National Unit specification

General information

Unit title: Computing: Academic Skills (SCQF level 6)

Unit code: H60C 46

Superclass:	HC
Publication date:	November 2013
Source:	Scottish Qualifications Authority
Version:	01

Unit purpose

The general aim of this Unit is to prepare learners at SCQF level 6 for progression to HN/HE level: to ensure they have the required study skills, and to help them become effective learners. The Unit combines research and study skills with academic writing and learners will develop skills in areas of time management, note-taking, searching, reading and referencing, and presenting by producing reports. It is expected that learners will make use of information and communication technology throughout to access and present information.

Outcomes

On successful completion of the Unit the learner will be able to:

1   Investigate a topic using a range of sources.
2   Present investigation findings.
3   Produce a report on a topic.
4   Improve independent learning skills through a range of activities.

Credit points and level

1 National Unit credit at SCQF level 6: (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 6)

National Unit specification: General information (cont)

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Recommended entry to the Unit

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

F3GC 11   *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* at SCQF level 5
F3GB 11   *Communication* at SCQF level 5

Core Skills

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes for this Unit specification.

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

Context for delivery

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

The Assessment Support Pack (ASP) for this Unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable and practicable assessment. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the ASP to ensure a comparable standard. A list of existing ASPs is available to download from SQA's website **(http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/46233.2769.html)**.

Equality and inclusion

This Unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website **www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements**.

National Unit specification: Statement of standards

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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

Investigate a topic using a range of sources.

Performance Criteria

(a) Design an effective research plan for the chosen topic, specifying a range of learning objectives.
(b) Research the chosen topic using a range of appropriate techniques and tools.
(c) Record information using suitable methods.
(d) Reference material appropriately.

Outcome 2

Present investigation findings.

Performance Criteria

(a) Review and evaluate collected information.
(b) Produce a presentation using appropriate quality criteria.
(c) Deliver presentation of investigation findings.
(d) Collect presentation feedback using a selection of methods.

Outcome 3

Produce a report on a topic.

Performance Criteria

(a) Ensure the sequence of the report is coherent.
(b) Justify the range of sources used within the report findings.
(c) Present appropriate conclusions and recommendations using recognised critical thinking techniques.

Outcome 4

Improve independent learning skills through a range of activities.

Performance Criteria

(a) Evaluate own performance, including recommendations for improvement, using a reflective log.
(b) Identify and evaluate learning styles.
(c) Manage time effectively to meet objectives and deadlines.

National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

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Evidence Requirements for this Unit

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

A holistic approach is recommended for assessment of this Unit and evidence must be generated through open-book conditions. Learners are required to produce a portfolio/ e-portfolio of evidence.

♦ Written and/or recorded oral evidence is required which demonstrates knowledge and understanding of aspects of research and study skills and personal attributes required for independent learning.
♦ Performance evidence generated by participation in practical activities for this assessment should be carried out under supervision.

The centre/assessor should negotiate with learners on a choice of a research topic which has:

♦ sufficient published material available
♦ more than one source of information, eg the internet
♦ feasibility
♦ importance

Outcome 1 — Written and/or oral evidence

Learners will be required to produce the following written and/or oral evidence:

♦ Research plan
♦ Description of techniques and tools used
♦ Record of information collected from referenced sources

Outcome 2 — Written and/or oral evidence

Learners will be required to produce the following written and/or oral evidence:

♦ A presentation of findings
♦ Feedback on the presentation

Outcome 3 — Written and/or oral evidence

Learners will be required to produce the following written and/or oral evidence:

♦ Report
♦ Justification of sources used
♦ Application of critical thinking techniques

National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

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Outcome 4 — Written and/or oral evidence

Learners will be required to produce the following written and/or oral evidence:

♦   Completed reflective logs
♦   Personal learning styles statement

National Unit Support Notes

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Unit Support Notes are offered as guidance and 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 is a mandatory Unit in the National Certificate in Computing with Digital Media at SCQF level 6. The overall aim of the Unit is to provide learners with knowledge and skills required to prepare them for advanced study.

This Unit is expressed in generic terms but can be related to a context which learners are familiar with.

Outcome 1

Within this Outcome the learner will develop research skills in order to better understand how to search for and organise information. This will involve looking at a range of information sources (including the internet), search methods (eg use of keywords) and note-taking techniques (eg mind-maps). Learners could also be given deadlines for each task to allow the development of time-management skills. Any, or all, parts of the investigation can be completed on an individual basis, or as a group, but each learner should provide their own documentation for their portfolio. Learners may review and critically evaluate the findings of the investigation and record any problems or recommendations for use in future investigations.

Self-evaluation is part of becoming an effective learner and learners may use reflective logs at various stages to record personal development of study skills. They should include critical assessment of their approach to each task and identify areas of knowledge/learning or practice that require further study or effort.

Outcome 2

On completion of Outcome 1, investigation findings may be organized into a presentation format for delivery to the assessor. Learners may be given a list of quality criteria (eg time limit, number of pages, use of graphics and hyperlinks) for production of the presentation which should be followed for achievement of this part of the Outcome, as well as the delivery. The presentation can take any format but must meet any criteria agreed. Learners should use a minimum of two methods to gather feedback from their audience, on their presentation. Examples could include a survey/questionnaire, online poll, comments box, use of an online discussion forum, or any other appropriate method.

National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Note-taking skills can also be taught to help learners to deliver oral presentations confidently, limiting the need to read directly from a screen or text document. Alternatively, learners may provide evidence of their presentation using an audio/video recording. In addition, learners should spell-check, proof-read, and edit where required. Reflective logs should also be created on completion of each task within this Outcome.

Outcome 3

Learners will be required to produce an extended formal report, complex in structure and with graphical information included as appropriate. The choice of topic should be negotiated with the tutor and approved before the learner embarks on their report. Learners can use the investigation topic for their report, from Outcome 1 if preferred. The report should be word-processed and spell-checked, proof-read, and edited where required. Vocabulary and style of report should be appropriate for the intended audience. The report should have a coherent sequence and be presented in paragraphs in an organised manner. All essential information should be included and any conclusions and recommendations should be consistent with the information presented.

Tutors may provide learners with a pro forma document to ensure that all report sections are defined and included, where appropriate. The following headings could be considered:

♦ Title page
♦ Contents page
♦ Introduction
♦ Terms of reference
♦ Procedures
♦ Summary
♦ Findings/body of report
♦ Conclusions
♦ Recommendations
♦ References/bibliography
♦ Appendices

Learners should be introduced to critical thinking techniques used to make informed decisions about choice of sources of information used, and also the process involved when reviewing their findings.

As per Outcome 1 and 2, learners should complete a reflective log on completion of the report.

National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Outcome 4

Achievement of Outcome 4 is mainly integrated within the tasks for Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 which include:

♦ Time-management skills
♦ Reflective logs
♦ Group work (if appropriate)

The final task learners should perform is to consider each of the previous tasks and the techniques used throughout to determine their own preferred learning style. Learners should then provide a statement describing their preferred style, giving examples of techniques used, and why.

This Unit is also available at SCQF level 5. The table below compares content in each level which may be useful for:

♦ Designing and planning learning activities for multi-level classes
♦ Ensuring seamless progression between levels
♦ Identifying relevant prior learning for all learners

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Stage in Investigation	SCQF level 5	SCQF level 6
Defining research area	Agree topic with assessor/centre Identify some learning objectives	Topic chosen by learner Specify some learning objectives
Planning research	Describe search tools Describe information sources to be used Use time management techniques	Design a research plan Describe search tools and information sources
Carrying out research	Make notes Capture text and/or graphical data Record sources used	Make notes Record and reference data Work to a timeline
Analysing data	Select information to use Structure/organise Identify main ideas	Analyse collected information Produce a report Justify and acknowledge sources Present conclusions by applying critical thinking
Presenting findings	Present key findings effectively in electronic format Find and correct errors	Create a presentation Deliver findings to a group Collect feedback
Evaluating process	Evaluate success in achieving research goals/learning objectives Evaluate effectiveness in carrying out research	Evaluate performance in carrying out investigation Maintain log throughout investigation Identify personal preferred learning style Develop advanced time management skills

National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes. *Computing: Academic Study Skills* is a mandatory Unit in NC in Computing with Digital Media at SCQF level 6.

Learners would benefit from the delivery of a combination of face-to-face, tutor-led and independent study. However a practical, hands-on approach to learning should be adopted with the emphasis on learning-by-doing. Terminology and underpinning knowledge should be introduced in a practical context.

Learners will require access to a range of information sources for Outcome 1.

Throughout this Unit, learner activities should relate to their personal, vocational or study interests. For example, learners should be permitted to choose topics, which reflect their interests, or agreed curriculum needs, rather than prescribed topics chosen by their assessor. Their search for information and suitable information sources should be genuine (rather than contrived) and provide some relevant information on the subject/topic which the learner can actually use.

The Unit has been constructed so that the Outcomes should be dealt with in the order they appear as they lead on logically from one to the next. The actual distribution of time between Outcomes is at the discretion of the centre.

Guidance on approaches to assessment of this Unit

The assessment should be contextualised. A holistic approach is recommended for assessment of this Unit and evidence must be generated through open-book conditions. Learners are required to produce a portfolio/e-portfolio of evidence covering the relevant Performance Criteria. Where evidence is oral in nature this may be supported by an appropriate assessor checklist covering the relevant Performance Criteria.

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

♦ Word processed documents — printed or electronic
♦ Audio or video recordings
♦ Digital photographs — printed or electronic
♦ Slide shows — printed or electronic

In addition to the above, Assessor checklists could be used to record learner performance evidence for each Outcome, ensuring all Performance Criteria is met.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

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Opportunities for 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 social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at **www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment**.

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

There are opportunities within this Unit to develop learners' Core Skills in *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* at SCQF level 5, and also *Communication* at SCQF level 5.

Broader skills development in the areas of enterprise, employability, sustainable development and citizenship may also be included depending on chosen investigation topic.

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

General information for learners

Unit title: Computing: Academic Skills (SCQF level 6)

This section will help you decide whether this is the Unit for you by explaining what the Unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the Unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

This Unit is intended to prepare you for progression to HN/FE to ensure you have the skills required to study at this advanced level, and to help you become an effective independent learner.

The Unit combines research and study skills with academic writing and you will develop skills in areas of time management, note-taking, searching, reading and referencing, and presenting information.

The use of ICT is implicit throughout the Unit and you are expected to be able to access and retrieve appropriate information that relates to an area of practice or study. During this you will consider what constitutes a good source of information and how to determine how reliable the information is.

Assessment for this Unit is a holistic approach in the form of a portfolio/e-portfolio containing the required evidence, gathered over the course of the Unit. Deadlines will be given for various tasks, as designated by your assessor.

In undertaking the Unit you will develop Core Skills of *Information Communication Technology (ICT)* as well as aspects of *Communication at SCQF level 5.*