



## National Unit specification: general information

**Unit title:** Countryside Recreation and Access (SCQF Level 5)

**Unit code:** FV5F 11

**Superclass:** QA

**Publication date:** September 2011

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 01

## Summary

This Unit is designed to improve the candidate's knowledge and understanding of the main issues relating to recreation and access in the countryside. This will better enable candidates to manage recreational activity in the countryside in order to cater for the needs of participants, land managers and the natural heritage alike.

This Unit is suitable for those seeking to establish a career in the management of the natural heritage.

This Unit is a mandatory Unit in the National Certificate in *Countryside Management* (SCQF Level 5) but is also available for candidates wishing to study the Unit on its own.

## Outcomes

- 1 Describe current provision for countryside recreation in Scotland.
- 2 Describe the rights and responsibilities of access to the countryside in Scotland.
- 3 Explain the provision for and benefits of participating in a named countryside recreation activity.
- 4 Investigate the interactions arising from countryside recreation use of a named site.

## Recommended entry

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, it would be beneficial if candidates had prior experience of countryside recreation. This could be through personal participation in a variety of countryside recreation activities or through volunteering in the natural heritage sector.

## **General information (cont)**

### **Credit points and level**

1 National Unit credit at SCQF level 5: (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.*

### **Core Skills**

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

Opportunities to develop aspects of these Core Skills are further highlighted in the support notes of this Unit Specification.

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

**Unit title:** Countryside Recreation and Access (SCQF Level 5)

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 current provision for countryside recreation in Scotland.

#### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Describe the current national provision for countryside recreation.
- (b) Describe countryside recreation activity and provision at local formal, facility based sites.
- (c) Describe countryside recreation activity and provision at local informal, non-facility based sites.

### **Outcome 2**

Describe the rights and responsibilities of access to the countryside in Scotland.

#### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Describe the public's right of access to the countryside.
- (b) Describe the three key principles relating to access to the countryside.
- (c) Explain what constitutes responsible access and land management in given situations.

### **Outcome 3**

Explain the provision for and benefits of participating in a named countryside recreation activity.

#### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Describe off site provision associated with the countryside recreation activity.
- (b) Describe on site provision associated with the countryside recreation activity.
- (c) Explain the physical and mental benefits to the individual from participating in the countryside recreation activity.
- (d) Describe the positive and negative impact on the natural heritage of the countryside recreation activity.
- (e) Explain how the natural heritage setting enhances the countryside recreation activity.

## **National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)**

Unit title: **Countryside Recreation and Access (SCQF Level 5)**

### **Outcome 4**

Investigate the interactions arising from countryside recreation use of a named site.

#### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Obtain information on countryside recreation interactions by active participation in the investigation.
- (b) Explain the interactions between different types of countryside recreation activity at the named site.
- (c) Explain the interactions between countryside recreation activities and other land uses at the named site.
- (d) Recommend improvements to the provision for and management of countryside recreation at the named site.

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

Unit title: **Countryside Recreation and Access (SCQF Level 5)**

### Evidence Requirements for this Unit

Candidates must provide written and/or recorded oral evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and skills by showing they can meet the following Evidence Requirements.

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

The evidence for all Outcomes must be generated under open-book conditions. The assessor must be satisfied that the evidence submitted is the individual candidate's own work.

#### Outcome 1

Evidence must include:

- ◆ Description of current national provision for countryside recreation in Scotland covering:
  - Country Parks
  - Regional Parks
  - National Parks
- ◆ Description of recreation activity and provision at three local countryside recreation sites, one of which must be formal and one of which must be informal.  
The description must include:
  - Location
  - Site structure and layout
  - Environmental education
  - Role in conserving the natural heritage
  - Visitor facilities and services
  - Income generation

#### Outcome 2

Using the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code the candidate will provide evidence of:

- ◆ Description of the public's right of access which must include:
  - Exercise access rights responsibly
  - Apply to land and inland water
  - Apply day and night
  - Apply to recreational, educational and some commercial activities
  - The areas and activities not covered by access rights
- ◆ Description of the three key principles of access which apply equally to the public and land managers which must include:
  - Respect the interests of other people
  - Care for the environment
  - Take responsibility for your own actions

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

Unit title: **Countryside Recreation and Access (SCQF Level 5)**

- ◆ Explanation of what constitutes responsible access by the public and land managers for three of the following activities and situations:
  - Deer stalking
  - Dogs
  - Fields of grass, hay or silage
  - Fields of crops
  - Fields with farm animals
  - Forests and woods
  - Grouse shooting
  - Lighting fires
  - Low ground shoots
  - Margins of fields growing crops
  - Nature reserves or conservation areas
  - Picnicking
  - Rivers, lochs and reservoirs
  - Wild camping
  - Wildlife watching and surveying

### Outcome 3

For a named countryside recreation activity the candidate must provide evidence of:

- ◆ Three examples of offsite provision
- ◆ Four examples of onsite provision
- ◆ Two physical benefits to the individual of participation
- ◆ Two mental benefits to the individual of participation
- ◆ One positive and one negative impact on the natural heritage
- ◆ Two examples of how the natural heritage enhances participation

## **National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)**

Unit title: **Countryside Recreation and Access (SCQF Level 5)**

### **Outcome 4**

For a named countryside recreation site the candidate will actively gather and provide evidence gained by desk and field study.

Investigate the interactions arising from countryside recreation use of a named site.

### **Performance Criteria**

The evidence must include the following:

Information obtained about the named site must include:

- ◆ The range of countryside recreation activities
- ◆ The profile of the visitors
  - Age
  - Origin
  - Frequency of use
- ◆ The pattern of recreational usage
- ◆ Current provision of recreational facilities
- ◆ Explanation of the interactions between four different recreational activities at the named site
- ◆ Explanation of the interactions between countryside recreation and three other land uses
- ◆ Four recommendations which would improve the provision for and management of recreation

## National Unit specification: support notes

### Unit title: Countryside Recreation and Access (SCQF Level 5)

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

Accessing the countryside for recreation is an increasingly popular pastime. This recreation takes place both on sites specifically catering for recreational use such as Country Parks and in the wider countryside. In the latter case recreation is superimposed on other land uses such as agriculture, forestry and water catchment. It is therefore important that recreation and access is managed to benefit:

- ◆ Those participating in countryside recreation — safeguard access and provide opportunities to enjoy their pastime
- ◆ Those who manage the land over which it takes place — make sure their ability to manage their land use activities isn't negatively affected by those engaged in recreation
- ◆ The natural heritage which provides the setting — ensure it isn't damaged by recreational activity

This necessitates a certain amount of knowledge and understanding and this Unit seeks to help the candidate develop their appreciation of the issues involved.

#### Outcome 1

An understanding of what Country, Regional and National Parks are set up to do in terms of recreation and how they set out to achieve it is an important first step in helping candidates understand where recreation fits into the countryside.

Country Parks differ from the other two in that they are areas where countryside recreation is the principal land use. Students should understand this and their three functions:

- ◆ Provide a convenient rural setting for open air recreation
- ◆ To relieve pressure on the wider countryside
- ◆ To increase awareness of what goes on in the wider countryside — land uses, natural heritage considerations, socio-economics, interactions etc — and how to behave responsibly when out and about in it

It might be useful to debate the relevance of these functions today, considering that the legislation which created them dates back to the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967 for example, do people today by-pass Country Parks in a headlong rush for the wider countryside they are exposed to by numerous TV shows, guidebooks and glossy magazines, or do they still perform their function of introducing people to the countryside and how to behave in it?



## National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

### Unit title: Countryside Recreation and Access (SCQF Level 5)

Regional Parks are larger than Country Parks and recreation is the dominant land use only in specific areas only. Regional Parks were created to help recreation and these other land use co-exist more smoothly. Students should understand this difference with Country Parks along with the three functions of Regional Parks:

- ◆ The co-ordinated management of recreation alongside and in co-operation with traditional land uses
- ◆ To promote conservation of the natural and cultural heritage
- ◆ To be of mutual benefit to owners, occupiers and visitors

National Parks represent the accolade designation for integrating management of the natural heritage. Some discussion of their history and rather laboured birth would be useful scene setting before looking at their four aims:

- ◆ To conserve and enhance the natural heritage
- ◆ To promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area
- ◆ To promote understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the public, including countryside recreation
- ◆ To promote sustainable economic and social development of communities

The 'Stanford Principle' should also be covered — that in the event of any conflict between the aims then protection of the natural heritage should take precedence.

In addition to these national designations countryside recreation takes place at a myriad of local sites — some formal and some informal. Definitions of formal and informal should be produced, with an understanding that there are shades of grey. Formal could perhaps include visitor attractions with a countryside theme — Deer Centres for example — and nature reserves with a visitor centre, cafe, shop, hides and way marked trails. Informal could apply to a wide range of experiences from an informal path network on the edge of a village through to the provision of a car park and a couple of benches.

Providers of formal and informal countryside recreation experiences locally would typically be the Local Authority, Forestry Commission, private enterprise and individuals, SNH, RSPB, NTS.

The other classification of commercial/private versus voluntary/public could also be examined.

### Outcome 2

An understanding of access rights and responsibilities is fundamental when dealing with countryside recreation. The content of this Outcome needs to be centred on the statutory right of access to most land and inland water provided by the Land reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and articulated through the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

A copy of this later publication should be given to each candidate. They need to be encouraged to familiarise themselves with its contents and use and be confident of being able to access the wealth of information it contains, rather than memorising the contents. However in any job interview today for a post in the natural heritage it would be reasonable to expect to be asked a question about access and the code.

## National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

### Unit title: Countryside Recreation and Access (SCQF Level 5)

Candidates should therefore be comfortable with being able to articulate the basic right of access, including:

- ◆ It covers most land and inland water, the air above the land, any caves under the land and also under the water
- ◆ It applies to everyone
- ◆ It only applies if it is exercised responsibly
- ◆ The right applies to:
  - Recreational pastimes
  - Educational purposes
  - Any commercial activity which is the same as the activities which could be carried out by the general public
  - Crossing over land and water
- ◆ It can be exercised day or night
- ◆ It does not apply to:
  - Any form of motorised recreation
  - Hunting shooting and fishing
  - Taking anything for commercial purposes
  - Dogs not under proper control
  - Certain specified areas

It should also be an aim of delivery to get the candidate to the situation where they can form an educated opinion as to the likely veracity or otherwise of a particular access situation or activity under the SOAC. Some logical areas to focus on would include livestock, dogs, crops, field sports, fires and nature reserves/conservation areas.

The key principles which apply equally to the public and land managers need to be explored:

- ◆ Respect the interests of other people
- ◆ Care for the environment
- ◆ Take responsibility for your own actions

### Outcome 3

An understanding of recreational activities and what people get out of them is very useful when coming to deal with the activities, those who participate in them and how they interact with other land uses. This Outcome allows the candidate to fully explore one example of a countryside recreation activity.

Often the preparation for a recreational activity begins offsite. This could be, among many things, consulting a guidebook, joining a club or society, consulting a weather forecast or tide tables, booking accommodation, going on a training course to improve skills and knowledge, visiting a website or purchasing and/or hiring clothing and equipment.

Once on site almost all recreational activities will make use of some form of provision. This provision may include a car park, footpath, bridge, picnic site, bothy, information notice, interpretive panel, Countryside Ranger, guided walk, viewpoint, bench, toilet, campsite or visitor centre.

## National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

### Unit title: Countryside Recreation and Access (SCQF Level 5)

People choose to take part in countryside recreation and it is reasonable to assume they derive benefit from doing so. These benefits are both physical and mental. Physical benefits would include fresh air and exercise along with long term health improvement. Mental benefits would include relaxation, solitude and time to think, improved motivation and rising to a challenge and the chance for social interaction.

It is undeniable that recreation impacts on the natural heritage where it takes place. However it is too easy to assume the impact is always negative. An example of a positive impact is greater understanding and appreciation of the environment leading to changed behaviours and increased protection. Negative impacts would include erosion, disturbance to wildlife and the normal country code type of offences — fires, leaving litter and open gates.

The natural heritage itself enhances our participation in countryside recreation. We seek out aesthetic places for a walk because of their beauty. Simply feeding the ducks in the park improves our day out. Spectacular landscapes inspire us. An encounter with an eagle or a roaring stag adds value to a hill walk. A sunset makes us feel better. A stroll from our front door on a spring evening after dinner relaxes us.

#### Outcome 4

Working in the natural heritage often means managing recreation on a particular site. This will involve interactions — between different forms of recreation and, in the wider countryside, between recreation and other land uses. Understanding these interactions is a key skill for the candidate to develop.

Some of the knowledge and skills required to do this is fairly apparent — the range of recreational activities, the range of other land uses, what recreation provision exists already and so on. However other aspects are more subtle. For example the visitors themselves — where do they come from (local or further afield) are they largely repeat visitors or are they all newcomers, are they urban or rural based, what level of education and understanding about the countryside do they possess for example. All of these will influence the thinking of someone engaged in managing recreation at a particular site. Equally the pattern of use is important — what time of day is busiest, what days of the week are more popular, do visitor numbers drop off in the winter, how do people spread themselves out around the site, what activities dominate, are there any special weather conditions which bring people out, does the site link to others nearby?

Interaction between different types of recreation and between recreation and other land uses has the potential to result in conflict. These conflicts are many and wide ranging. For example dogs and lambs, walkers and cyclists on narrow tracks and inconsiderate parking. Exploration of these should be the main focus of the Outcome. Equally a high level of repeat visitors may mean people feel a sense of connection with the site and are more likely to engage in activities which benefit themselves and other users and land managers — local volunteer groups and so on.

Once the current provision and the needs and interactions of recreation and the other land uses are established the challenge then is to come up with recommendations for improving the situation. These will be specific to each site and are therefore difficult to offer guidance on here. However, favourites include toilets, more circular walks, improved facilities, special

events/activities and open days and more money.

## National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Countryside Recreation and Access (SCQF Level 5)

### Guidance on learning and teaching approaches for this Unit

A useful approach to a significant portion of this Unit would be:

- ◆ Talk about it in class
- ◆ Issue some support material
- ◆ Go out and look at an example of what you have been talking about in the field, with input from other professionals as appropriate
- ◆ Come back into the class and talk about it again

Useful site visits would include:

- ◆ A visit to one or more of the following: Country, Regional or National Park
- ◆ Visits both formal and informal local countryside recreation sites — nature reserves, woodland walks, visitor centres, beaches, lochs, popular walking areas and so on
- ◆ Participation as a group in some form of countryside recreation activity
- ◆ A visit to an area of countryside where there are multiple form of recreation taking place on multiple types of land use (most normal areas of countryside in other words)

Classroom work offers the usual chances for enhancing delivery:

- ◆ Individual research
- ◆ Working as small groups
- ◆ Giving presentations
- ◆ Debate
- ◆ Using presentation software to illustrate elements that are hard to access locally
- ◆ Involving others in delivery — countryside rangers, wardens, farmers, foresters, gamekeepers, visitor centre managers, access officers etc

Scenarios would work particularly well in relation to developing a sound knowledge and understanding of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Undertaking and reflecting as a group on a countryside recreation activity would be an excellent way of broadening individual perception of the benefits associated with the activity. The involvement of recreationists and land management practitioners on field trips is also highly recommended in order to get a wide variety of perspectives and help make clear the issues of integrated management and access.

### Opportunities for developing Core Skills

*Oral communication* can be developed throughout the Unit via classroom discussion and interactions on field trips and in group work. Written communication can be developed by producing assessment work.

If this assessment work is word processed then there are opportunities for developing basic *Information Technology skills*. These can be further developed by use of the internet to source information and by the inclusion of any relevant graphs or tables in assessments as appropriate (Outcome 4 is the most likely here).

*Problem Solving* can be developed in specifically in Outcome 4 by having to come up with recommendations to improve the site based on information to hand.

## **National Unit specification: support notes (cont)**

**Unit title:** Countryside Recreation and Access (SCQF Level 5)

### **Guidance on approaches to assessment for this Unit**

The nature of the Outcomes in this case lends them to individual assessment instruments. However the knowledge and understanding gained through the assessment of Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 build towards Outcome 4.

#### **Outcome 1**

Assessment could be by:

- ◆ Restricted response questions relating to National, Country and Regional Parks
- ◆ A candidate report relating to local countryside recreation sites experienced. An observation checklist which could be completed on site, relating to the Evidence Requirements, would be beneficial for both the field visit and subsequent reporting process

This assessment is open-book. It should be acceptable for candidates to complete a checklist for a local countryside recreation site that they have visited on their own and not as part of delivery of the Unit, provided that the lecturer was familiar with the site.

#### **Outcome 2**

Assessment could be by restricted response questions.

This assessment is open-book.

#### **Outcome 3**

Assessment could be by way of an activity diary based on participation in a countryside recreation activity. This could be split into sections pertaining to:

- ◆ Preparation for the activity
- ◆ Undertaking the activity
- ◆ Reflection on the activity

#### **Outcome 4**

Assessment could be by way of a report based on active participation in a site visit to a named countryside recreation site.

## **National Unit specification: support notes (cont)**

**Unit title:** Countryside Recreation and Access (SCQF Level 5)

### **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](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements).

## History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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