



Higher National unit specification: general information

Unit title: Leadership and Decision Making Skills (SCQF level 8)

Unit code: HH64 35

Superclass: AF

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Unit purpose:

This unit is designed to enable learners to develop an approach to decision making which will allow them to make effective decisions in routine and non-routine settings. The unit will also provide learners with an understanding of the application of leadership skills and concepts.

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

- 1 Evaluate approaches to leadership and explain the relevance of different leadership styles.
- 2 Analyse decision making.
- 3 Develop an approach to making decisions.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

Access to this unit is at the discretion of the centre however it is recommended that learners should have good communication and analytical skills.

Credit points and level

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

Core Skills

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

Complete Core Skill None

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.

General information (cont)

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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.

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

Unit title: Leadership and Decision Making Skills (SCQF level 8)

The sections of the unit stating the Outcomes, Knowledge and/or Skills, and Evidence Requirements are mandatory.

Outcome 1

Evaluate approaches to leadership and explain the relevance of different leadership styles.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Functions of leadership
- ◆ Models of Leadership
- ◆ Influences on leadership behaviour
- ◆ Selection of leadership styles in different situations and the advantages and disadvantages of each

Outcome 2

Analyse decision making.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Types of decision making
- ◆ Alternative models of decision making
- ◆ Group decision making

Outcome 3

Develop an approach to making decisions.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Definition and diagnosis of the problem
- ◆ Generate alternative solutions
- ◆ Deciding between alternatives
- ◆ Gathering acceptance and implementation
- ◆ Techniques of decision making
- ◆ Evaluation

Higher National unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

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Evidence Requirements for the unit

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

- ◆ identify the different leadership styles and evaluate the effectiveness of each in their appropriate environment.
- ◆ demonstrate applications of two leadership models.
- ◆ use relevant concepts and theories to analyse routine and non-routine decisions, including a group decision.
- ◆ use a suitable approach to suggest a decision which could be taken to solve a problem.
- ◆ justify the approach taken to decision making process and evaluate the approach in a particular situation.

Higher National unit specification: Support Notes

Unit title: Leadership and Decision Making Skills (SCQF level 8)

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 is designed to enable learners to become fully conversant with current approaches to leadership and the role of the leader in a modern organisation. It aims to give learners the foundation that they will need in order to develop their own approach as a leader which will be consistent with current leadership thinking.

There is a considerable amount of material on leadership, ranging from the highly prescriptive to the strongly theoretical. This includes a significant number of models on leadership. It is also an area where there has been many developments in recent years. While the learners should be aware of the main developments in leadership and of current thinking, the main requirement is that they recognise that the theories and models can be a guide to how they approach the leadership aspect of the work as a manager.

The unit recognises that decision making is influenced by many factors, one of which is the learner themselves. For this reason the unit is designed to enable learners to develop an approach to decision making with which they are comfortable. The unit also stresses evaluation of decisions so that the learners get into the habit of reviewing decisions they have made and refining and developing their approach in line with their experience.

Outcome 1

Functions of leadership: developing sense of direction or vision (strategic); defining tasks necessary to achieve objectives and achieving objectives (task); maintaining morale and cohesion (interpersonal or maintenance); action centred leadership.

Models of leadership: trait theories; style theories such as Ohio studies, managerial grid, Tannenbaum and Schmidt; transactional leadership; contingency theories (such as Fiedler, path goal theory, Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership); transformational theories (such as charismatic leadership, emotional intelligence).

Influences on leadership behaviour: firm life cycle; socio-cultural factors; organisational culture; diversity issues; expectations of others such as colleagues; people who report to them; managers.

Higher National unit specification: Support Notes (cont)

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Outcome 2

This Outcome could cover what a decision is (a commitment to a course of action) and Simon's three elements in decision making (intelligence activity, design activity, choice activity). It may help also to clarify the distinction between a decision and a problem (a difference between an actual and a desired state) and the distinction between the actual problem and its symptoms. These can help to set the scene for the following:

Types of decision: in responses to a problem, crisis, opportunity (Mintzberg); simple and complex; programmed and non-programmed; strategic, administrative, operating (Ansoff).

Rational decision making model: problem definition; collect information; generate alternative solutions; compare each solution against pre-determined criteria; choose optimum solution; implement the solution; evaluation.

Alternative models of decision making: The various alternatives should cover process, political, organisational and societal influences. This is important as it will enable links to be made to other units and the various factors that can affect decision making eg in ethics, leadership, organisation management. It is more important that learners recognise that there are many alternatives to the rational model than that they know specific alternatives in detail.

Learners should also recognise that the various alternatives often stem from dissatisfaction with the rational model. Some possible alternative approaches include: intuitive; incrementalism (Lindblom); garbage can theory (Cohen); action rationality (Brunsson); Simon (bounded rationality and satisficing); Cyert and March (quasi resolution of conflict, uncertainty avoidance, problemistic search); behavioural aspects of the rational model (eg Kahneman); influence of power (eg autocratic; democratic); organisational learning; heuristics.

Group decision making: Vroom-Jago model; groupthink (this represents a further alternative to the rational model based on group dynamics).

Outcome 3

This Outcome follows through the main steps of the rational model. However, the intention is to encourage learners to tailor this to their own preferred style and to recognise that it needs to be used in a flexible and adaptive fashion. Some techniques may be valid at more than one stage of the process. When doing this, learners should bear in mind the issues raised in Outcome 2 and recognise that the rational model may be no more than a loose framework. The focus of this unit is on the decision making process itself and issues such as gathering acceptance for any solution and implementing any decision are less important in the context of this unit. However, learners should be aware that these are key considerations. Learners are expected to consider a specific situation and propose a suitable approach to decision making in this situation. This approach should be based on the theories and concepts introduced in Outcome 2. It should also be linked to the various alternatives to the rational model.

Higher National unit specification: Support Notes (cont)

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Definition and diagnosis of the problem and/or issue: soft systems approach; why-why; fishbone diagram.

Generating alternative solutions: use of thought showering; lateral thinking; morphological analysis.

Deciding between alternatives: how-how; evaluation matrix.

Gathering acceptance and implementation: setting SMART objectives; planning; stakeholder diagram.

Techniques of decision making: decision tree; cost benefit analysis.

Learners are asked to develop an approach which is suitable for a particular situation. However, when doing so they should endeavour to find an approach which has as wide an applicability for their work as managers as possible.

Learners should be encouraged to look back on decisions and the decision making process and consider how effective it was in producing a suitable Outcome to the initial problem.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this unit

Delivery of this unit will involve ensuring that learners become familiar with relevant concepts of leadership. The unit also includes skills and techniques which should enhance their personal effectiveness and help them operate more effectively as leaders.

Delivery should therefore encourage learners to relate the theories and approaches to their own experience and to consider how they could make use of them. An important aspect of delivery, therefore, is helping learners to develop their own approach to leadership which draws on their study of leadership. Learners should be encouraged to recognise that successful leadership often requires a flexible, adaptable approach and that they should take this into account when developing their own ideas on what is required of a leader and how a leader should act.

The unit offers considerable scope for learners to relate the material to their own experience. They can be given short case studies or examples to help them to recognise different facets of leadership as well as analysing and reflecting on the work of leaders that they have come across. These case studies and real life examples could form the basis of assignments which could act as formative assessments.

Higher National unit specification: Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Leadership and Decision Making Skills (SCQF level 8)

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this unit

Delivery of this unit will involve ensuring that learners do acquire the relevant underpinning knowledge to enable them to develop a robust approach to making decisions of the type that they will meet. The underling principle of the unit is that learners have to work out for themselves an approach to making decisions which they can use to make effective decisions. Learners should also recognise the deficiencies inherent in the basic model and the difficulties of applying it in practice. All these issues demand a flexible and adaptable approach. In addition, the decision maker also influences the process of decision making. For these reasons, it is important that learners work out for themselves how to tailor the basic model to their own individual situation.

The unit is well suited to distance learning because it can give learners the opportunity to relate the underpinning knowledge, skills and techniques to situations with which they are familiar. Learners can be given short case studies or examples of problems which require a decision where they can be asked to work through the decision making approach and decide on a suitable course of action. They could also be given case studies of decisions which have been taken and asked to work out the process of decision making and evaluate the decision in light of this. These examples can assist learners to develop their own approach.

They can be presented as self-assessment tasks and, as such, they can be used for assignments and for formative assessment. Learners could, for example, write a brief report on a decision known to them. The report could include the process by which the decision was taken and an evaluation of the decision.

Opportunities for the use of 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 e-checklists. 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. Further advice is available in *SQA Guidelines on Online Assessment for Further Education (AA1641, March 2003)*, *SQA Guidelines on e-assessment for Schools (BD2625, June 2005)*.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

There are opportunities for developing all elements of the Core Skill of *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6.

This Unit has the Critical Thinking component of Problem Solving embedded in it. This means that when learners achieve the Unit, their Core Skills profile will also be updated to show they have achieved Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6.

History of changes to unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Core Skills Component Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6 embedded.	21/02/17

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General information for learners

Unit title: Leadership and Decision Making 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.

The Unit is designed to help you develop leadership and decision making skills that you will need to work in a management role leading a team. It aims to give you the foundation that you will need in order to develop your own approach as a leader which will be consistent with current leadership thinking. It will also allow you to develop a consistent approach to decision making which will cover both routine and non-routine situations. This should help you to decide on an effective course of action to tackle the kind of problem that you will meet as a manager.

The Unit introduces you to different models of decision making and takes you through the stages involved in making a decision. It also looks at evaluating decisions you have made which will help you to refine and develop your approach. This can be particularly important as a manager where you may be required to explain decisions you have made and be held accountable for the consequences of them. It is an applied Unit and you will be expected to apply the underpinning knowledge and techniques in the unit to situations where decisions have to be made.

Successful completion of this unit will provide a foundation for further leadership and management units at more advanced SCQF levels.

The unit lends itself to a variety of assessment approaches and your tutor will provide more information on the assessment methods to be used.

The unit provides opportunities to develop the Core Skills of Communication and Problem Solving at SCQF level 6.

This Unit has the Critical Thinking component of Problem Solving embedded in it. This means that when you achieve the Unit, your Core Skills profile will also be updated to show you have achieved Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6.