional Development Award (PDA) in Career Information, Advice and Guidance: Advanced Practice at SCQF level 8 and Guidance and can be used as a free-standing Unit for a number of purposes including continuing professional development.

### 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 candidates 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](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements).

## Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards

**Unit title:** Career Information, Advice and Guidance: Research Skills  
(SCQF level 8)

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.

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

Analyse current sources of information for research in a CIAG environment.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Range of printed information resources
- ◆ Range of electronic information resources
- ◆ Uses of resources
- ◆ Benefits and limitations of resources
- ◆ Criteria for evaluation of resources

### Outcome 2

Apply research skills to provide answers to CIAG information enquiries, using a range of resources.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Range of CIAG enquiries
- ◆ Research skills
- ◆ Search strategies
- ◆ Boolean logic

### Outcome 3

Evaluate the effectiveness of a search strategy for a CIAG enquiry.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Methods of measuring effectiveness of search strategies
- ◆ Methods of measuring effectiveness of information obtained

## Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

**Unit title:** Career Information, Advice and Guidance: Research Skills  
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### Evidence Requirements for this Unit

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

#### Outcome 1

- ◆ describe a minimum of **three** written information resources appropriate for research in a CIAG environment.
- ◆ describe a minimum of **three** electronic information resources appropriate for research in a CIAG environment.
- ◆ explain **five** evaluation criteria appropriate for evaluating printed and/ or electronic resources.
- ◆ distinguish between information requirements of customers and professionals.

#### Outcome 2

- ◆ develop a search strategy to provide answers to CIAG information enquiries.
- ◆ conduct the search, applying the strategy and modifying it as required, using a range of resources to provide answers to CIAG information enquiries.
- ◆ apply Boolean logic to the search strategy.
- ◆ produce a list of results.

#### Outcome 3

- ◆ evaluate the effectiveness of the search strategy used in obtaining results appropriate to the CIAG enquiry.
- ◆ assess the results in terms of validity and currency.
- ◆ reflect on the research process.



## Higher National Unit Support Notes

**Unit title:** Career Information, Advice and Guidance: Research Skills (SCQF level 8)

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 Unit enables candidates who work in the Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) sector to develop and apply their knowledge and skills to research and effectively use career-related information sources. Candidates should be able to identify the information needs and select and interpret appropriate information and resources. Candidates will establish the purpose of an enquiry, develop an appropriate search strategy, select appropriate resources, carry out the search, and evaluate the results using selected criteria to ascertain their relevance and validity in answering the enquiry. Candidates will also develop their analytical and evaluation skills as they carry out a review of the information sources. The enquiry could be from a CIAG customer or a request for information from a Careers Advisor.

The content of the Unit will provide the candidate with the necessary underpinning knowledge and understanding to allow them to undertake further Units that develop practical skills, such as:

- ◆ *Career Information, Advice and Guidance: Supporting Customers to Access and Use Career-Related Information (CRI)*

In Outcome 1, candidates will gain detailed knowledge of types of CRI sources. Candidates must be able to distinguish between the level and complexity of information required by customers and information required by professional staff. Within the CIAG process, the range and scope of Career Related Information (CRI) includes the following types of information:

- ◆ Occupational information
- ◆ Labour market information (LMI)
- ◆ Formal and informal learning opportunities and entry requirements
- ◆ Entry and progression routes and pathways in learning/training/continuing professional development
- ◆ Qualifications' frameworks

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Career Information, Advice and Guidance: Research Skills (SCQF level 8)

The range of printed information sources may include:

- ◆ Prospectuses produced by colleges or universities
- ◆ Professional body information
- ◆ Newspapers and professional journals

The range of electronic information sources may include:

- ◆ Internet search engines
- ◆ Sector skills councils
- ◆ Recruitment websites
- ◆ Career service website (eg My World of Work)
- ◆ Social media
- ◆ Government websites

### Websites:

Decoding the URL, or Internet address can provide indications of the site's mission or purpose. The most common domains are:

.org: An advocacy website, such as a not-for-profit organization.  
.co/.com: A business or commercial site.  
.net: A site from a network organization or an Internet service provider.;  
.ac: A site affiliated with a higher education institution.  
.gov A government website  
.uk (United Kingdom) indicates that the site relates to UK information rather than from another country.

### Social Media

Web-based technologies and smart phones create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. These include Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Many employers use the Internet in some form to aid the recruitment process and there is increasing use of social media by job seekers to build an online career presence.

The importance of legislation covering the handling and sharing of information, eg Data Protection and aspects of the Equality Act should also be covered within the context of CIAG. Candidates should be introduced to the different evaluation criteria that can be used and how to apply these criteria when selecting appropriate resources.

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Career Information, Advice and Guidance: Research Skills (SCQF level 8)

This could include:

- ◆ Authority
- ◆ Accuracy
- ◆ Currency
- ◆ Coverage and scope
- ◆ Objectivity and bias
- ◆ Usability and accessibility

For Outcome 2 candidates should be made aware of how to prepare and carry out a search strategy. A strategy saves time and makes searches more effective. A search strategy should:

- ◆ be focused and specific — know the meaning of the question or topic you are researching.
- ◆ use keywords that sum up the information you want.
- ◆ use the most relevant sources, eg: internet sites, search engines, printed information.
- ◆ be clear about the information required, eg a basic introduction, a detailed explanation, a set of statistics providing evidence of research.
- ◆ be time limited.
- ◆ be flexible, eg using different words to search or using a different resource.

Search terms may be combined using Boolean logic. Many databases use a default operator which can affect results:

‘OR’; — expands retrieval to include synonyms and closely related terms. Gives results with ‘any of the words’

‘AND’; — narrows retrieval to make the search more specific. Gives results with ‘all of the words’

‘NOT’; — narrows retrieval by excluding unwanted records. Gives results with ‘this but not this’

In Outcome 3, candidates will develop as a reflective practitioner by thinking about their own work performance. Candidates must review and evaluate the results of the search objectively in terms of validity, reliability and currency of the information found and its appropriateness in answering the CIAG enquiry. They should consider the sufficiency and format of the information obtained and its effectiveness in meeting the requirements of the customer. The candidate needs to know how to reflect on his/her performance and experiences during the research process and how to assess his/her own strengths and areas requiring further development.

This Unit is contained within the framework of the HNC in Career Information, Advice and Guidance Practice but can also be taken as a stand-alone Unit, perhaps for the purposes of continued professional development.

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Career Information, Advice and Guidance: Research Skills (SCQF level 8)

### Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

It is recommended that the Outcomes be delivered in the order presented. A candidate-centred, participative and practical approach is recommended.

Delivery of Outcome 1 provides opportunities for group discussion and sharing experience of practice. Candidates should be made aware of the resources that are available and appropriate and how to use different evaluation criteria when selecting resources.

Outcome 2 is a practical application of candidate skills in developing and applying a search strategy and can be based on the use of case studies or where appropriate, candidates own workplace practice. Candidates should be made aware of how to prepare a search strategy to provide answers to CIAG enquiries and the range of appropriate resources that are available. Candidates may require some support to choose appropriate methods for their search.

For Outcome 3, candidates should be made aware of how they can use reflection and feedback to improve their work practice and why this is important.

As part of the overall review, candidates should be encouraged to reflect upon their own performance within the activity and introduced to various methods that can be used to assess the results in terms of validity and currency and measure the effectiveness of the search strategy.

### 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 candidates.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where candidates experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

There are three instruments of assessment for this Unit.

For Outcome 1 candidates could be asked to produce an extended response to cover the Evidence Requirements.

For Outcome 2 candidates should develop and apply a search strategy, modifying it as required, using a range of resources to provide answers to CIAG information enquiries. Candidates are required to produce a list of results obtained.

Candidates should produce a reflective account for Outcome 3 and this will include an assessment of the results in terms of validity and currency, a review of their own performance in the research process, and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the search strategy in obtaining results appropriate to the CIAG enquiry.



## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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### 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 candidate 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](http://www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment).

### Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

This Unit has the Problem Solving component Critical Thinking embedded in it. This means that when the candidates achieve the Unit, their Core Skills profile will also be updated to show they have achieved Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5.

There may be opportunities to develop aspects of the Core Skills of *Problem Solving*, *Communication* and *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*.

## History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Core Skills Components Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5 embedded.	03/06/14

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## General information for candidates

**Unit title:** Career Information, Advice and Guidance: Research Skills (SCQF level 8)

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 specialist Unit has been designed to allow you to develop knowledge of research in the context of Career Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) and to provide you with the skills to apply this knowledge in practice.

Access to the Unit is at the discretion of the centre but you should have competence in communication skills at Intermediate 2 (SCQF level 5) or equivalent, as a minimum standard. It would be beneficial if you have some knowledge and experience of the Career Information, Advice and Guidance sector and the adviser's role within it.

This Unit has three Outcomes:

- ◆ Analyse current sources of information for research in a CIAG environment.
- ◆ Apply research skills to provide answers to CIAG information enquiries, using a range of resources.
- ◆ Evaluate the effectiveness of a search strategy for a CIAG enquiry.

Because of the nature of the subject, there will be opportunities for you to develop your Core Skills in *Communication* at SCQF level 6 and *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6 and Information and Communication Technology at SCQF level 5.