

National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Weblogs (Intermediate 2)

CODE DN81 11

COURSE

SUMMARY

This unit is designed to enable candidates to find, review and create weblogs (“blogs”). The unit will provide candidates with an opportunity to explore the applications of blogs, create a blog and track blogs using aggregation tools.

OUTCOMES

1. Locate and review blogs of various types.
2. Create a blog to perform a specific information task.
3. Track selected blogs.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

Entry is at the discretion of the centre. No previous knowledge or experience of computers or the Internet is required. However, it would be advantageous if candidates possessed basic IT skills which could be evidenced by possession of D01D10 Information Technology (or equivalent).

CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Intermediate 2 (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 5*)

**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: CD

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

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CORE SKILLS

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components in this unit.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Weblogs (Intermediate 2)

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 the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

OUTCOME 1

Locate and review blogs of various types.

Performance Criteria

- a) The historical development of blogs in relation to social software is correctly described.
- b) The main providers of blogs are correctly identified.
- c) Search tools are used effectively to locate specific blogs.
- d) The characteristics of high quality blogs are correctly described.
- e) Blogs are correctly evaluated using given criteria.
- f) Common uses of blogs are correctly described.

Note on range for the Outcome

Types: person journal; community blog; corporate blog; political blog; special interest blog.

Evaluation criteria: design; usability; navigation; collaboration; links; quality of information; use of multimedia; frequency of update; archiving.

Evidence Requirements

Performance evidence that the candidate can locate and review blogs to the standards defined by performance criteria (c) and (e). This will be in the form of a review of at least one example of each type of blog using supplied evaluation criteria.

Evidence of knowledge and understanding will consist of ten restricted response questions relating to performance criteria (a), (b), (d) and (f), and the underpinning knowledge relevant to performance criteria (c) and (e). Candidates are required to produce at least six correct responses.

OUTCOME 2

Create a blog to perform a specific information task.

Performance Criteria

- a) The purpose of the blog and its target readership are clearly defined prior to its creation.
- b) Blog creation tools are used efficiently and effectively.
- c) The design of the blog is consistent with its purpose and target readership.
- d) The contents of the blog are kept up-to-date and are relevant to its purpose and target audience.
- e) The blog serves as an effective information tool.

Note on range for the Outcome

The range is fully defined within the performance criteria.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

UNIT Weblogs (Intermediate 2)

Evidence Requirements

A written or oral statement of the purpose and target readership to the standards defined by performance criterion (a).

Performance evidence that the candidate can create and maintain a blog to the standards defined by performance criteria (b), (c), (d) and (e). The blog must include a significant number of posts and a variety of media. Evidence will take the form of the URL of the blog.

Evidence of knowledge and understanding will consist of five restricted response questions relating to the underpinning knowledge relevant to performance criteria © and (e). Candidates are required to produce at least three correct responses.

OUTCOME 3

Track selected blogs.

Performance Criteria

- a) Methods of generating newsfeeds are correctly described.
- b) Tools for aggregating newsfeeds are correctly used.
- c) A personal list of newsfeeds is created.
- d) A personal list of newsfeeds is maintained.

Note on range for the Outcome

The range is fully defined within the performance criteria.

Evidence Requirements

Performance evidence that the candidate can create and maintain an aggregated newsfeed to the standards defined by performance criteria (b), (c) and (d). Candidates must track at least five blogs of varying types and maintain their newsfeeds over an extended period of time.

Evidence of knowledge and understanding will consist of five restricted response questions relating to performance criterion (a) and the underpinning knowledge relevant to performance criterion (b). Candidates are required to produce at least three correct answers.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

The assessment of knowledge and understanding can be combined into a single instrument of assessment consisting of 18 restricted response questions relating to Outcomes 1 2, and 3. The distribution of questions should adhere to the evidence requirements for each outcome:

Outcome 1	10 questions
Outcome 2	5 questions
Outcome 3	5 questions

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

UNIT Weblogs (Intermediate 2)

The combined pass mark for this assessment is 12 correct answers (out of 20 questions). If a single instrument of assessment is used, it is not necessary to satisfy the pass mark for each outcome. Candidates will be deemed to have achieved all outcomes (with respect to their knowledge and understanding) if their combined score is at least 12 out of 20. However, for the purpose of re-assessment (of specific outcomes), the individual thresholds for each outcome will be followed.

The requirements for performance evidence are as stated under the individual outcomes.

National Unit Specification: support notes

UNIT Web Logs (Intermediate 2)

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.

Where performance criteria refer to effective use this should be ascertained over time and not in one-off set-piece situations.

GUIDANCE ON THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT FOR THIS UNIT

Corresponding to Outcomes 1-3

The overall aim of this unit is to introduce candidates to the theory and practice of weblogs. Although two outcomes are overtly practical, every outcome should be delivered with a broad theoretical framework.

This unit should ideally be delivered over an extended period of time to give candidates an appreciation of the skills required to maintain a blog over an extended timeframe. Where this is not possible, it is permissible for candidates to maintain a blog over a shorter time period but such blogs should contain a significant number of posts.

Candidates may use an existing blog for evidence of competence for Outcome 2. However, assessors are required to authenticate that the blog is the candidate's own work.

Outcome 1

This outcome relates to locating and reviewing blogs of various types. The specific types of blogs that candidates should be familiar with are defined in the associated range statement. The performance criteria define the standards which should be applied to candidate activity.

Performance criterion (a) relates to explaining correctly the role of blogs within the context of social software. Candidates should be aware that the term "social software" is used to describe a range of software tools that promote interaction and collaboration. These tools include, but are not restricted to, email, chat, newsgroups or forums, instant messaging, blogs, wikis and online communities.

Candidates should also know that social conventions and etiquette play an important role in this area, in parallel with technical features. They should be aware of the importance of links between blogs and the role of blogs in developing virtual communities.

Performance criterion (b) relates to identifying correctly the main providers of blogs. Candidates should be aware that there are many different providers of blogs, both free and commercial. They should be aware of the common factors which link all of the providers and the special features and facilities which distinguish between them.

Performance criterion © relates to using search tools effectively to locate specific blogs. Candidates should be aware that in addition to the normal World Wide Web search facilities, there are a number of specialised search engines which search only for blogs. Effective use means that they use the facilities to accomplish a specific task – such as locating blogs of a specific type or on a specific topic.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Web Logs (Intermediate 2)

Candidates' effectiveness should be gauged over an extended period of time – not during a single instance of the use of a specific facility. So, for example, before judging that a candidate can use search tools effectively, the assessor should observe the candidate's use of search tools over an extended period and using a variety of examples to judge the candidate. The efficient use of these tools requires candidates to use them without assistance and without repeated attempts.

Performance criterion (d) relates to describing the characteristics of high quality blogs. Candidates should be able to discuss the features which characterise high-quality blogs, for example: usability; navigation; structure; connectedness presentation. Usability covers areas like ease of navigation, ease of finding information, visual appeal and ability to recover from errors. Navigation includes backtracking, timeline navigation, search facilities and threading. Structure includes concepts such as linear and hierarchical structures, timelines and semantic blogging. Connectedness is concerned with links, particularly top other blogs and newsfeeds, but also to the Web in general. Presentation covers the visual and typographical aspects of blogs.

Performance criterion (e) relates to evaluating blogs correctly using given criteria. The evaluation criteria that candidates should be familiar with are defined in the associated range statement. In particular, candidates should be aware that all blogs are not equal in terms of the quality of information provided and should know how to evaluate this effectively. The quality of information relates to the following attributes: (1) relevance; (2) accuracy; (3) clarity; (4) brevity; (5) depth/detail; (6) timeliness. Information is relevant if it relates to the subject under investigation; information is accurate if it is factually correct – or at least known not to be factually incorrect; information is clear if it is well written in accordance with the rules for clear and simple writing; information is brief if it is succinct and to-the-point; information is detailed if sufficient information is provided to give the reader a clear understanding of the subject matter; and information is timely if it is up-to-date. Note that some of these attributes conflict – there is a tension between brevity and depth, and it is difficult to maintain a blog's timeliness and accuracy.

Performance criterion (f) relates to the common uses of blogs. Candidates should be aware that the potential uses of blogs are almost limitless and that they can be used for anything that involves communicating or publishing information on the World Wide Web. However, they should also be aware of a range of common uses, including teaching/educational uses and corporate uses. Candidates should be exposed to well known blogs of each type; for example, there are particularly popular blogs relating to politics and special interests that candidates should experience.

Outcome 2

This outcome relates to creating a blog to perform a specific information task. The performance criteria define the standards which should be applied to candidate activity.

Performance criterion (a) relates to the definition of the purpose of the blog and its target readership prior to its creation. Candidates should know the purpose and target readership of the bog before creating it. The purpose may influence the selection of an appropriate blog creation tool, eg. to what extent are collaboration facilities required. It may also influence the overall style of the blog – a corporate blog is likely to be more formal than one devoted to a rock band.

Target readership is also an important consideration as this is likely to influence the design of the blog. One critical aspect to be considered here is readability.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Web Logs (Intermediate 2)

Performance criterion (b) relates to using blog creation tools efficiently and effectively. Efficient use of blog creation tools means that candidates will be able to use the tools within an acceptable time scale and without too many attempts. They are also expected to use the tools effectively, for example, without assistance. Candidates should be aware of the wide variety of blog creation tools available, the differences between them and where they can be obtained.

Performance criterion (c) relates to the design of blogs. Candidates should be aware of the need to match the design of the blog to its target readership, for example, blogs aimed at teenagers might be expected to be bright and brash, whilst those aimed at corporate users or researchers would be a bit more businesslike and professional looking.

Performance criterion (d) relates to keeping the contents of the blog are kept up-to-date and relevant to its purpose and target audience. Candidates should be aware that one of the most important features of blogs is currency. A blog which is out of date can rapidly become useless.

However, they should also be aware that a blog should only be updated when there is something useful to be added: indiscriminate updating, when there is nothing significant to be added, can discourage readers.

Performance criterion (e) relates to ensuring that the blog serves as an effective information tool. Candidates should be aware that a blog can be regarded as an effective information tool when it succeeds in reaching the target audience, which could be defined by demographics, location, interests or many other variables and communicating the desired information, whether factual or opinion.

Outcome 3

This outcome relates to creating an aggregated newsfeed to track selected blogs. The performance criteria define the standards which should be applied to candidate activity.

Performance criterion (a) relates to correctly describing methods of generating newsfeeds. Candidates should be aware that RSS is not a single technology, but a family of loosely related specifications (e.g. RSS 1.0, RSS 2.0, Atom), all based on XML documents. They should also be aware of the use of more sophisticated technologies, such as ASP and PHP for generating and manipulating newsfeeds, but they are not expected to make direct use of these.

Performance criterion (b) relates to the use of tools for aggregating newsfeeds. Candidates should be aware of the variety of tools available (eg: AmphetaDesk, Bloglines, FeedDemon, NewsGator and many others) and should select suitable tools to enable them to create and maintain a personal list of newsfeeds as required by performance criteria (c) and (d).

Performance criterion (c) relates to crating a personal list of newsfeeds. Candidates should be aware that they are required to create a personal list of newsfeeds by using tools as selected above. They should be given the opportunity to track newsfeeds involving their academic work, hobbies and pastimes, recreational and entertainment preferences or other topics that will stimulate their interest.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Web Logs (Intermediate 2)

Performance criteria (d) relates to maintaining a personal list of newsfeeds. Candidates should be aware that they are required to maintain a personal list of newsfeeds by adding new ones and deleting old ones which are no longer of interest. This process may be assisted by the use of newsfeed search engines and should be carried out over an extended period.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

A practical, hands-on approach to learning should be adopted. The emphasis should be on learning-by-doing. Terminology and underpinning knowledge should be introduced in a practical context.

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

Outcome 1:	15 hours
Outcome 2:	20 hours
Outcome 3:	5 hours

Throughout this unit, candidate activities should be related to their personal or vocational interests. For example candidates work with blogs may be related to their academic interests, hobbies and pastimes, recreational and entertainment preferences or employment goals to stimulate their interest.

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

It is recommended that centres combine the assessment of knowledge and understanding into a single restricted response question paper. Re-assessment should be undertaken by re-assessing the specific outcomes that have not been passed. Centres are free to select from a range of restricted response question types. This type of assessment is well suited to e-testing.

Evidence of practical competence should be stored in a portfolio. At the completion of this unit the portfolio should contain a range of evidence, drawn from the evidence requirements for each outcome.

This material may be stored in paper or electronic format. Centres may choose to store candidate evidence in an electronic portfolio (e-portfolio).

CANDIDATES WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

This Unit Specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. 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. For information on these, please refer to the document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (SQA, 2004).