



Higher National Unit specification

General information

Unit title: Professional Career Development in the IT Industry
(SCQF level 7)

Unit code: HG1K 34

Superclass: HC

Publication date: August 2016

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: 03

Unit purpose

The purpose of this Unit is to enable learners to develop an understanding of industry roles within IT and prepare for employment in this sector.

Learners will develop an understanding of the vocational skills and personal attributes that are required in industry and will evaluate their skills in relation to those required. The Unit will also give learners an opportunity to look at the current job market to identify career paths and gain an insight into activities that should be carried out in order to gain employment.

This Unit is suitable for inclusion in a wide range of Computing-related awards.

Outcomes

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

- 1 Explain roles in IT and their associated requirements in terms of qualifications and experience.
- 2 Prepare for and undertake professional development.
- 3 Prepare for professional interview and selection processes.

Credit points and level

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

Higher National Unit specification: General information (cont)

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Recommended entry to the Unit

Access to this Unit will be at the discretion of the centre. However it would be beneficial if the learner already possessed good written communication, information technology, critical thinking and analytical skills. This Unit would be particularly beneficial to learners if it was undertaken along with H1F7 34 Professionalism and Ethics in Computing.

Core Skills

Achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Complete Core Skill Problem Solving at SCQF level 5

Core Skill component None

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes for 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 suitable for learners undertaking any of the following Group Awards:
HNC Computing, HND Computer Science, HND Software Development, HND Networking,
HND Technical Support.

The Assessment Support Pack (ASP) for this unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable and practicable assessment. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the ASP to ensure a comparable standard. A list of existing ASPs is available to download from SQA's website (<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/46233.2769.html>)

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.

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. Learners 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 roles in IT and their associated requirements in terms of qualifications and experience.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Roles in the IT industry
- ◆ Trends in IT
- ◆ Present and future job demands
- ◆ Entry qualifications
- ◆ Vocational skills
- ◆ Personal skills
- ◆ Professional bodies

Outcome 2

Prepare for and undertake professional development.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Self-evaluation techniques
- ◆ Career paths and goals
- ◆ Professional development opportunities
- ◆ Curriculum Vitae
- ◆ Presentation skills
- ◆ Online presence
- ◆ Self-promotion

Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

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Outcome 3

Prepare for professional interview and selection processes.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Selection processes
- ◆ Interview types
- ◆ Interview preparation
- ◆ Interview questions and answers
- ◆ Interview conduct
- ◆ Interview evaluation

Evidence Requirements for this Unit

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills across all Outcomes.

The evidence for this Unit may be written or oral or a combination of these. Evidence may be captured, stored and presented in a range of media (including audio and video) and formats (analogue and digital). Particular consideration should be given to digital formats and the use of multimedia.

The Evidence Requirements for this Unit will take **three** forms.

- 1 Evidence of cognitive competence (for Outcomes 1, 2 and 3)
- 2 Evidence of practical (psycho-motor) competence (Outcomes 2 and 3)
- 3 Evidence of affective competence (Outcomes 2 and 3)

The evidence of **cognitive competence** will relate to the following knowledge:

- 1 Description of the main roles in the IT industry
- 2 Explanation of current trends in IT
- 3 Identification of present and future job demands
- 4 Description of current entry qualifications to each main role
- 5 Description of the key vocational skills for each role
- 6 Identification of the key personal skills for each role
- 7 Description of the main professional bodies
- 8 Identification of self-evaluation techniques
- 9 Identification of professional development opportunities
- 10 Explanation of selection processes
- 11 Description of interview types

At least **three different job roles**, relating to the candidate's sphere of interest, must be described and applied to knowledge statements 3, 4, 5 and 6 above.

Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

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For the evidence of **practical (psycho-motor) competence** in Outcome 2 and 3, candidates must demonstrate that they will be able to:

- ◆ produce an action plan after carrying out a sufficient research and analysis to identify any possible skills gap.
- ◆ participate in at least one activity to develop professional skills.
- ◆ produce at least one Curriculum Vitae.
- ◆ produce at least two covering letters for different job roles to accompany the CV created.
- ◆ establish and update an online presence including suitable endorsements to be made available to prospective employers.
- ◆ prepare a presentation of professional quality.
- ◆ self-promote.
- ◆ prepare Interview including job research and professional discussion with the assessor.
- ◆ present the presentation at a simulated interview.
- ◆ conduct professionally and appropriately at the Interview (including questions and answers).
- ◆ evaluate the interview and update the action plan.

The evidence of **affective competence** will relate to the following values, attitudes and behaviours:

- ◆ Conduct during professional development activities
- ◆ Conduct during interviews
- ◆ Conduct during presentations

Candidates are required to maintain a professional and appropriate manner during professional development activities, interviews and presentations. The assessor will use their professional judgement to decide if candidates have met the requirements.

The evidence that the candidate generates should be in a portfolio or where possible in an e-portfolio, although blogs, wikis or online logs are also acceptable. The candidate should have evidence of each activity undertaken and the checklist should reflect when this process is complete. The candidate should demonstrate in his/her evidence, clear signs of understanding and evaluation on his/her research and skills gained from the activities. The activities being of a mainly practical nature should be carried out in supervised conditions so that the assessor has confidence that the evidence provided is the candidate's own work.

It is recommended to use a holistic approach to assess all the Outcomes.

The Guidelines on Approaches to Assessment (see the Support Notes section of this Specification) provides specific examples of instruments of assessment.

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

The purpose of this Unit is to allow learners to learn skills that will prepare them for a career in a professional field. The job market is changing and learners need to be aware of the need to be lifelong learners. It is intended that learners develop networking and other 'soft' skills that will enhance their knowledge and understanding of the Industry in which they are seeking employment.

As part of Developing the Young Workforce it has been stated that teachers and educators should be, *'Helping all learners to see the link between the skills they develop across the curriculum and how these are used in the world of work can open up new possibilities for learning. In this way career education can support learning and the important decisions that young people make about subjects, pathways, future learning and job opportunities. Teachers and practitioners working with young people play an important role in career education as it supports the development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.'* This Unit is designed to do just that.

Although this Unit is written primarily for Computing students in the first instance, it is just as relevant for other professional vocations. The Unit is designed to help learners prepare and consider their future which may be in other educational or vocational offerings.

To achieve the Outcomes for this Unit the learner must demonstrate, through the evidence gathered in an e-portfolio, the ability to:

- ◆ review his/her experience — in terms of their knowledge and skills with a view to self-promotion interests and preferences in a range of contexts, such as online, volunteering, work placement, internships, etc.
- ◆ analyse, on the basis of the above, his/her achievements, abilities, and interests; and identify career aims.
- ◆ Set out measurable and achievable targets — relating to his/her study programme and their intended professional career.
- ◆ Understand different interview types and their purpose.
- ◆ review and evaluate their own actions and behaviours in a simulated environment for the purpose of interviewing.
- ◆ gather, present and summarise evidence of the above in an e-portfolio or similar (eg VLE).

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Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

It is preferable that learners use this Unit to create a portfolio that can demonstrate their skills and the assessor should use a checklist to test for completeness.

Learners could be given an overview of the IT Industry and then encouraged to research roles and responsibilities within the field. They should research so that they become aware of the numerous job titles and the associated tasks that go with these roles as well as the difference in job roles in different areas, eg a developer in a large multinational organisation would have a very different role to one in a small organisation. They should familiarise themselves with how recruitment occurs in the Industry and the qualifications and remuneration that is generally expected, noting geographical and other differences.

The learners should then look at professional development available to IT professionals and examine which are pertinent to different roles and which areas for development they might benefit from in order to get specific roles. Another suggested activity is creating a social media profile, preferably one related to work and undertaking to store all of their work in an e-portfolio with the option of publishing this if so desired. The learners should be encouraged to look at the role of networking as a tool in gaining employment, this may be enhanced with an activity such as taking part in competitions where they will get an opportunity to demonstrate their skills, see others in the same role and meeting people who will enhance their knowledge regarding their chosen career path. They could also join a professional body as a student and gain access to activities and events aimed at developing these skills.

Following this, learners should be prepared for and take part in a professionally set interview. This would be a good time to examine and prepare CV's and application forms as well as e-portfolios and social media networking sites that might increase and improve their chances of gaining employment. They should undertake roles as interviewer, interviewee and then be given feedback as to their performance. It is suggested this might be a good opportunity to undertake peer review with the aim of making the learner fully aware of areas for personal development. This needs to be led by a professional and not peers so that the learner receives the benefit of their professional experience.

Much of these activities are practical in nature and although students should be encouraged to be independent, they will benefit from being guided through the array of job roles. A number of the activities should provide the students a chance to hear a visiting professional, take a field trip or access a workplace.

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.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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A minimum portfolio containing the following is expected:

- ◆ A completed CV, application form and cover letter.
- ◆ Evidence of having taken part in an interview as an interviewee and interviewer — this could be in video or pro forma format. Evaluation of same.
- ◆ Evidence of professional group activity, eg online profile, screenshot.
- ◆ Evidence of research into industry roles, eg completed pro forma, screenshots, or general description of activity.

Evidence of networking with others in industry, relevant work experience or taking part in a competition, again in the format of pro forma, or other digital format. Candidates will be required to prepare a 5 minute presentation of professional quality to outline how a complex problem was solved. This will include planning the problem, how the solution to the problem space was developed and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the problem solving activity.

The candidate will research a range of sources of employment opportunities and select a suitable job based on their action plan prior to an interview. The candidate will provide the assessor with an outline of the organisation and how their career may develop within the organisation.

The assessor interview notes will show if the candidate has participated in a single simulated 15 minute interview, either competence or capability-based. The candidate should know in advance which type of interview they will be assessed on, but this should not be the same for all candidates in the group. The simulated interview could be before a panel or a single interviewer, but both of these options must include the assessor. The 15 minute interview will include the 5 minute presentation created in Outcome 2.

The candidate will be expected to receive verbal feedback from the assessor following the interview. Candidates will then be required to provide evidence that they have evaluated the feedback and have updated their action plan with this feedback.

The assessor will complete a checklist once he/she is satisfied with all the activities carried out by candidates.

The Unit could be assessed holistically as a project activity by candidates being given a scenario if the centre wishes to do so.

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.

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 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

There are opportunities for developing *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* Core Skill throughout the Unit.

This Unit has the Core Skill of Problem Solving embedded in it, so when learners achieve this Unit their Core Skills profile will be updated to show that they have achieved Problem Solving at SCQF level 5.

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Core Skill Problem Solving at SCQF level 5 embedded.	16/11/2016
03	Minor change to Evidence Requirements section – description of five different job roles reduced to three.	12/07/2018

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General information for learners

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This Unit is aimed at learners who intend to enter a professional occupation. It aims to develop skills that will enhance your skill in the area of seeking and gaining a professional job. The Unit is designed to focus your knowledge and on the job seeking process and how you can be competitive in a demanding and professional sphere.

During this Unit you will prepare your CV, gather research regarding your intended profession and understand and gain opportunities for networking with professionals. You will practise real interview scenarios that you may meet in professional interview situations so that you can understand your own weaknesses and develop your capabilities, which will allow you to successfully gain employment in a professional field.

In order to complete this Unit successfully, you will be required to achieve a satisfactory level of performance in three areas of assessed work:

- ◆ Explain roles in IT and their associated requirements in terms of qualifications and experience.
- ◆ Prepare for and undertake professional development.
- ◆ Prepare for professional interview and selection processes.

The Unit is assessed with a checklist which lists all of the activities you must undertake. This will be demonstrated in a portfolio or other online portal that you can use to showcase your skills.

There are opportunities for developing *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* Core Skill throughout the Unit.

This Unit has the Core Skill of Problem Solving embedded in it, so when learners achieve this Unit their Core Skills profile will be updated to show that they have achieved Problem Solving at SCQF level 5.