National Unit Specification: General Information

SCOTTISH
QUALIFICATIONS
AUTHORITY

UNIT   Communication (Higher)

NUMBER   D01B 12

COURSE

SUMMARY
This core skills unit seeks to develop the ability to respond to and produce complex written and oral communication which deals with unfamiliar and abstract ideas which go beyond what is immediately accessible or related to personal interests. This unit is designed to develop communication skills at a level which is valuable for intermediate posts in business, administration and technician occupations, and for entry to certain courses of advanced and higher education.

OUTCOMES
1   Respond to complex written communication.
2   Produce well-structured written communication on a complex topic.
3   Produce and respond to oral communication on a complex topic.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY
While entry is at the discretion of the centre, candidates would normally be expected to have attained Communication (Intermediate 2).

CREDIT VALUE
1 Credit at Higher.

Administrative Information

Additional copies of this specification can be purchased from the Scottish Qualifications Authority. The cost is £2.50. (minimum charge £5.00)

CORE SKILLS

Information on the automatic certification of core skills is published in *Automatic Certification of Core Skills in National Qualifications* (SQA, 1999).

The attainment of this unit will lead to the automatic award of:

- Communication at Higher.

National unit specification: statement of standards

UNIT Communication (Higher)

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.

Note on range for the unit
The outcomes should be demonstrated in relation to material which deals with unfamiliar and abstract ideas which go beyond what is immediately accessible or related to personal interests or experience.

OUTCOME 1
Respond to complex written communication.

Performance Criteria
a)   Identify the type and purpose of a communication and justify in terms of the main conventions used.
b)   Identify all significant information, ideas and supporting details and provide a full explanation of their relationships.
c)   Draw inferences from the communication about the writer's point of view, and justify by detailed reference to the text.
d)   Evaluate fully the effectiveness of the communication in meeting its purpose.

Evidence Requirements
Written or spoken evidence that on one occasion the candidate has understood, analysed and evaluated an appropriate non-fiction text and has achieved all the performance criteria. All the performance criteria *must* be met within one task.

Complex written communication
Non-fiction texts must be used. Texts will normally have more than one purpose - e.g. to inform or report, to discuss, to persuade, to express feelings and reactions - and will deal with unfamiliar and abstract ideas which go beyond what is immediately accessible or related to the candidate's personal interests. The communication may present information, ideas and meaning at a sophisticated level (often characterised by the number and relationship of ideas, by density of detail or by abstraction). The text will contain complex and/or specialist vocabulary and make substantial use of sentences which are internally complex.

National unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

UNIT   Communication (Higher)

OUTCOME 2
Produce well-structured written communication on a complex topic.

Performance Criteria
a)   The techniques are appropriate to the writer's purpose, are used consistently and effectively and are adapted as necessary for the intended readership.
b)   All essential ideas/information and supporting detail contributing to the main purpose of the communication are expressed accurately and coherently.
c)   Structure is appropriate to purpose and audience and the writer arranges and links major and minor points in ways which assist the clarity and impact of the writing.
d)   Spelling, punctuation and syntax are consistently accurate; sentence structure, paragraphing and vocabulary are varied to suit purpose and audience.

Evidence Requirements
One piece of written evidence or a portfolio of thematically linked pieces to show that the candidate has achieved all the performance criteria. The piece, or pieces taken together, should amount to no fewer than 700 words. Where a portfolio of evidence is used, it should consist of one main piece of written communication which succinctly presents complex information and/or opinions. Further linked pieces of writing should be included to show the development of the main piece.

Complex written communication
The candidate will produce complex written communication which *either* presents, analyses and evaluates information *or* develops opinions and/or ideas in relation to an issue which is explored in depth. The structure will make clear how the content has been organised; where a prescribed format is used, it will be used consistently and effectively. Layout, word choice and any use of graphics or pictures will be appropriate to purpose, context and target audience. Some complex vocabulary, including specialist vocabulary, will be used. Sentences may be internally complex and will be varied. Linkages will be clear. Paragraphs will show a developing line of thought and make clear the distinction between facts, opinions, arguments and conclusions. Few errors will be present.

OUTCOME 3
Produce and respond to oral communication on a complex topic.

Performance Criteria
a)   Vocabulary and a range of spoken language structures are used consistently and effectively at an appropriate level of formality for a clear purpose.
b)   The communication conveys all essential information, opinions or ideas with supporting detail accurately and coherently, and with varied emphasis as appropriate.
c)   The structure of the communication takes full account of purpose and audience.
d)   Delivery takes account of situation and audience.
e)   Responses take account of the contributions of other(s).

National unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

UNIT   Communication (Higher)

Evidence Requirements

All the performance criteria must be met in one spoken interaction (discussion or presentation) involving significant and sustained contributions and interactions with one or more people. A brief note of context and source will accompany the evidence, which could take the form of a checklist or recording. An individual presentation should last for a minimum of five minutes with additional time for questions.

In a spoken interaction at this level

The candidate will convey all essential information, and will provide an introductory overview if appropriate. The candidate will demonstrate a clear and developing line of thought, will differentiate between facts and opinions and will reach a conclusion which summarises and builds on information given. Opinions and ideas presented will be linked and substantiated. The use of vocabulary, register and structure will be consistently appropriate to purpose and audience and varied effectively. Some complex and/or specialist vocabulary will be included. Delivery will be audible with pace, tone and modulation adjusted to the needs of the group or audience. Appropriate use will be made of non-verbal conventions. The candidate will respond to points of view and/or questions from others.

National unit specification: support notes

UNIT   Communication (Higher)

This part of the unit specification is offered as guidance. None of the sections of the support notes is mandatory.

GUIDANCE ON CONTENT AND CONTEXT
The content and context for this core skills unit should be appropriate to the personal and vocational needs of the candidate.

Core skills units are stated at five levels of attainment, with activities becoming progressively more demanding in breadth and depth, and in the extent of individual autonomy required. The appendix to this unit shows the relationship between the levels in Communication.

The programme in Communication should develop:
- the skills and concepts required for reading complex texts
- the skills and concepts required for reading and researching topics and texts
- the skills and concepts required for informational and expressive writing
- the skills and concepts required for writing notes, plans and evaluations
- the skills and concepts required for individual talk, discussion and listening.

The programme in Communication should provide opportunities to:
- use language for a variety of purposes with a balance between productive and receptive modes
- use language in a range of settings - personal, social and vocational
- read a variety of texts which offer a range of reading demands
- use a range of written forms including graphical and pictorial
- use a range of forms of oral communication with a balance between productive and receptive modes.

Outcome 1
Non-fiction texts must be used. Candidates' reading should include a variety of texts and graphical and pictorial representations which offer a range of reading demands, e.g. books; newspapers and magazines; pamphlets; notices; advertisements; instructions; graphs; diagrams; tables; charts; and reports. Information, ideas and meaning may be at a sophisticated level (often characterised by the number and relationship of ideas, by density of detail or by abstraction). The communication may contain complex and/or specialist vocabulary and make substantial use of sentences which are internally complex.

Texts can include complex newspaper/journal feature articles; specialised journalism relating to a particular issue or area of interest; academic textbooks (non-fiction book exploring an issue from several perspectives); complex reports or papers relating to a work setting. Texts may also include images, e.g. diagrams, maps, charts, tables, sketches or photographs.

The *purpose* of the communication should be concerned with the presentation, analysis, synthesis and/or evaluation of a substantial body of information, and/or the development of a point of view in relation to an issue which is explored in depth, and from several perspectives.

National unit specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Communication (Higher)

Conventions: candidates should not only identify purpose by referring to the main content, but also to the likely audience and those aspects of the form which make clear what type of text it is. In practice, candidates may reasonably be expected to make detailed reference to aspects of layout, including any graphic material, and key phrases that help to identify purpose.

In *evaluating* the text, the candidate should analyse its strengths and weakness and comment fully on the effectiveness of the communication in meeting its purpose. At this level, reference to the text should not only focus on content but should also involve comment on structure, style, tone, use of vocabulary and register.

Outcome 2

Candidates should use language for a variety of purposes appropriate to their individual needs, e.g. presenting, analysing and evaluating information; exploring, analysing and reviewing experiences; presenting arguments; examining issues in depth from a range of viewpoints and presenting conclusions. Candidates should be able to consider an issue from several perspectives and to present a stance which takes account of, and refutes, challenges offered by other perspectives on the issue. Candidates may be dealing with ideas and meaning at a sophisticated level (often characterised by the number and relationship of ideas, by density and clarity of detail or by the degree or level of abstraction).

Written communication which the candidate produces should reflect personal interests or be related to an area of study or the work setting, e.g. a formal report evaluating information and making recommendations; a write-up of a project/practical investigation, which should have a clear purpose and audience and may take a prescribed format; an argumentative essay which explores an issue in depth; a formal paper for a tutorial or vocational group; a personal/reflective or persuasive essay which should include analysis and evaluation as well as reflection or persuasion. Texts may also include images e.g. diagrams, maps, charts, tables, sketches or photographs may be used in support of the written text. The images may be produced by the candidate or selected from a bank of images.

Candidates should choose an appropriate *structure* for written work. The structure chosen and the layout, word choice and any use of graphics or pictures should be appropriate to purpose, context and intended readership For example, where appropriate, structural sub-divisions such as introduction, background information, presentation and analysis of findings, conclusions and recommendations, could be used. At this level, these should be appropriate to the purpose and form (e.g. a formal report); the context (e.g. a particular company); and the intended audience (e.g. senior management of the company or the team the candidate has been working in).

National unit specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT   Communication (Higher)

It is anticipated that a word length of no fewer than 700 words would be required to demonstrate competence at this level. Where a portfolio of evidence is being used for assessment requirements (e.g. memorandum, business letter and report or technical specification) the pieces should be linked and cover an issue related to personal interest, an area of study or the work setting. The portfolio should consist of one main piece of written communication which succinctly presents complex information and/or opinions. Although the topics being addressed are complex, the written communication might explain and simplify these by identifying key aspects and by giving appropriate supporting detail. Further linked pieces of writing should be included to show the development of the main piece and/or give further supporting detail. The pieces taken together should amount to no fewer than 700 words.

Outcome 3
Candidates should use language for a variety of purposes appropriate to individual needs, e.g. collating, synthesising and evaluating information; presenting research findings or a formal tutorial paper.

In their spoken interaction, candidates may, for example:
- give a talk supported, where appropriate, by images, e.g. illustrations, handouts, audio/visual aids and involving significant and sustained interaction with the audience, and response to questions and points of view
- contribute to a group discussion with a clear purpose on topics relevant to candidates' studies and/or vocational interests e.g. to identify and distinguish key aspects of, and points of view on, an issue; the candidate's contribution to the discussion should be significant and sustained
- participate in a formal meeting to discuss an issue and reach conclusions.

Topics might include, for example, findings from a project or a piece of research which the candidate has been working on, or a tutorial topic which is explored in discussion. Although the topics being addressed are complex, the speaker might explain and simplify these by identifying key aspects and by giving appropriate supporting detail, perhaps in response to questions.

An individual presentation should have a clear *structure* with an introductory overview if appropriate. The talk should demonstrate a clear and developing line of thought; should differentiate clearly between facts and opinions; and should reach a conclusion which summarises and builds on information given. Information, opinions and ideas will have been linked, related and substantiated. At this level, an individual presentation should last for a minimum of five minutes with additional time for questions.

It is likely that effective group discussion would involve four or more people but an interview or an oral briefing could be conducted on a one to one basis and still demonstrate a sophisticated level of oral communication skills which covers the performance criteria.

UNIT   Communication (Higher)

In *taking account of the contributions of others* candidates should listen and respond to points of view, answer questions, ask questions to clarify or explore in greater depth, analyse, summarise, expand, and /or reflect.

Delivery should be clear and audible, and supported by conscious variation in tone, pace and modulation adjusted to the needs of the group or audience. Appropriate use should be made of eye contact, posture and gesture.

In creating a checklist for Outcome 3, teacher/lecturers should find the detail provided under *Evidence Requirements* helpful.

GUIDANCE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES
The learning and teaching approaches should encourage candidates to identify the evidence of their attainment and to transfer the skills acquired to other contexts.

Programmes of work in Communication should be designed to engage candidates in the varied and purposeful use of interrelated skills of language through a range of tasks. These tasks may reflect the candidates' vocational interest or may be of more general interest. It is recommended that these tasks should be negotiated and planned in such a way that the evidence required for assessment is generated in the course of ongoing work rather than as a discrete exercise.

Learning and teaching in Communication should be active and candidate-centred. Candidates should have the opportunity to plan and make decisions for themselves, to show initiative and independence and to work co-operatively in groups. Activities should provide opportunities to use language in real situations for real purposes and may be part of projects or practical exercises set within the Communication programme or drawn from activities in other vocational and social contexts.

Opportunities for rewriting, reviewing, revising and evaluating by the candidate, by peers and by the teacher/lecturer should be seen as an essential feature of all formative activities. The candidates should be involved in activities which stretch their capabilities.

The use of dictionaries should be encouraged at all stages. Word processors, including those which can make use of spelling check type software, may be used by candidates.

In oral communication, recordings of candidate performance at this level would enable others to appreciate the standard required. Recorded evidence of candidate performance would also assist internal and external verification.

National unit specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT   Communication (Higher)

Where the Communication unit is being combined with another unit to create an enhanced learning and teaching programme, care must be taken to ensure that all aspects of each unit are covered and adequate time must be allowed for the coverage of both units. Such a programme would create opportunities to consolidate the skills gained in this unit.

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT

The statement of satisfactory performance for each outcome indicates the minimum required for the purpose of summative assessment. However, the number of activities undertaken by the candidate in the course of the unit should not be limited to those specified for assessment purposes. In awarding the candidate Communication at Higher the teacher/lecturer must be confident that the candidate will be able to demonstrate these skills in any context and set of circumstances.

Teachers/lecturers must remember to distinguish between their differing roles in formative and summative assessment. In the former, as much help and support as is required by the candidate may legitimately be given by the teacher/lecturer. *Tasks which are used to provide evidence for summative assessment must be completed by the candidate unaided.* It would, however, be acceptable for the teacher/lecturer to draw the candidate's attention to any general area of error in relation to particular performance criteria or redirect him or her to the task in hand.

Where the candidate is responding orally in Outcome 1, detailed evidence (transcript, recording) must be retained for verification purposes. In Outcome 3, a brief note of context and/or source, whether for an individual presentation or group discussion, should accompany the evidence, which could take the form of a checklist or recording.

Evidence of attainment should be gathered, wherever possible, from integrated activities, whether this unit is being studied as a stand alone unit or is being used in combination with others.

SPECIAL NEEDS

This unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. Special 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 SQA document *Guidance on Special Assessment and Certification Arrangements* (SQA, 1998).

Core skills units   **Appendix**

Communication: progression chart

Skill	**Access 2**	**Access 3**	**Intermediate 1**	**Intermediate 2**	**Higher**
Reading	Respond to very simple written communication	Respond to simple written communication	Respond to simple but detailed written communication	Respond to accessible written communication	Respond to complex written communication
Writing	Produce very simple written communication	Produce simple written communication	Produce simple but detailed written communication	Produce well-structured written communication	Produce well-structured written communication on a complex topic
Talking and listening	Produce and respond to very simple oral communication	Produce and respond to simple oral communication	Produce and respond to simple but detailed oral communication	Produce and respond to oral communication	Produce and respond to oral communication on a complex topic