



## National Unit Specification: general information

**UNIT** Computing: Office and Personal Productivity Applications (SCQF level 6)

**CODE** F3SX 12

### SUMMARY

This Unit is designed to enable candidates to gain knowledge of how to make efficient and effective use of application packages for personal and business use. The Unit will offer practical experience in developing information handling skills and integration of different data types within a single package and the integration of data across multiple application packages. This Unit is not application specific and use may be made of any application software designed to improve and enhance productivity.

### OUTCOMES

- 1 Describe how application software can be used to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in locating and using information.
- 2 Plan the acquisition of information and the efficient and effective production of a solution to a given brief.
- 3 Use IT effectively and efficiently to obtain information and produce a solution to a given brief.

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#### Administrative Information

**Superclass:** CB

**Publication date:** July 2008

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 01

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## **National Unit Specification: general information (cont)**

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### **RECOMMENDED ENTRY**

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, candidates would normally be expected to have attained one of the following, or equivalent:

- ◆ F1K8 11 *Office and Personal Productivity Applications*
- ◆ F1FB 11 *PC Passport: IT Software — Spreadsheet and Database*
- ◆ F1FC 11 *PC Passport: IT Software — Word Processing and Presenting Information*

### **CREDIT VALUE**

1 credit at Higher (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.*

### **CORE SKILLS**

The attainment of this Unit will lead to the automatic award of

- ◆ Information Technology at Higher

## **National Unit Specification: statement of standards**

### **UNIT        Computing: Office and Personal Productivity Applications (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**

Describe how application software can be used to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in locating and using information.

##### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Describe the key aspects of application software that enhance efficiency in their use
- (b) Describe how application software can be used to perform complex tasks
- (c) Describe key considerations for effective location and use of information

#### **OUTCOME 2**

Plan the acquisition of information and the efficient and effective production of a solution to a given brief.

##### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Identify sources and search strategies to obtain the information required to meet the requirements of a given brief
- (b) Select application software to provide a solution to meet the requirements of the given brief
- (c) Plan a solution to meet the requirements of the given brief
- (d) Justify selection of application software

#### **OUTCOME 3**

Use IT effectively and efficiently to obtain information and produce a solution to a given brief.

##### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Operate IT equipment effectively and responsibly to obtain the required information using the identified search strategies
- (b) Use the selected application software to efficiently produce the planned solution
- (c) State any problems that occurred and the actions taken to resolve them

## National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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### EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

Evidence is required that candidates have achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

A candidate is encouraged to use the Internet in research and obtaining information. However, the evidence produced must be the candidate's own words. Assessors should assure themselves of the authenticity of candidate's evidence.

Written and/or oral recorded evidence and product and performance evidence is required which demonstrates that the candidate has achieved the requirements of all of the Outcomes and Performance Criteria to show that the candidate has appropriate knowledge and understanding of the content of this Unit.

For **Outcome 1** written and/or oral recorded evidence is required that demonstrates that the candidate has achieved all Performance Criteria.

The instrument of assessment will provide opportunities for **Outcome 1** to be fulfilled by means of sampling across the range of the content of all of the Performance Criteria in Outcome 1. Each sample must include the following:

- ◆ describe three customisations of tasks to improve efficiency in application software packages, from: templates, style sheets, macros, data validation, mail merge, wizards, table of contents, customised keys.
- ◆ for each of three complex tasks, identify the appropriate application packages to be used and describe their use to perform the task. A complex task is one that involves the use of advanced features of an application software package or one that involves more than one form of information (text, image, numbers).
- ◆ describe four key considerations involved when locating and using information, from: digital sources, search terms, search strategies, validity, accuracy, legal issues, confidentiality, format.

The evidence for **Outcome 1** should be obtained under controlled, supervised conditions. The assessment will be closed-book and should last no more than 45 minutes. Achievement can be decided by use of a cut-off score. Where re-assessment is required the sample presented to the candidate must be different on each assessment occasion.

For **Outcomes 2 and 3** the candidate should be presented with a complex brief which allows them to demonstrate all of the Performance Criteria.

The brief should allow a broad range of applications software to be used to produce a final integrated solution. The range of applications should be specified so that the candidate can demonstrate effective selection of suitable software tools to produce the solution. Suitable applications could include desktop publishing; presentation; spreadsheet; database; design; draw/paint; project; mail; calendar; web authoring; mapping; personal information management; diagramming; and forms design.

## National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

### UNIT Computing: Office and Personal Productivity Applications (SCQF level 6)

The complex brief must also require that candidates:

- ◆ analyse and interpret a requirement for at least two types of data or information
- ◆ identify digital sources for information (CDROM or Internet)
- ◆ define search strategies with two or more search criteria
- ◆ obtain information and present it effectively in a format and style that suits its purpose
- ◆ select suitable application software to present the information
- ◆ integrate two or more types of data in the application software
- ◆ use the IT hardware and software in an efficient and responsible manner
- ◆ organise and backup the stored information securely and efficiently
- ◆ use an advanced feature of the application software

The written and/or oral recorded evidence for **Outcomes 2 and 3** will be:

- ◆ a plan that describes the application software to be used, the search strategies and digital sources to be used and the methods to be followed in producing the solution
- ◆ a statement of justification for the selected application software
- ◆ a candidate log of problems encountered and their resolution

The product evidence for **Outcomes 2 and 3** will be the solution to the brief, implemented in the selected application software and presented in the format and to the standard required by the brief.

The performance evidence for **Outcomes 2 and 3** will be supplemented by an assessor observation checklist, which demonstrates that the candidate has achieved all of the following:

- ◆ use the software in a safe and efficient manner
- ◆ start and shut down the system correctly
- ◆ open and close application packages correctly
- ◆ comply with all relevant health and safety legislation
- ◆ identify and resolve at least one hardware and one software problem

This evidence must be gathered under supervised, open-book conditions and can be collected over an extended period of time.

The Assessment Support Pack (ASP) for this Unit provides sample assessment materials including assessor checklists, practical tasks and an instrument of assessment for the knowledge. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the Assessment Support Pack to ensure a comparable standard.

## National Unit Specification: support notes

### UNIT        Computing: Office and Personal Productivity Applications (SCQF level 6)

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

This Unit is a mandatory Unit in the National Certificate Group Award Digital Media Computing but may also be taken as a free-standing Unit. This Unit is suitable for a wide range of candidates but is particularly appropriate for those who are interested in a developing their competence in the use of application software to perform tasks efficiently and effectively using IT.

The aim of **Outcome 1** is to enable candidates to develop an understanding of how to use application software to enhance the use of IT to produce information in an efficient and effective manner. Although it is expected that candidates will, most likely, use standard office applications such as word processing, spreadsheets and databases, candidates should be introduced to a wider range of applications and their uses.

Efficient use of applications should include customising to make things easier to do such as use of: Tool sets, wizards, templates, style sheets, customised keys, macros, mail merge etc.

Effective use should focus on choosing the right tools for the right job such as desktop publishing; presentation; spreadsheet; database; design; draw/paint; project; mail; calendar; web authoring; mapping; personal information management; diagramming; and forms design.

Candidates should also develop an understanding of information sources and current legal issues relating to them. The attributes of information should also be covered.

The aim of **Outcomes 2 and 3** is to develop skills in locating information from digital sources and production of IT solutions. Candidates will develop skills in the planning process for an IT project. This will include identifying and documenting a search strategy for information using different sources such as CD ROMs and the Internet/intranet. Candidates will develop strategies for efficient searching including complex search criteria and key words.

Candidates will develop a detailed plan for all aspects of the task. This will include selection and justification of software packages to fulfil all the requirements of a complex given brief.

At this level candidates will be expected to use advanced features of familiar application packages or to use packages that are unfamiliar to them. Candidates will learn how data of different types can be integrated across a number of different packages to enhance meaning of information such as inclusion of graphical representation. Candidates will also learn that productivity and efficiency can be increased by integrating data produced in one application to other applications such as mail merge, and presentations.

## National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

### UNIT            Computing: Office and Personal Productivity Applications (SCQF level 6)

As competent IT users candidates, at this level, would be expected to use the operating system effectively and to identify/explain and resolve simple problems. Candidates should therefore be introduced to common hardware and software problems that occur. These could include problems with printers, data storage devices or missing components of applications.

#### **GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT**

This Unit has been designed to provide practical experience in the use of efficient and effective use of software applications in both personal and business use. It is anticipated that the vast majority of the time spent on this Unit will be on practical exercises. Candidates will acquire necessary knowledge through practical work which should relate to both personal and business use. The candidate may be given extensive practical exercises to reinforce their proficiency and a variety of exercises may prove beneficial.

During learning activities there may be opportunities for candidates to participate in group work to participate in the production of complex information production tasks. This could include a piece of information being produced in different ways using different applications. Candidates may be introduced to scheduling software which would allow them to plan a schedule for group activities and allocate resources as required.

While teaching will necessarily focus on a specific product, candidates should be made aware that alternative packages are available and should be encouraged to explore these alternatives.

The candidates should be encouraged to think about their actions as they perform the practical tasks so that they are able to describe to another person how to perform a specific task, eg how to save a file to disc.

The actual distribution of time between Outcomes is at the discretion of the centre. However, the following distribution and order is suggested:

Outcome 1	10 hours
Outcome 2	10 hours
Outcome 3	20 hours

The allocated timings allow for assessment and re-assessment where required.

#### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORE SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

This Unit involves candidates in using a wide range of IT and carrying out searches to extract and present relevant information which may provide an opportunity to gather evidence towards aspects of the *IT* Core Skill. Candidates successfully completing this Unit will have performed all of the criteria necessary for the award of Using IT Core Skill at SCQF Level 6. Candidates are required to select and justify a suitable application package to perform tasks and produce a plan of activities, which may provide an opportunity to gather evidence towards the planning aspect of the *Problem Solving* Core Skill.

## National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

**UNIT**        Computing: Office and Personal Productivity Applications (SCQF level 6)

### **GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT**

The brief used to assess Outcomes 2 and 3 should be presented to the candidate at an early stage to allow them to complete the planning at an appropriate time. It is expected that the plan will be submitted and agreed by the assessor before the candidate proceeds with carrying out the searches and the production of the final solution.

Outcome 1 will be assessed through a written test. The test items will include brief scenarios describing three complex tasks. These should be selected to allow the candidate to describe advanced features of application software packages, such as mail merge in a word processing package, or using a spreadsheet to create a chart or graph and then importing it into a document.

Where candidates have not encountered operational problems during the work of the Unit, then these should be introduced to the candidate's system for them to resolve.

Where possible evidence should be stored using electronic means. The brief could state that the final solution is to be e-mailed to the assessor.

#### ***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 communications 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)*.

The Assessment Support Pack for this Unit provides sample assessment material. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the Assessment Support Pack to ensure a comparable standard. A centre may wish to submit their own assessment materials to the SQA Quality Assurance for prior verification.

### **CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES AND/OR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS**

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs (www.sqa.org.uk)*.