

National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Soft Landscaping: An Introduction (SCQF level 4)

CODE DX13 10

SUMMARY

This Unit is suitable for candidates with no previous land-based or employment experience. The Unit allows candidates to develop some of the basic knowledge and skills required for soft landscaping. Candidates will develop the basic skills and knowledge required to establish and maintain a soft landscaped area. The Unit is appropriate for a range of contexts including agriculture, countryside management, and landscape horticulture. This Unit has been designed for delivery within the context of landscape projects.

OUTCOMES

- 1 Assist with the establishment of a soft landscaped area.
- 2 Assist with the maintenance of soft landscaped areas.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

Entry is at the discretion of the centre.

CREDIT VALUE

0.5 credit at SCQF level 4 (3 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 4*).

**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: SF

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

UNIT Soft Landscaping: An Introduction (SCQF level 4)

CORE SKILLS

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills in this Unit.

There are opportunities for Core Skill development; these are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit Specification.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Soft Landscaping: An Introduction (SCQF level 4)

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

Assist with the establishment of a soft landscaped area.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Assist with the preparation of a soft landscaped area.
- (b) Give a reason for choosing the selected plants.
- (c) Assist with the planting of a soft landscaped area.
- (d) Assist with post-planting activities.
- (e) Demonstrate safe working practices.

OUTCOME 2

Assist with the maintenance of soft landscaped areas.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Assist with control measures for weeds.
- (b) Assist with pruning and/or deadheading plants.
- (c) Demonstrate safe working practices.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Soft Landscaping: An Introduction (SCQF level 4)

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

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

All relevant operational procedures undertaken in this Unit must adhere to current health and safety legislation, regulations, codes of practice and manufacturers' recommendations where appropriate.

Performance evidence supported by an assessor checklist together with additional evidence is required to show that all Outcomes and Performance Criteria have been achieved.

Evidence must be gathered in a context of soft landscaping projects being implemented by an employer, voluntary organisation, training organisation or college. Examples of appropriate landscape projects can be found in Guidance on Content and Context for this Unit, in the support notes of this Unit Specification.

The assessor observation checklist confirms that the candidate has:

- ◆ helped to clear the site
- ◆ helped to mark out the site
- ◆ helped to cultivate the site
- ◆ helped to improve the soil
- ◆ correctly spaced the plants
- ◆ planted the plants to the correct depth
- ◆ added soil improver or fertiliser when necessary
- ◆ placed, back filled and firmed-in the plants
- ◆ carried out two post-planting activities (selected from provision, guard provision, water provision, mulching)
- ◆ carried out deadheading and/or pruning
- ◆ demonstrated safe working practices throughout

Additional evidence will also be recorded. This additional evidence will confirm that the candidate can give one reason for choosing the selected plants.

The item for this Unit contains an assessor observation checklist, with a section to record the additional evidence. The NAB illustrates the national standard required for this Unit. Centres who wish to devise their own assessments should refer to the NAB to ensure a comparable standard.

National Unit Specification: support notes

UNIT Soft Landscaping: An Introduction (SCQF level 4)

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 20 hours.

GUIDANCE ON CONTENT AND CONTEXT FOR THIS UNIT

This Unit is an optional Unit of the National Certificate in Greenkeeping, but may also be taken as a free-standing Unit.

This Unit is aligned to the following Lantra, Sector Skills Council's National Occupational Standard (NOS) Units:

- (L2) Establish plants outdoors
- (CU2) Monitor and Maintain Health and Safety
- (L27) Use and maintain equipment and machines
- (CU5) Develop personal performance and maintain working relationships

This Unit is designed to allow the candidate to develop the basic skills required for soft landscaping. It is envisaged that this Unit can be delivered in the context of various landscape projects such as:

- ◆ Hedge (amenity, boundary, farm) planting
- ◆ Tree (woodland, amenity) planting
- ◆ Shrub plantings
- ◆ Herbaceous plant display

Candidates may be involved in a number of different projects as the objective is to introduce them to a range of skills rather than the implementation of a single project. However it is important that take place within the context of landscape projects. Partnerships with employers, voluntary organisations, land-based colleges or training providers are likely to provide the most appropriate settings.

Candidates should experience outdoor working conditions and the associated effects on the senses (smells, dirt, ambient temperatures and noise levels). It is important that the deployment of appropriate learning environments is preceded by a valid risk assessment, particularly identifying protective clothing that the candidate may require. The level of involvement of the candidates will depend on the risk assessment. Involvement in mechanical operations may have to be limited to observation, calibration and monitoring when specialist equipment is used.

Outcome 1

Candidates should be involved and contribute to all aspects of site preparation including ground clearance, cultivation, incorporation of organic matter, and marking out. Where machinery is being used then it may be appropriate for candidates to observe the operations and monitor the effectiveness. They should not be expected to operate machinery where risk assessment identifies the risk as high. Candidates should state the reason for selecting particular plants. For example wood planting may be a mixture of native species whereas in a park trees may be selected for aesthetic reasons. Hedges may be double row, native, thorny species for stock proofing or evergreens to provide a backdrop in a garden. Shrub planting may be for screening, security or as a barrier. Plant types may be selected to encourage wildlife etc.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Soft Landscaping: An Introduction (SCQF level 4)

Candidates should contribute to the planting of material with attention to preparation of the hole and planting to correct depth, spacing and orientation. If possible, candidates should be introduced to a range of planting materials. Candidates should also contribute to implementing measures for establishing plants including staking, ties, gro-tubes, shelter, guards, watering and mulching. Candidates should be made aware of the risks of particular operations. They should also be advised on the correct care and maintenance of equipment and of health and safety issues.

Outcome 2

Candidates should be introduced to the range of skills involved in the maintenance of soft landscaping. They should be introduced to the skills of hoeing, mulching and manual weeding. It would be useful for the candidates to be aware of chemical methods of controlling weeds. Reasons for pruning and the timing of pruning should be considered. Methods of pruning should be introduced and the purpose of various types of cut should be explained. Candidates might assist with manual pruning, hedge cutting or deadheading.

Candidates should also be advised on the correct care and maintenance of equipment and of health and safety issues.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

It would be useful for both the Outcomes to have some classroom theoretical input prior to undertaking the practical activities. The candidates should also be thoroughly briefed on health and safety practices before entering the work setting or simulated work setting. The practical skills can then be demonstrated and practised on landscape projects. Ideally, partnerships with land-based colleges would be appropriate but training providers, voluntary organisations or employers may also offer suitable opportunities.

Outcome 1

Emphasis on experiential learning with a mentoring/coaching approach whilst the candidate undertakes or assists with operations. Reasons for selecting plant types, positioning and spacing should be explained along with theory behind practical operations.

Outcome 2

Emphasis is placed on experiential learning with candidates undertaking or observing operations. Coaching/mentoring should explain the reasons for particular operations and compare the advantages and disadvantages of different methods used.

It may be useful to adopt an approach of emphasising not only the vocational skills development but also the development of employability skills in this Unit. This could be done by: setting incremental targets for candidates in terms of time for given tasks once they have developed reasonable competence; setting particular start times for tasks; monitoring the preparation and planning of the candidates; setting candidates a task as a group and allowing them to be responsible for the allocation of subsets of tasks to encourage team working. Candidates could be encouraged to review and evaluate tasks undertaken.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Soft Landscaping: An Introduction (SCQF level 4)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Employability Skills

On completion of this Unit, the candidate will have had the opportunity to develop aspects of the following employability skills:

- ◆ Acceptable time keeping and attendance
- ◆ Planning and preparing for work
- ◆ Working co-operatively with others
- ◆ Awareness of efficient resource use
- ◆ Following instructions*
- ◆ Working safely*
- ◆ Self review and evaluation

Achievement in a number of these employability skills (those marked with an asterisk*) will be clearly identified as a result of the evidence generated through the assessment activities for this Unit. There are opportunities in the Unit to develop the remaining skills.

Tasks undertaken in Outcomes 1 and 2 provide ideal opportunities to complete the review sheets of the *Employability Skills for Land-based Industries* Unit of the Rural Skills (Intermediate 1) Course.

Core Skills

In this Unit candidates will be involved a range of practical tasks which may well involve working as part of a small team. These tasks are good opportunities for developing aspects of:

- ◆ *Working with Others* (SCQF level 3)
- ◆ *Communication* (SCQF level 3)
- ◆ *Problem Solving* (SCQF level 3)

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

Assessor observation checklists and other assessment records should be maintained and kept up to date to keep track of candidate progress and to provide evidence for internal and external verification.

If re-assessment is required, the centre must provide a sampling from a range of content within the Outcome.

Performance evidence supported by an assessor checklist together with additional evidence is required to show that all Outcomes and Performance Criteria have been achieved.

The assessor observation checklists should be used at a point when the assessor identifies that the candidate is ready to be assessed for competence in the tasks identified. The number of plants used in the tasks will depend on the particular project and the type of planting material. For example: if planting trees, two standard trees may be appropriate; if planting bedding plants or bulbs, ten to twenty plants may be more appropriate.

The learning and teaching advice above encompasses the gathering of evidence for assessment.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Soft Landscaping: An Introduction (SCQF level 4)

The standard to be applied is exemplified in the National Assessment Bank item for this Unit. If a centre wishes to design its own assessments for this Unit, they should be of a comparable standard.

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