



National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Research Skills (SCQF level 6)

CODE D669 12

SUMMARY

This Unit is designed to develop skills which enable candidates to carry out research. The Unit develops the key investigative skills: planning a piece of research; gathering and analysing data; reporting on findings and evaluation of the completed work. Emphasis should be on the quality of the research and evaluation of the findings rather than the quantity or type of data collected.

OUTCOMES

- 1 Design a research programme.
- 2 Implement a research programme.
- 3 Report on a research programme.
- 4 Evaluate a research programme.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

Access is at the discretion of the centre. However, possession of good skills in communication and analysis would be advantageous.

CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at SCQF level 6 (SCQF level 6) 6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 6*).

**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.*

Administrative Information

Superclass: KB

Publication date: October 2009

Source: SQA

Version: 02

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

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CORE SKILLS

Information on the automatic certification of any Core Skills in this Unit is published in *Automatic Certification of Core Skills in National Qualifications* (SQA, 1999).

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Research Skills (SCQF level 6)

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.

OUTCOME 1

Design a research programme.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Research topic selected is relevant and appropriate to purpose.
- (b) Programme of research including timetable is defined and negotiated effectively.
- (c) Research objectives are clear and suitable for purpose.
- (d) Research survey is designed and used which has objectives which are pertinent and relevant for the purpose.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR OUTCOME 1

Written and/or oral evidence which indicates that the candidate can analyse key issues involved in undertaking research into a chosen topic and construct an action plan for a research programme.

OUTCOME 2

Implement a research programme.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Common cataloguing systems are identified accurately which will hold relevant information for defined purpose.
- (b) The evaluation of primary and secondary sources of information is correct in terms of their appropriateness for a specified purpose.
- (c) Data extracted from a range of print and non-print sources is relevant and comprehensive in terms of a defined purpose.
- (d) Sampling strategy used is appropriate and valid in terms of suitability for the purpose.
- (e) Questionnaire is designed and used which is justified in terms of appropriateness for the purpose.
- (f) An interview is undertaken which is valid in terms of suitability for purpose.
- (g) Research is carried out effectively and follows plan.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR OUTCOME 2

Written evidence in the form of a report (650–750 words) which includes objectives, evaluation of primary and secondary sources, a defence of sampling methodology, copy of questionnaire and checklist of interview questions. Performance evidence of sampling, using questionnaire, interviewing, using common cataloguing systems and extracting data. The candidate must justify and explain the sources of information selected. This will be assessed against a checklist of requirements in a structured interview with the candidate.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

UNIT Research Skills (SCQF level 6)

OUTCOME 3

Report on a research programme.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Report presented provides information in both written and graphic form which is clear, accurate and appropriate for the purpose.
- (b) Analysis and editing of collected information is accurate and appropriate for the purpose.
- (c) Conclusions drawn from the information are reported and presented accurately.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR OUTCOME 3

Written and graphical evidence contained in the form of a schematic report.

OUTCOME 4

Evaluate a research programme.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Report presented includes an accurate evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology employed.
- (b) Report presented includes a proposal of a relevant alternative research strategy for future investigation of topic investigated.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR OUTCOME 4

Written evidence in the form of a report.

National Unit Specification: support notes

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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

Corresponding to Outcomes:

- 1 The emphasis in this Outcome is on the processes of planning and negotiation where the candidate selects a topic that is relevant and designs a research programme which is practical within the constraints of time and resources available.

The emphasis should be on the quality of the design and evaluation, rather than on the quality of the information collected. The opportunity for group work and collaboration by candidates on a particular project should not be overlooked as this may allow the best use of time and resources.

Time management is a critical feature of this Unit.

- 2 It is hoped that centres will introduce candidates to alternative research methods for example by observation or by controlled experiment. The opportunity clearly exists here to exploit the 'Information Highway' for on-line investigations as well as the more traditional book based library research. The sheer volume of information on the Internet generated by over thirty million users, fourteen thousand web sites and over twelve thousand news groups immediately presents a challenge in terms of not just selection but discrimination between reliable and dubious sources of information. The opportunity to use e-mail makes worldwide sampling a cheap and fast reality. Candidates might also exploit other multi-media sources of information such as data published on CD-ROMs.
- 3 The final report should include evidence of the ability to present data in graphical form(s): these should include — tables, line graphs, spreadsheets, bar charts, pie charts and histograms. Several popular software packages can assist in this requirement.
- 4 It is important that the candidates reflect on and evaluate the programme of research they have completed.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

Candidates may require considerable teacher/lecturer guidance when choosing topic for investigation. While encouraging independent learning, it is expected that the teacher/lecturer will monitor the work of each candidate closely especially in the early stages.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Embedded within this Unit are Core Skills Components Critical Thinking, Planning and Organising, and Reviewing and Evaluating, all at SCQF level 6.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Research Skills (SCQF level 6)

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

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 candidate 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)*.

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