



Higher National Unit specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Support Learning in a Social Services Practice Context

Unit code: F1W9 37

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to enable candidates to support learning in a practice context based on legislation, policy and guidance relevant to social services. Successful candidates will be able to model good practice and enable learners to operate within the boundaries of the context of their own field of professional practice.

On completion of the Unit candidates should be able to:

- 1 Demonstrate a critical understanding of good practice in the application of legislation, policy and guidance relevant to social services.
- 2 Enable learners to act within the responsibility, accountability and authority of their professional role in a social services context.
- 3 Enable learners to develop critical awareness of the implications of legislation, policy and guidance for practice in social services.

Credit points and level: 1 HN credit at SCQF level 10: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 10*)

**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.*

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Candidates should have well developed communication and inter-personal skills and be able to demonstrate their ability to critically review and consolidate knowledge, skills, practices and thinking in their disciplines. This may be demonstrated by relevant professional qualifications at SCQF Level 9 (or equivalent) or above with relevant experience in a social services or other related setting. Acceptance of relevant equivalent qualifications and experience will be at the discretion of the centre.

Core Skills: Although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components in this Unit, there are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of Working with Others, Problem Solving and Communication at SCQF Level 6. Additionally, there may be opportunities to develop the Core Skill of Information Technology.

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.

General information for centres (cont)

Assessment: The focus of this Unit is on the development of competence to use a wide range of principal skills, some specialised skills and advanced applications to critically evaluate learning. Assessment mechanisms should gather evidence from a range of sources.

This collection of evidence approach allows candidates flexibility in relation to evidence gathering and scope to present their evidence in a way that best fits with their learning needs and styles. The evidence gathered to demonstrate that candidates have achieved the Outcomes should be naturally occurring during their day to day activity, therefore encouraging them to critically reflect on the nature of what they do on a daily basis.

Candidates' practice evidence of their ability to support learning in practice can be taken from a variety of sources including feedback from peers, managers, learners, service users, carers and other professionals. This will be collated alongside evidence of the candidate's knowledge and understanding of the topics covered by the Unit. Candidates should also provide a critically reflective narrative identifying their learning for the Unit, critically reflecting on what they have done well, what they might have done differently and what they need to work on in the future.

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.

Please see specific knowledge and/or skills required in relation to each Outcome and Evidence Requirements for the Unit after the Outcomes.

The whole of the content listed in the knowledge and skills sections must be taught and available for assessment.

Outcome 1

Demonstrate a critical understanding of good practice in the application of legislation, policy and guidance relevant to social services

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Current legislation, policy and guidance, including equalities legislation relevant to a social services practice context
- ◆ Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) Code of Practice and its application
- ◆ Current research on the application of legislation, policy and guidance relevant to practice context
- ◆ Perspectives of others, including service users and carers, on the application of legislation, policy and guidance
- ◆ Current practice material demonstrating good practice examples in specific legislative, policy and guidance contexts

Outcome 2

Enable learners to act within the responsibility, accountability and authority of their professional role in a social services context

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ How legislation, policy and guidance define the responsibilities, accountability and authority of professional roles
- ◆ Methods for enabling others to practise within a framework of accountability
- ◆ Rights, responsibilities, freedom, authority and power in the practice of workers as ethical and professional/statutory agents
- ◆ Organisational structures and expectations
- ◆ Current practice material demonstrating complex ethical conflicts and dilemmas within specific practice contexts

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Support Learning in a Social Services Practice Context

Outcome 3

Enable learners to develop critical awareness of the implications of legislation, policy and guidance for practice in social services

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Positive and negative impacts of specific legislation, policy and guidance for practice
- ◆ Current campaigns for change in relation to legislation and policy
- ◆ Processes through which legislation and policy are developed
- ◆ Methods for developing analytical and critical awareness skills

Evidence Requirements for the Unit

Candidates must provide evidence to cover all knowledge and skills in the Outcomes above by demonstrating their ability to support learning in a social services practice context based on relevant legislation, policy and guidance. The evidence will demonstrate application of knowledge, sources of knowledge and a critical understanding of principal theories and concepts relevant to this Unit.

Candidates will show that they can:

- ◆ critically reflect on their own learning needs in relation to legislation, policy and guidance and take steps to address these
- ◆ make professional judgements about the range of legislation, policy, and guidance necessary to enable learners to understand the context for practice
- ◆ critically evaluate learners' progress towards responsible, accountable and critically aware practice
- ◆ demonstrate a critical understanding of the processes underpinning the formation of legislation and policy, and design methods for promoting this understanding with learners
- ◆ use a variety of methods to promote learners' ability to critically appraise the impact of legislation and policy
- ◆ critically evaluate own practice in application of legislation, policy and guidance

Assessment guidelines

This Unit stands alone and can be assessed in its own right. However, when delivered as part of a Group Award it may be appropriate for candidate evidence to span more than one Unit.

Appropriate methods for candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how to support learning in the practice context include witness statements, formal and informal feedback, learning material, self-evaluation, direct observation and critical analysis of own practice.

Administrative Information

Unit code: F1W9 37

Unit title: Support Learning in a Social Services Practice Context

Superclass category: PM

Original date of publication: August 2007

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History of changes:

Version	Description of change	Date

Source: SQA

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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Support Learning in a Social Services Practice Context

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 has been designed as a stand alone Unit. It can be delivered as a stand-alone Unit if a centre has determined that the knowledge and skills developed within this Unit are all that are required to enhance the capability of candidates. Alternatively, the Unit can be delivered as part of an SQA Group Award such as a Professional Development Award (PDA). For example, it is one of eight Units that comprise the:

- ◆ PDA in Practice Learning (Social Services) at SCQF Level 10

As this Unit is delivered as part of the PDA in Practice Learning (Social Services) at SCQF Level 10, the centre should be aware that there may be additional entry requirements for candidates in line with Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) policy.

This Unit is intended for candidates from a range of occupational and professional situations within social services. Examples include first line managers supervising staff, people in a variety of posts delivering training courses to staff, those supervising learners in practice learning and workplace assessors. This list is not exhaustive but provides a flavour of the diversity of people who might wish to access this Unit from a social services setting. The Unit is designed to enable candidates to recognise the range of legislative, policy and guidance knowledge to be considered in order to ensure that the learner understands the practice context in which they are placed and is enabled to practice in a professional manner. The Unit is designed, also, to enable candidates to recognise and to critically appraise the impact of legislation, policy and guidance in order to implement good practice for themselves and for learners. This may require candidates to step back from their immediate practice context in order to enter their educator role and encourage learners to develop critical appraisal skills.

The knowledge and skills obtained from the Outcomes of this Unit will ensure that candidates support learners within a practice context which is underpinned by specific legislative, policy and guidance (eg Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968: Mental Health Care and Treatment (Scotland) Act 2003, Twenty First Century Review — Changing Lives, DoH Framework for the Assessment of Children). Candidates need to demonstrate their ability to identify, clearly state and convey, in a way which takes account of the learners' stage and style of learning, a broad practice context. Candidates need to demonstrate their ability to encourage learners to seek out material relevant to specific practice which relates to the legislative and policy context, and to support learners to critically appraise the positive and negative impact of legislation and policy (eg the debates around the new Support and Protection of Vulnerable Adults Act 2007, Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and its utilisation of a medical model).

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Support Learning in a Social Services Practice Context

The overall purpose of the Unit is to provide candidates with:

- ◆ a critical awareness of the variety of methods (eg supervision, case studies, critical incident analysis) which can be used over time to engage learners with practice issues which challenge their thinking and skills in relation to their responsibilities, accountabilities and the development of their sense of professional role
- ◆ the skills to critically evaluate learners' progress towards responsible, accountable and critically aware practice within a practice context which may be new and unfamiliar to the learners
- ◆ a critical awareness of the change required in their own role from practitioner to educator which necessitates a development in their own critical appraisal and reflection skills in relation to the impact of legislation, policy and guidance on good practice outcomes

The Unit includes skills in critical analysis of the legislative, policy and guidance in a social services practice context for the purpose of appraisal of good practice; in critical analysis, development and critical evaluation of learning materials relating to the development of professional role for use with learners of different styles and abilities; in utilising methods to develop learners' own critical analytical skills relating to practice context; and in critically reflective evaluation of progress from practitioner to educator.

On successful completion of the Unit, candidates will be able to critically analyse and use a range of legislation, policy and guidance essential for good practice and essential for learners in developing responsible, accountable and professional practice in a specific practice context. Candidates will be able to critically analyse and provide reflective commentary on the methods used to develop learners' critical analytical abilities.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

Delivery

This Unit involves candidates in a significant amount of experiential learning. Candidates are required to critically analyse and critically reflect on this experience and to be able to make conclusions for their future behaviour and development.

It is expected that the facilitation of learning for this Unit will be through a range of approaches including face-to-face inputs, blended and other forms of directed and self-directed learning.

The delivery mechanisms adopted by centres should be flexible to allow comprehensive access and participation, including distance and e-learning. An outcomes-based approach, centred round the learning needs of the individual, may best meet the requirement for flexible delivery. The delivery of the Unit must take account of its practical nature and of the occupational and professional backgrounds of candidates.

At the outset, centres should make candidates aware of the requirements of the Unit, including the need to gather evidence, critically analyse and report on their experiences. They should also inform candidates at the outset about the type of evidence they will have to provide in order to complete the Unit successfully. It is likely that delivery will consist of some initial orientation and briefing sessions after which candidates will manage their learning independently to a significant extent.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Support Learning in a Social Services Practice Context

Centres will make suitable arrangements to support and guide candidates throughout. This could involve regular meetings with candidates on an individual basis or in groups or through e-learning.

Assessment

Centres should advise candidates about assessment requirements. The Unit takes a holistic approach to assessment and all three Outcomes are closely and systematically connected. Candidates should be encouraged to seek opportunities to generate evidence that would span more than one of the Outcomes. For example, candidates' use of good practice examples, as part of the learning programme, which relate to specific legislation and policy in social services (Outcome 1) are likely to relate to enabling learners to develop understanding of, and good practice, in relation to their own responsibilities in their professional role (Outcome 2).

Candidates should demonstrate that they have achieved the Unit Outcomes by gathering evidence from a range of sources. As far as possible for most candidates the evidence should be 'naturally occurring' during the course of their day to day activity. Where candidates are not able to rely solely on naturally occurring evidence, appropriate supplementary assessment activity such as role play or simulation will need to be developed by centres. This approach aims to reduce the need for contrived assessed activity in circumstances where outcomes are effectively being evidenced in candidates' work. The approach aims to encourage candidates to critically reflect on the nature of what they do on a daily basis.

An example of this holistic approach to gathering evidence for all 8 Units of the Award can be found in the Arrangements document.

Centres should provide advice and guidance to candidates on gathering evidence. The evidence should be presented as a coherent and logical whole rather than a collection of disparate items. Essentially, it is a record of the learning journey undertaken by candidates.

The evidence produced by candidates should demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to each Outcome. Overall, this should encompass a demonstration of:

- ◆ the professional performance improvements that candidates have achieved as a result of participating in this learning and related practical activities
- ◆ candidates' ability to critically evaluate and critically review their own and their learners' experiences of the learning environment
- ◆ candidates' application of relevant theories, methodologies and standards to enhance the learning environment

There may be opportunities to combine evidence for this Unit with evidence from other Units, especially where candidates are undertaking a relevant Group Award or a number of Units as part of a programme of Continuous Professional Development.

Combining evidence from several Units should be encouraged wherever possible. It will give candidates the opportunity to develop a more comprehensive record of their learning, but will also highlight the close connections and relationships between the different strands involved in professional development. It may also enable candidates to make use of the same piece of evidence in different contexts.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Support Learning in a Social Services Practice Context

Collection of Evidence

Assessment mechanisms should offer candidates flexibility in relation to evidence gathering against the Outcomes. Each candidate's evidence will be unique and will be expected to meet a set of minimum required content criteria as advised by the centre. Candidates are encouraged to offer fewer rather than more pieces of work to evidence several Outcomes. This is not intended to deter candidates from taking a rigorous approach to their assessment tasks, but rather to allow them scope to focus their evidence. The statement of standards for the Unit lists the mandatory Evidence Requirements, but the type of evidence candidates present for assessment is not prescribed unless specifically stated.

It is likely that content will include items covering both product and process. Evidence of support for learning can be drawn from any context across health, education and social services and involve work with individual learners and/or groups, such as through the facilitation of group supervision, or planning, delivering and/or evaluating training events. Evidence can come in a variety of forms including assignment, video, audio, presentations, witness statements etc.

Centres will advise on specific requirements but candidates will need to provide evidence of knowledge, values and skills and may include some of the following, for example:

- 1 Critically reflective narrative of the learning from the Unit as a whole. This is candidates' summary of how the evidence they have provided meets the Outcomes. It can include a clear map indicating where the evidence provided links to the Outcomes. It is likely that this will also describe what they have done well, what they might have done differently and what they need to work on in the future
- 2 Candidates' critically reflective accounts of how they have met each of the Outcomes
- 3 Evidence of direct observation of candidates' current practice with a learner or learners
- 4 Witness statements from, for example, managers, colleagues, service users, the learners themselves or practitioners in other related disciplines
- 5 Formal and informal feedback on practice from a learner or learners with whom candidates have been working
- 6 Formal and informal feedback on practice from, as appropriate, mentor, assessor, a service user, carer, peers, managers, and other professionals
- 7 A self-assessment, including critical reflection by candidates on feedback received
- 8 Product evidence to specifically demonstrate knowledge gained in relation to the purposes, design and choice of evaluation strategies and collaboration in this regard. For example, assignments, reports, extracts of minutes, supervision notes and practice documents etc

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

All elements of the Core Skill of Problem Solving at SCQF level 6, namely planning and organising, critical thinking, and reviewing and evaluating could be developed and enhanced.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Support Learning in a Social Services Practice Context

Support in developing an effective research strategy for accessing and critically evaluating paper based and electronic sources of complex information will be of value. The production and discussion of initial draft documents for the completed range of evidence is a useful way to ensure the development of skills in presentation and collation of relevant materials. Although communication skills are not formally assessed, candidates should be expected to produce and present written work to a professional standard, and to communicate essential ideas and concepts effectively. Terminology and spelling used in annotation should be technically accurate. As such, opportunities exist to develop Communication at SCQF level 6. The availability of suitable software to support an effective professional presentation could further assist the development of Core Skills Information Technology.

Candidates may have the opportunity to develop the Core Skill of Working with Others as they undertake group work, and one to one supervision with their candidate. Candidates should be made aware of techniques to put subjects at ease, or to create appropriate environments, using reflective listening and non-verbal communication, including making eye contact and relaxed body language. They should know how to initiate actions confidently and in a way that progresses communication and they should continually modify and adapt their approach to produce desired effects.

Open learning

This Unit requires candidates to take responsibility for their own learning. If it is to be delivered by means of open learning it will be necessary to ensure candidates have access to relevant material to enable them to assimilate the underpinning concepts and knowledge. Candidates will also need access to guidance and support throughout the learning and development process.

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. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (www.sqa.org.uk).

General information for candidates

Unit title: Support Learning in a Social Services Practice Context

The Unit is designed to enable you to critically appraise the areas of relevant social services legislation, policy and guidance appropriate to enabling learners to develop critical understanding of their responsibilities and accountabilities as professional workers for the promotion of good practice within the social services practice context. It will enable you to develop your educator role and to use a variety of methods to assist learners to develop their own critical appraisal skills in relation to critically analysing the impact of legislation, policy and guidance in social services.

In this Unit you have to achieve three Outcomes. Collectively these Outcomes cover a range of effective skills in supporting the learning of others as part of a wider inter-professional context in social services. They will involve you in demonstrating good practice in the application of appropriate legislation, policy and guidance. You will demonstrate critical evaluation of the areas of social services legislation, policy and guidance relevant to enabling learners to develop a critical awareness of their responsibilities and accountabilities as professional workers within the social services practice context. You will enable learners to develop their critical appraisal skills in order to demonstrate critical awareness of the positive and negative implications of legislation, policy and guidance for practice.

The overall purpose of the Unit is to provide you with a critical understanding of how to identify, develop and manage learning opportunities relating to the legislative, policy and guidance context of social services practice. You will be supported to develop your own critical evaluation skills in relation to the responsibilities and accountabilities of your professional role and to clarify your own thinking about issues of good practice. You will be assisted to develop skills to enable learners to develop their own critical appraisal skills and to critically evaluate their progress in demonstrating their own accountability for good practice as developing professionals. You will be assisted to critically reflect on your own development from practitioner to educator.

On successful completion of this Unit, you will be able to create and manage a thorough and effective learning programme relating to legislation, policy and guidance in the social services practice context which takes critical account of the impact of this context. You will be able to demonstrate good practice and you will have developed your own critical analysis of good practice within this practice context. You will have developed skills to assist learners to critically appraise the legislative, policy and guidance context in order to develop their sense of responsibility and accountability for good practice as professional social services workers.

The assessment for the Unit requires you to produce evidence that you can demonstrate good practice in the application of legislation, policy and guidance and that you can critically appraise and make use of materials and methods with learners to develop their professional role in relation to legislation, policy and guidance in the social services practice context; also, that you can critically evaluate learners' progress towards responsible, accountable and critically aware practice.

It is important that you gather this evidence from your ongoing practice with learners and build a collection of evidence of your work. This tool should offer you flexibility in relation to evidence gathering against the Outcomes. Your collection of evidence will be unique, although it will be expected to meet a set of minimum required content criteria as advised by the centre and will include evidence of knowledge, values and skills. You can use evidence from any context across health, education and social services and involve work with individual learners and/or groups, such as through the facilitation of group supervision, or planning, delivering and/or evaluating training events.

General information for candidates (cont)

Unit title: Support Learning in a Social Services Practice Context

Your evidence collection is likely to consist of several different types of item covering both product and process. Centres will advise you about any specific requirements. Some examples of items of evidence you might provide are:

- ◆ critically reflective accounts of how you have met each of the Outcomes
- ◆ witness testimony from others involved in the learning process (learners, colleagues, service users, assessors, other professionals, university or college tutors etc)
- ◆ product evidence to specifically demonstrate knowledge gained eg exercises used to assist learners to critically appraise good practice in a variety of practice specific contexts. For example, assignments/exercises, reports, extracts of minutes, supervision notes and practice documents etc
- ◆ a critically reflective narrative of learning from the Unit as a whole
- ◆ video, audio, presentations

If you take this Unit in conjunction with one or more other Units, you may be able to present evidence for more than one Unit at the same time. In this way, you can provide a much fuller record of several interconnected aspects of your personal development. It is possible, therefore, to use evidence generated as part of this Unit to gain credit for more than one Unit.