

-SQA-SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL CERTIFICATE MODULE: UNIT SPECIFICATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

-Module Number-	7350695	-Session-	1995-96
-Superclass-	HB		
-Title-	CONTEMPORARY ISSUES 4		

-DESCRIPTION-

GENERAL COMPETENCE FOR UNIT: Developing a high level of research and investigation techniques, planning, organisational and interpersonal skills and self-awareness through in-depth research activities into aspects of current issues.

OUTCOMES

1. devise and organise an investigation of a contemporary issue to meet personal development goals;
2. undertake an investigation of a contemporary issue to a pre-planned specification;
3. foster and maintain good working relationships in the planning and implementation of an investigation of a contemporary issue in testing circumstances;
4. analyse and evaluate the contribution of the knowledge and skills gained through the investigation of a contemporary issue to own personal, social and vocational development.

CREDIT VALUE: 1 NC Credit

ACCESS STATEMENT: Access to this unit to this unit is at the discretion of the centre. However, it would be beneficial if the candidate had achieved any level 3 PSD unit or 7110045 Communication 3, or Standard Grade in Social and Vocational Skills at 2/1 or equivalent.

For further information contact: Committee and Administration Unit, SQA, Hanover House, 24 Douglas Street, Glasgow G2 7NQ.

Additional copies of this unit may be purchased from SQA (Sales and Despatch section). At the time of publication, the cost is £1.50 (minimum order £5).

NATIONAL CERTIFICATE MODULE: UNIT SPECIFICATION**STATEMENT OF STANDARDS****UNIT NUMBER:** 7350695**UNIT TITLE:** CONTEMPORARY ISSUES 4

Acceptable performance in this unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

OUTCOME

1. DEVISE AND ORGANISE AN INVESTIGATION OF A CONTEMPORARY ISSUE TO MEET PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- (a) An initial self-assessment clearly identifies qualities and skills and realistic personal development goals are set.
- (b) Definition of the goals of the investigations is clear and accurate.
- (c) A comparison of suitable investigation activities is thorough and uses a range of sources.
- (d) Justification of selection of investigation activity is clear in terms of personal development goals and problems and consequences associated with different choices.
- (e) Information collected to aid planning and preparation is relevant to the investigation.
- (f) Potential problems of limitations associated with the investigation are identified accurately.
- (g) A detailed step-by-step plan is produced which is complete, accurate and realistic.

RANGE STATEMENT

The range for this outcome is fully expressed within the performance criteria.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

PC(a) An initial self-assessment.

PCs(b)-(g) An investigation plan.

PC(h) An investigation plan for a contemporary issue.

OUTCOME

2. UNDERTAKE AN INVESTIGATION OF A CONTEMPORARY ISSUE TO A PRE-PLANNED SPECIFICATION

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- (a) Investigation activity is implemented according to step--by-step plan.
- (b) Activities prioritised to allow the achievement of set goals to achieve effective use of time and resources.
- (c) Required preparations for carrying activities are organised efficiently and effectively.
- (d) Investigation activities are consistently undertaken with commitment, confidence and competence.
- (e) Flexibility, initiative and problem-solving skills are demonstrated clearly in the investigation activities.
- (f) Progress of the investigation is self-monitored continuously and reviewed methodically and objectively.
- (g) Records of investigation procedures are detailed, and accurate.
- (h) The conclusions of the investigation activity clearly accurately, and in detail.

RANGE STATEMENT

The range for this outcome is fully expressed within the performance criteria.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

PCs(a)-(e) Performance evidence.

PCs (f)-h) Written and/or oral evidence.

OUTCOME

3. FOSTER AND MAINTAIN GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIPS IN THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INVESTIGATION OF A CONTEMPORARY ISSUE IN TESTING CIRCUMSTANCES

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- (a) Advice is sought when required and evaluated effectively.
- (b) Instruction and advice are responded to positively and constructively.
- (c) Ideas, information, judgements and criticisms volunteered are relevant, accurate and sensible.
- (d) Anticipated needs of peers and others are met with unsolicited advice and assistance.

- (e) Opinions of others during the progress of the investigation are critically evaluated.
- (f) Disagreement is dealt with sensitively and tactfully.
- (g) Cooperative working relationships in unfamiliar situations are initiated and developed independently.
- (h) Appearance, manner and behaviour are appropriate to circumstances.

RANGE STATEMENT

The range for this outcome is fully expressed within the performance criteria.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

Performance evidence which covers all of the performance criteria for an investigation into a contemporary issue.

OUTCOME

- 4. ANALYSE AND EVALUATE THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS GAINED THROUGH THE INVESTIGATION OF A CONTEMPORARY ISSUE TO OWN PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- (a) The initial self-assessment is analysed in terms of strengths and weaknesses and progress towards defined goals is evaluated effectively.
- (b) Comments, feedback and advice from others are recognised objectively in conclusions.
- (c) An analysis of the planning and implementation of the investigation activity is detailed, clear and accurate.
- (d) Conclusions relating to the investigation activity, including feelings and reactions to it, are expressed clearly, accurately and with insight.
- (e) Performance in task management skills and interpersonal skills is evaluated and related to future personal, social and vocational goals.

RANGE STATEMENT

The range for this outcome is fully expressed within the performance criteria.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

PC(a) An updated self-assessment.

PCs(b)-(e) Written and or oral evidence for the investigation of a contemporary issue.

ASSESSMENT

In order to achieve this unit, candidates are required to present sufficient evidence that they have met all the performance criteria for each outcome within the range specified. Details of these requirements are given for each outcome. The assessment instruments used should follow the general guidance offered by the SQA assessment model and an integrative approach to assessment is encouraged. (See references at the end of support notes).

Accurate records should be made of the assessment instruments used showing how evidence is generated for each outcome and giving marking schemes and/or checklists, etc. Records of candidates' achievements should be kept. These records will be available for external verification.

SPECIAL NEEDS

In certain cases, modified outcomes and range statements can be proposed for certification. See references at end of support notes.

© Copyright SQA 1995

Please note that this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational purposes provided that:

- (i) no profit is derived from the reproduction;
- (ii) if reproduced in part, the source is acknowledged.

NATIONAL CERTIFICATE MODULE: UNIT SPECIFICATION**SUPPORT NOTES**

UNIT NUMBER: 7350695

UNIT TITLE: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES 4

SUPPORT NOTES: This part of the unit specification is offered as guidance. None of the sections of the support notes is mandatory.

NOTIONAL DESIGN LENGTH: SQA allocates a notional design length to a unit on the basis of time estimated for achievement of the stated standards by a candidate whose starting point is as described in the access statement. The notional design length for this unit is 40 hours. The use of notional design length for programme design and timetabling is advisory only.

PURPOSE This unit is designed to provide opportunities to develop a high level of research and investigation techniques, planning, organisational and interpersonal skills and self-awareness through investigation activities. It provides candidates with the opportunity to develop a high degree of insight, understanding and knowledge of a contemporary issue through in-depth research activity of the issues involved.

SQA publishes summaries of NC units for easy reference, publicity purposes, centre handbooks, etc. The summary statement for this unit is as follows:

This unit is designed to develop your research and investigation techniques, your planning, organisational and interpersonal skills and self-awareness and your knowledge and understanding of aspects of an issue of current importance. You will have the opportunity to select some aspect of a contemporary issue, to research this in depth and to present your detailed findings. In this unit you will exercise a high degree of responsibility over your own learning.

CONTENT/CONTEXT Corresponding to Outcomes 1-4:

1. The possible contexts for an investigation of a contemporary issue are wide-ranging covering, for example, environment, politics, industry, society education, leisure etc. Contexts may be local, national or international. This list is not prescriptive and tutors/trainers will find that a range of other contexts provide appropriate topics for investigation which provide an appropriate vehicle for the development of appropriate planning, organisational, investigative and interpersonal skills.

The scope for investigation within any of these contexts is wide-ranging. The topic chosen should have a current relevance. In an investigation within the environmental context, for instance, possible subjects might include nuclear waste disposal; oil spillage from tankers; logging by international companies in the rainforest; comparison of recycling methods in different countries. Investigation could focus on pressure groups eg Greenpeace and the industrial and governmental agencies involved eg oil companies, Department of the Environment.

Tutors/trainers should encourage topic choice which enables candidates to follow their own interests and to exploit the range of resources available. At this level candidates will be expected to tackle controversial and complex topics and issues.

In this unit the tutor's/trainer's role is as a consultant and candidates should demonstrate a high degree of autonomy in planning and undertaking activities.

Working independently, candidates should identify their skills, qualities, capabilities and interests and their personal development goals. Choice of investigation topic should be consistent with personal development goals and will be made after examination of a number of possible options and review of information from a range of sources identified by the candidate. A clear indication of how investigation activity will promote personal development goals should be provided and the candidate should provide evidence that possible problems and consequences of the investigation activity have been carefully considered. The project brief will include a clear definition of the goals of the investigation activity, an outline plan and a detailed step-by-step plan which provides clear evidence of a high degree of planning time management skills. The complete and accurate recording of both the planning and the implementation of the investigation is a requirement at level 4.

2. The candidate should take responsibility for the organisation and implementation of the investigation. The high level of organisational skills required of candidates in this unit should be reflected in the investigation activities. The investigation techniques employed must be appropriate to the investigation. Candidates should be encouraged to use a variety of techniques as appropriate to particular contexts or issues. The range of investigation techniques which can be employed includes interviews; questionnaires; photographs; audio and video recordings; appeals for information and opinions via local press; library research; museum research; map work; "opinion polls"; surveys; discussion with local experts.

Where possible, use might be made of government departments, newspapers and radio/TV programmes, political parties, trade associations, research institutes and electronic sources of information such as the Domesday disks.

Candidates should organise resources to implement their plan and detail and prioritise tasks appropriate to achievement of the goals outlined earlier. Activities should be organised to a self-constructed timescale and candidates will require to demonstrate evidence of commitment and competence in undertaking the investigation. The tutor/trainer should look for evidence of flexibility, initiative and problem solving throughout. In addition candidates should demonstrate evidence of effective self-monitoring of performance, record investigation procedures and report findings in a detailed and accurate manner.

The findings can be presented in a variety of forms, including video recordings, tape slide presentations, wall displays, written reports supported by graphical material, photographs, etc.

3. Investigations of a contemporary issue provide an appropriate context for the development of interpersonal skills. The tutor/trainer should emphasise to candidates the importance of this aspect of the investigation activity.

Candidates should ensure that investigation and research methods provide opportunities to develop interpersonal skills. This should be reflected in the planning and implementation of the investigation and recorded in planning sheets and the project brief.

Log sheets should provide evidence that the candidate has independently initiated cooperative working relationships and has anticipated and responded to the needs of others in planning and conducting the investigation. Throughout the investigative activity there will be a range of opportunities for candidates to demonstrate the range of behaviours specified in the performance criteria. The candidate should provide evidence that he or she has presented himself/herself in a manner appropriate to circumstances and situations in various tasks and activities.

4. At this level candidates should display an extremely high level of insight and self-awareness both during and after investigation activity. A review of the initial self-evaluation in relation to the achievement of the identified personal goals should be undertaken and evidence provided that this has been carried out objectively. Analysis and evaluation of all investigation activities and their contribution to personal goals must be objective and clear. Evidence that a detailed analysis of both the planning and implementation activity has been undertaken and that conclusions have been expressed with clarity, accuracy and insight is required at this level.

The final interview provides an opportunity for candidates to analyse and evaluate the learning gained and to explain fully all aspects of the investigation activity. Evidence should be provided to link clearly the candidate's conclusions in relation to future personal, social and vocational development to learning gained through the investigation.

APPROACHES TO GENERATING EVIDENCE In this unit candidates may choose whether to undertake the investigation individually or in groups. If a group approach is preferred each candidate must maintain individual records of his or her part of the investigation. It is expected that in the course of the unit each candidate will compile a folder of assessment evidence containing initial self-analysis, project brief, preliminary and detailed planning sheets of the proposed investigation, log sheets which record the activities undertaken by the candidate in the process of the investigation, material (in appropriate print or non-print format) which presents the results of the investigation activities, a final review sheet and final self-analysis with reflections on the investigation process and its relevance to personal, social and vocational development.

Involving candidates in the decisions which affect them is valuable for personal development as well as being a powerful motivating factor. Among the areas for negotiation in the unit are:

membership of investigation groups; initial self-analysis and definition of personal goals; choice of investigation topics; roles within groups and allocation of tasks to group members; methods of investigation; methods of presenting results of investigation.

Corresponding to Outcomes 1-4:

1. Induction to the unit including explanation of its key features and establishing working relationships. An important role of the tutor/trainer is to act as facilitator to provide the appropriate framework and climate where candidates can take full responsibility for decision making, planning, organising and problem solving. At this level the tutor/trainer acts in a consultative role and it is important that this is fully explained to candidates at the outset. Tutors/trainers should ensure that a framework is established which encourages a high degree of independent activity and autonomy.

Individual, pair or group exercises will enable candidates to identify qualities and skills necessary for successful investigation and in-depth research activities. Tutor/trainer exposition, case studies and role play may be used.

Candidates working independently should identify a topic for investigation related to their local area and focus on a particular context or issue. At this level candidates must tackle complex issues and relate these to their identified personal goals.

2. Each candidate or group undertakes the investigation, maintains accurate records of the investigation as it progresses and presents the findings. During this phase the role of the tutor/trainer is to act only as a consultant. It is important that the initiative lies with the candidates. The tutor/trainer must make a judgement regarding the timing and degree of any intervention should problems arise.

Candidates will have chosen the method of presentation of the findings early in the investigation. Where possible the findings of each investigation should be considered and discussed by the group as a whole. The sharing of knowledge and experience gained is valuable and the presence of an audience for the findings creates a sense of purpose.

3. Tutoring/training approaches should be designed to provide a framework within which independent learning related to investigation techniques and activities can take place. A wide range of methods can be used eg research techniques and task management skills involved in fieldwork activities, library visits, interview, planning, information retrieval, interviewing, group work (if appropriate), time management, record-keeping, presentation of findings, review and self-evaluation.

The level of skills required in relation to the above is extremely high and should be reflected in candidate performance throughout the unit.

4. In a debriefing interview with each individual the tutor/trainer will discuss the candidate's experiences of investigation and research activity. Tutors/trainers should not prompt performance but should create an atmosphere and framework within which candidates are encouraged to evaluate progress towards defined goals, describe learning gained and critically evaluate performance of task management and interpersonal skills relating to future personal and social development.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES Centres may use the instruments of assessment which are considered by tutors/trainers to be most appropriate. Examples of instruments of assessment which could be used are as follows.

During the unit the candidate is required to devise, plan and complete investigation tasks for an investigation of a contemporary issue during which he or she should assemble a folder of assessment evidence in relation to the outcomes. Personal interviews are central to the assessment and will be used to explore the candidate's experience of the investigation tasks in relation to the stated performance criteria.

The tutor/trainer may conduct personal interviews with individual candidates or with groups, as appropriate. The interviews will take place on an on-going basis throughout the unit with a final debriefing interview at the end of the unit. Interviews should draw on relevant evidence from the candidate's assessment folder.

Corresponding to outcomes:

1. Personal interview drawing on evidence from self-assessment sheet, project brief/statement of intent and preliminary and detailed planning sheets.
2. Personal interview drawing on evidence from planning sheets, log sheets and presentation of findings of investigation in appropriate format.
3. Personal interview drawing on evidence from log sheets.
4. Personal interview drawing on evidence from final self-assessment sheet and review sheet.

PROGRESSION This unit is the fourth in a series of units on Contemporary Issues. Units 73503665 Contemporary Issues 1, 7350675 Contemporary Issues 2 and 7350685 Contemporary Issues 3 set less demanding targets for candidates.

RECOGNITION Many SQA NC units are recognised for entry/recruitment purposes. For up-to-date information see the SQA guide 'Recognised and Recommended Groupings'.

REFERENCES

1. Guide to unit writing.
2. For a fuller discussion on assessment issues, please refer to SQA's Guide to Assessment.
3. Procedures for special needs statements are set out in SQA's guide 'Students with Special Needs'.
4. Information for centres on SQA's operating procedures is contained in SQA's Guide to Procedures.
5. For details of other SQA publications, please consult SQA's publications list.

© Copyright SQA 1995

Please note that this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational purposes provided that:

- (i) no profit is derived from the reproduction;
- (ii) if reproduced in part, the source is acknowledged.