



Higher National Unit specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Evidence Based Practice in Social Services

Unit code: F1WF 37

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to enable candidates to demonstrate current knowledge of effective practice in a social services setting to support learners and contribute to the further development of the research and evidence base for practice. Successful candidates will critically analyse, use and disseminate relevant research and practice development to enhance the quality of learning experiences.

On completion of the Unit candidates should be able to:

- 1 Critically analyse current research and evidence relevant to supporting learners in a social services context.
- 2 Apply appropriate research to facilitate the professional development of self and others in a social services context.
- 3 Disseminate findings from research and practice development in social services related fields in order to enhance the quality of learning experiences.

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 evaluate learning 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.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Critically analyse current research and evidence relevant to supporting learners in a social services context

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Definition of research and evidence based practice
- ◆ Sources of research and evidence relevant to supporting learners in a social services context
- ◆ Research findings relevant to practice in social services
- ◆ Frameworks for critically analysing research evidence
- ◆ Ethical perspectives and principles in the conduct of research

Outcome 2

Apply appropriate research to facilitate the professional development of self and others in a social services context

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Range of methodologies to facilitate the professional development of others
- ◆ Research and evidence for linking methods to results
- ◆ Research as a method to improve practice in social services

Outcome 3

Disseminate findings from research and practice development in social services related fields in order to enhance the quality of learning experiences

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Methods of disseminating research effectively
- ◆ Methods for gathering feedback on learning experiences and critical analysis and application of findings
- ◆ Influences on the dissemination of research ideas in social services eg work environment and organisational culture

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Evidence Based Practice in Social Services

Evidence Requirements for the Unit

Candidates must provide evidence to cover all knowledge and skills in the Outcomes above by demonstrating their current knowledge of effective practice in their own work setting to support learners and contribute to the further development of the research and evidence-base for practice. 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:

- ◆ research and critically evaluate the evidence base for own effective practice and the practice of others in a social services context
- ◆ contribute to the development of evidence based practice in a social services context through the dissemination and promotion of research
- ◆ critically analyse and evaluate research findings and literature that is relevant to supporting learners
- ◆ critically evaluate and modify own practice and performance in the light of research findings relevant to supporting learners

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 understanding of the application of current knowledge of effective practice in a social services context and in supporting learners include witness statements, formal and informal feedback, learning material, self-evaluation, direct observation and critical analysis of own practice.

Administrative Information

Unit code: F1WF 37

Unit title: Evidence Based Practice in Social Services

Superclass category: PM

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Version	Description of change	Date

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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Evidence Based Practice in Social Services

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 access and use research findings (eg a piece of recent research which relates to candidates' area of practice or a piece of research about supporting adult learning or learners) and evidenced based practice to support learners. It will include critical evaluation of research evidence with critical analysis of ethical principles and perspectives in research (eg respect for autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, justice, avoiding race or gender bias, adherence to relevant ethical code of practice) methodology. Successful candidates will be able to disseminate research findings and promote evidence based practice both in relation to a social services area of practice and to the support of learners.

The knowledge and skills obtained from the Outcomes of this Unit will result in successful candidates demonstrating and promoting 'research-mindedness' in all aspects of their practice. This will include the role of research in own practice and the development of learning. Candidates will have frameworks for critically analysing research and therefore be skilled in making informed choices about appropriate methods and models for supporting learners (eg supervision, workshops, group learning, individual exercises). Strategies for successful dissemination of research will have been explored with links made to practice and policy development.

The overall purpose of the Unit is to provide candidates with the underpinning knowledge and skill base to access, apply and critically evaluate research findings in relation to own practice and the role and task of supporting learners. This foundation will lead to candidates promoting research evidence and practice and using strategies to implement findings.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Evidence Based Practice in Social Services

This Unit covers a range of principal skills eg some specialised skills and advanced applications to apply research findings to current practice and role in supporting learner development. These include principal skills to access research and develop capacity to link theory to practice. Specialist skills include understanding and demonstration of the relationship between research methodologies and validity of findings. Advanced applications may link to the development of policies and procedures for supporting learners in the workplace and other contributions to strategic development.

On successful completion of the Unit, candidates will be able to critically analyse research findings relating to practice in a social services context, learning and development and apply these to their own role and tasks within the work setting. In addition, candidates will develop 'research-mindedness' in respect of their own practice and promote this with colleagues, partners and others involved in the learning process. Finally, candidates will have developed a range of strategies for disseminating research and encouraging its application to practice and strategic development.

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 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. 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.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Evidence Based Practice in Social Services

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 could access current research in respect of ‘what works’ in facilitating adult learning and critically examine the findings both in terms of validity and in light of own experience. Applying the research findings to their current role in supporting learners and receiving feedback from learners about its effectiveness could follow this. Feedback provided could add to the ‘messages from research’ that candidates shared with team members and other partners involved in the learning process. This example could provide evidence for all of the required learning Outcomes.

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: Evidence Based Practice in Social Services

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: Evidence Based Practice in Social Services

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: Evidence Based Practice in Social Services

The Unit is designed to enable you to access and critically examine the evidence base for your own practice and in relation to supporting learners. This will involve you searching for relevant research and evidence based materials, including web searches. You will develop skills in critically analysing these findings and applying theoretical frameworks to your practice. You will also be able to choose models and methods that are fitting to learner needs and consider ethical dimensions in research practice. Furthermore, you will develop capacity to share and promote good practice based on evidence and ‘what works’ by making contribution to policy or practice developments in respect of promoting a positive learning culture and environment.

In this Unit you have to achieve three Outcomes. Collectively these Outcomes cover a range of effective relationship building skills to support learning as part of a wider inter-professional context for a range of learners in practice learning environments. They will involve you in searching for and critically analysing different sources of ‘knowledge’ to underpin your role and responsibilities as an adult educator. You will then be demonstrating these in direct practice with your learner – for example, use of a model for critically reflective practice, and then critically evaluating the effectiveness of your interventions. You will also be taking opportunities to share and promote research findings with colleagues and others involved in the learning process.

The overall purpose of the Unit is to ensure you develop research-mindedness in your practice. You will develop capacity to apply research to your own direct practice and to your role in supporting learners. You will also achieve confidence and competence to take research findings to a wider audience so as to contribute to policy or strategy relating to work based learning.

On successful completion of this Unit, you will be able to:

- ◆ critically analyse current research and evidence relevant to supporting learners in a social services context
- ◆ apply appropriate research to facilitate the professional development of yourself and others in a social services context
- ◆ disseminate findings from research and practice development in social services related fields in order to enhance the quality of learning experiences

The assessment for the Unit requires you to produce evidence that you can access and critically evaluate research and demonstrate the application of research in your support of learners. You will need to show that you understand and can use a theoretical base for your practice. You will be required to reflect on your application of theory, knowledge and research to critically evaluate your own practice. You will also need to demonstrate that you are taking opportunities to share evidence for good practice with colleagues and partners so as to positively impact on the quality of the experience for learners. 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 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: Evidence Based Practice in Social Services

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.