

Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Workplace Communication in English

Unit code: DE1K 33

Unit purpose: This Unit develops oral and written communication skills in English at SCQF level 5. It is aimed at candidates for whom English is an additional language. The Unit is appropriate for use within a wide variety of business contexts.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

1. Respond to written business communication.
2. Produce well structured written business information.
3. Contribute to an extended discussion on a complex vocational issue.

Credit value: 1 HN Credit at SCQF level 6: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 6*)

**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 points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Access to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre. Candidates will be bilingual and speak English as an additional language. However it would be beneficial if the candidate had competence in Communication to at least one of the following:

- ◆ NQ English and Communication Intermediate 1
- ◆ Core Skills Communication at SCQF level 4 (Intermediate 1)
- ◆ SQA Intermediate 2 Units in English for Speakers of Other Languages
- ◆ University of Cambridge First Certificate
- ◆ IELTS score of 5.0 – 5.5
- ◆ An equivalent qualification or experience

Core skills: This Unit gives automatic certification of the Core Skill of *Communication* at level 5.

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. There may be opportunities for integration with other Units in the Group Award that require written and/or oral communication.

General information for centres (cont)

Assessment: Evidence should be generated through assessment undertaken in conditions where the authenticity of the candidate's work can be ensured. Since the Core Skill of *Communication* at level 5 is incorporated within this Unit it is strongly recommended that you follow the assessment guidelines given. An exemplar assessment pack and marking guidelines have been produced to indicate the national standard of achievement required at SCQF level 6.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

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The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, knowledge and/or skills, and Evidence Requirements are mandatory.

Outcome 1

Respond to written business communication

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ knowledge of the purposes and uses of written vocational communication
- ◆ an understanding of the impact of layout, language and graphical communication
- ◆ an understanding of techniques used to reach a range of readers
- ◆ techniques for identifying and summarising key information and supporting detail
- ◆ skills in evaluating the effectiveness of written text in meeting its purpose

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and skills by summarising and evaluating a written business text which combines factual content and analysis and is at least 500 words in length. The response must be written or recorded on audio tape and must:

- ◆ summarise the key points
- ◆ evaluate the effectiveness of the text in meeting needs of purpose and readership in terms of content, format and presentation

Evidence should be generated in assessment undertaken in supervised conditions.

Assessment guidelines

Any detailed and structured text may be used, but it is suggested that the text, which should be selected by the assessor, could be one which would provide a model of a type of document to be produced for Outcome 2 or could be a source text for a thematic approach to Outcomes 2 and/or 3. An integrated approach would avoid over-assessment. A report, proposal, or detailed memorandum, supported, if appropriate, by graphic communication could fulfil this requirement.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Workplace Communication in English

Outcome 2

Produce well structured written business information

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ awareness of the influence of purpose and readership on written communication
- ◆ knowledge of a range of business formats
- ◆ effective ways of gathering information
- ◆ how to arrange ideas for impact
- ◆ how to choose layout, words and any graphics to convey meaning clearly and effectively
- ◆ correct use of spelling, grammar and punctuation

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and skills by producing a folio of at least three vocationally relevant documents which present and examine information and ideas. The texts — a total of 1,000 words minimum — should be produced in properly supervised and invigilated conditions, meet an agreed brief and be in a recognised format. The texts should:

- ◆ select format and layout appropriate to purpose and readership
- ◆ present information accurately
- ◆ arrange information in a logical order
- ◆ use language effectively
- ◆ use consistently accurate spelling, syntax and punctuation

Assessment guidelines

There should be some negotiation with the candidate in terms of the content, purpose and intended readership of the documents. Setting deadlines for the submission of any first drafts should reflect workplace practice.

The documents produced should follow industry standard conventions. The texts, for example a formal letter, report, and/or proposal, could provide a basis for or follow up to the discussion in Outcome 3. Appropriate papers produced for other Units within the course may be included. Graphics may be used to support and supplement text. Although word processing is not mandatory, the texts should as far as is practical reflect accepted workplace practice. Dictionaries and/or spellcheck software may be used to assist accuracy.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Workplace Communication in English

Outcome 3

Contribute to an extended discussion on a complex vocational issue

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ how to plan and prepare for a discussion
- ◆ how to locate and select relevant information
- ◆ how to express and present information and ideas clearly and effectively
- ◆ how to organise and structure a contribution to discussion
- ◆ how to use non-verbal communication to support spoken communication
- ◆ how to respond and adapt to the contributions of other(s)
- ◆ the purpose, and format of written records of spoken communication

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and skills by taking part in sustained spoken communication which has a clear remit involving a complex vocational issue. A detailed observation checklist and/or a video recording, individual written records and support materials should be retained as evidence of performance for each candidate. Each candidate should:

- ◆ plan a contribution to a formal discussion
- ◆ speak clearly and audibly
- ◆ organise and present information clearly
- ◆ use appropriate tone, pace and body language
- ◆ listen to others and respond in a way which encourages communication
- ◆ complete a written record of the discussion

Assessment guidelines

Candidates should take part in a formal discussion with one or more others which has a clear aim and anticipated Outcome. There may be scope for integration with other Outcomes or Units. Each candidate must make a sustained spoken contribution. Each candidate should make brief planning notes and a record of proceedings such as action minutes. Brief written records such as an outline agenda and action minutes must be accurate and suitable for wider distribution. A recording and/or observation checklist should be completed for each candidate.

Administrative Information

Unit code:	DE1K 33
Unit title:	Workplace Communication in English
Superclass category:	FK
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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Workplace Communication in English

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

This Unit incorporates the Core Skills of Written and Oral Communication at SCQF level 5. Where it is delivered within a Higher National framework there is the potential for some integration with other course Units which involve written or spoken communication. In such a situation it is critical that candidates are aware of the need to achieve all the Evidence Requirements for all the Units that are being assessed together.

HNCs and HNDs are designed to support technician, technologist or first line manager occupations. The levels of communication performance set out here are those expected in English in these occupations. Variations in accent, intonation and idiom will be acceptable, so long as the normal conventions of business English are adhered to. Written communication should always adhere to the conventions of business English accepted in the occupations or HE institutions mentioned above.

The content will vary according to the vocational discipline or interest of the candidate, but the Unit should encourage good practice to industry standards in responding to and delivering written and spoken communication. Throughout the Unit the emphasis should be on workplace practice and the conventions of business English.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

The practical skills assessed in this Unit will have links with other aspects of vocational work and for both assessment and delivery, an approach which is integrated with other Unit work may be helpful in reducing workload and using Core Skills in practical situations. In cases where candidates lack the formal recommended entry requirements a discrete assessment approach which develops skills, and includes additional bridging support over an extended time, may be more beneficial.

Making links between Outcomes is good practice and reinforces the development of communication skills needed in the workplace. Outcome 1 assessment could be based on a model report, proposal or in-house article on, for example, a safety issue or suggested change of system or procedure. Candidates might summarise and evaluate this text, recording individual responses in writing or, if spoken, on audio-tape. They might then research the proposals and present their summary and conclusions orally to one or more others, using a real or role-play situation, using any suitable support materials, such as demonstration models and/or handouts or other written communication. Information and associated papers, such as letters, memoranda, and records of discussion could be formally written up and contribute to the assessment of Outcome 2. Graphic information could be used to support and enhance both written and oral communication. The use of technology for word processing and to produce audio-visual support material may encourage confidence, although candidates without access to such resources should not be disadvantaged.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Workplace Communication in English

Assessment approaches should be sufficiently flexible to allow for adaptation to the needs and situations of the candidates and their vocational discipline. Outcomes may be integrated, but candidates must be aware of the need to fulfil all assessment criteria. Where candidates are part time, or where the Unit is delivered on a stand-alone basis, negotiation of content and delivery around employment needs and situations is recommended.

The provision of exemplar and reference material to support all aspects of the Unit, the value of formative work to practise and develop the skills and the allowance of time for the draft and redraft of materials is critical to achievement. The setting of precise remits and of deadlines which allow for evaluation and re-negotiation will be an important aspect of delivery and should reflect working practice. Although some written communication may be undertaken outside the centre, arrangements should be made to ensure authenticity; supervised production of assessment work, and the retention of drafts, outlines and planning documents signed by the candidate is recommended.

Outcomes 1 and 2

The use of a contextualised model as a text for the assessment of skills for Outcome 1 has advantages in developing skills within a realistic workplace context. Oral responses should be scribed or recorded. Evaluation of a text should be detailed, summarising the key points and examining the appropriateness and effectiveness of the content, format and layout for the intended purpose and readership.

The task of the candidate in Outcome 2 is to present a folio of written information using as a context a workplace situation. This could involve, for example, a review of equipment, accident and safety reports, minutes, letters and any internal/external written documents relating to vocational issues. Electronic mail, and fax texts could be included, although documents should be of a length and complexity to allow demonstration of all criteria. There should be full discussion with the candidate in terms of the purpose and intended audience of any text in order to ensure that the document produced is appropriate, and proforma materials may be used where this would reflect industry practice. The candidate should be encouraged to consider aspects such as any prior knowledge the intended reader has and how this might affect the structure of the document and the vocabulary used. The candidate should also be aware of the most appropriate register and syntax. While the issue may be complex the language used need not be so and much of the language may usefully be direct and accessible. In general, the use of informal style and language is unlikely to be acceptable in documents which may be used for recording information and for wider distribution within the workplace; where an informal approach is adopted it should be the result of a conscious strategy. Documents should follow current conventions which may vary considerably according to the vocational area involved. Graphic materials, such as diagrams and tables, may be used to support the text and it should be clear when these are original work. Any supplementary papers included in the word count must be written by the candidate.

Outcome 3

There may be links with other Outcomes or Units, or the skills may be discretely assessed. Introducing candidates to practical communication skills needed within a workplace is often most easily accomplished by beginning the course with an examination of the function and format of informal meetings, interviews and discussions and the value, range and uses of written records. These could include an outline agenda, brief written summaries of points/proposals for distribution and simple action minutes.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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Whatever scenario is used to assess the Outcome, the candidate would have to demonstrate some control of the presentation of information, and use appropriate register and language. In achieving this Outcome the candidate would be expected to demonstrate appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication skills and the ability to ask and answer questions in such a way as to progress discussion and promote working relationships. One or more others could be involved in an interaction reflecting work practice, such as a meeting or interview. Although formal documentation is not required, there should be some evidence of planning. This might take the form of a brief agenda or a planning sheet which indicates the reason for the discussion, what is to be discussed, what the individual candidate's contribution to the meeting is to be as well as the what, where and when of the meeting. Records need not be complex but should be sufficient for use and proforma sheets may be used.

Open learning

Outcomes 1 and 2 are appropriate to Open and to Flexible Learning approaches, such as on-line distance learning, with tutor input support at all stages of draft. Centre-devised supervision agreements should detail controlled conditions to ensure authenticity of evidence. For Outcome 3 candidates must be directly observed and assessed by the tutor. This could be achieved either by arranging an interview or meeting with candidates, by video conferencing or by the tutor assessing a video of performance which meets all assessment criteria.

Candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs

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 SQA document *Guidance on Alternative Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs*, which is available on SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk.

General information for candidates

Unit title: Workplace Communication in English

Conveying and responding to a range of information by reading, writing, listening and talking is the basis of communication. Effective oral and written communication skills are essential to promote good relationships and best working practice in a business environment.

This Unit will focus on the skills needed for communication in the workplace. You will summarise business texts and evaluate the effectiveness of the content, format and layout in meeting the needs of purpose and readership. You will produce effective business documents such as proposals, letters and reports. You will develop the skills for sustained spoken interactions with others.

The skills developed in this Unit will be useful to you during the course and in your working life.