



National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Rural Environment: An Introduction - Scotland

Unit code: H6MH 74

Superclass: SL

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Summary

The Unit is designed to give candidates an introduction to exploring and understanding a rural environment in Scotland. It introduces candidates to the key features and characteristics of a chosen locality, its wildlife and human influences, land and water uses and the demands made of it by its users. It provides a better understanding of the effect that the environment has upon the wildlife, resources, enterprise and industry, people and communities in any area. This Unit is suitable for candidates who are undertaking the study of this subject for the first time and those who wish to develop their understanding of the factors that influence a local area and to develop their investigation skills.

This is an alternative mandatory Unit in the National Certificate in Rural Skills at SCQF level 4 and is also an optional Unit in the Scottish Studies Award at SCQF level 4 and is also available as a free-standing Unit.

Outcomes

- 1 Assist with an investigation of the characteristics and environment of a selected locality.
- 2 Describe how the environment affects wildlife and human activities in the selected locality.
- 3 Describe land and water uses, conflicts and other issues relating to the selected locality.

Recommended entry

Entry is at the discretion of the centre. Candidates do not need any prior knowledge or experience of rural environments. However, an interest or some experience of the countryside, wildlife and the rural environment or of rural skills would be an advantage.

General information (cont)

Credit points and level

1 National Unit credit at SCQF level 4: (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 4*)

**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.*

Core Skills

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

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

National Unit specification: statement of standards

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Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

Outcome 1

Assist with an investigation of the characteristics and environment of a selected locality.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Gather information about the characteristics of the locality by active participation in the investigation.
- (b) Gather information about the environment of the locality by active participation in the investigation.

Outcome 2

Describe how the environment affects wildlife and human activities in the selected locality.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Describe the wildlife and how it is affected by the environment.
- (b) Describe human activities and how they are affected by the environment.

Outcome 3

Describe land and water uses, conflicts and other issues relating to the selected locality.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Describe the main uses of water resources and water based activities.
- (b) Describe the main uses of land resources and land based activities.
- (c) Describe existing and potential conflicts in land and water resource use.
- (d) Describe other issues affecting human activities and wildlife.

National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

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Evidence Requirements for this Unit

Written and/or oral evidence (open book) is required to demonstrate that candidates have achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria. A holistic approach to assessment and gathering of evidence is encouraged.

Outcome 1

Performance and product evidence is required of a study of an appropriate rural environment in Scotland, which includes:

Candidate participation in the investigation, assisting the tutor and working together in gathering and recording information and observations made in the investigation of the locality.

In this Outcome the focus will be upon candidates gathering information about the chosen locality primarily by direct investigation in the field and meeting local people, supplemented by use of records, maps, photographs and other reference materials.

Candidates must keep a record of the key features relating to the characteristics and environment of the locality. This should include a minimum of:

- ◆ Characteristics:
 - two characteristics of topography
 - three natural and three man-made landscape features
 - list 10 plants and 10 animals typical of the area (wild and cultivated)
 - three key human activities
 - two uses of land and two uses of water not already covered in human activities.

- ◆ Environment:
 - features of the climate and weather
 - three ecosystems or habitats
 - two examples of how the area has changed or developed over time
 - one positive and two negative issues affecting the environment.

Outcome 2

Following discussions based on the investigation and information gathered in Outcome 1 written and/or oral evidence (open-book) is required to describe how the environment affects wildlife and human activities in the selected locality.

- (a) Candidates will give a brief description of the key general characteristics and some named examples of the wildlife (animals, plants, habitats and ecosystems) typical of the area and how it is affected by and adapted to the environment (climate, weather, topography, soil, water).

This will include information such as: dominant type of vegetation; adaptation to exposed conditions, wet, dry, fresh or salt water etc.; dormancy, hibernation or migration or other adaptations to growth or behaviour patterns.

National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

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The description must include a minimum of:

- ◆ two named ecosystems or habitats
- ◆ two named plants
- ◆ two named animals.

- (b) Candidates will give a brief description of two key human activities associated with the area.

They will describe how the environment has affected these becoming key activities in the area. For example how the conditions and surroundings might affect whether farming, forestry, fishing, industry (of a particular type) become key activities.

They will also describe how the environment has affected the type of these activities that are undertaken. For example if farming is the human activity how has the environment (climate, weather, topography, soil) affected the main types of farming in the area: better climate & soils tend towards higher value crops/livestock, higher rainfall tends to favour livestock over arable.

Outcome 3

Following discussions based on the investigation and information gathered in Outcome 1 written and/or oral evidence (open-book) is required to describe land and water uses, conflicts and other issues relating to the selected locality.

Candidates must describe a minimum of two examples for each of the following:

- (a) Describe the main uses of water resources and water based activities.
- (b) Describe the main uses of land resources and land based activities.
- (c) Describe existing and potential conflicts in land and water resource use.
- (d) Describe other issues affecting human activities and wildlife. These could be any two positive or negative issues that are having an important effect on the area. For example: opening or closing of a business, pollution/damage or designation/protection of an area.

National Unit specification: support notes

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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

The emphasis of the Unit is on getting out and about and experiencing the range of characteristics and environments of the locality at first hand through participation in visits and contributing to the investigation of different sites and interaction with local people. The Unit will also involve research using paper and ICT based records of the area, maps and climate information but these should always be supplementary to and in support of developing an understanding of the area through direct experience and interaction. Group discussion and analysis of the information supported by the tutor will play an important part in preparing the candidates to produce their assessed work.

The Unit should provide the candidate with the ability to describe the characteristics of an area from first hand investigation and to use research and investigation skills to develop an understanding of land and water use, the local environment and some of the effects it has upon the area. The main aim of the Unit is to provide the candidate with a better understanding of the rural environment and where the Unit is offered as part of the NC in Rural Skills course, it should complement other Units in the course framework well. The Unit is primarily aimed at the rural environment but could be applied to sub-urban or urban situations.

The locality chosen for the investigation should be easily accessible to the centre and some familiarity of the locality by the candidate is preferable. The locality should cover an area large enough to incorporate a range of topography, landscape features, wildlife, uses of land and water resources and human activities.

The area should be considered with regard to its main topographical and natural and man-made landscape features. A sequence from hills, rivers and valleys to woods, hedges, fields and ponds to buildings, roads, fences and overhead cables could be used to distinguish between topography, landscape and built features. The details will differ depending on the local area. Reference should be made to any archaeological features, historical developments and sites of nature conservation interest.

The description of the flora and fauna should include both the natural and cultivated situations to provide a balanced view of the locality that is not biased unrealistically towards natural history or commercial activity. The explanation of the development of the local environment should investigate how human influence has modified the appearance and nature of the area.

Records and maps available for interpretation will vary according to the chosen area but OS maps and where available land capability for agriculture and forestry maps should be used to support the understanding of the landscape and land and water use.

National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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Weather data could be collected directly to compare with or supplement published data for the area. Records of human activity should relate mainly to land and water based industries and should focus in more detail on typical industries of the area but some information on the pattern of human settlement should be given.

Wildlife records from direct observation are likely to focus on flowering plants, trees and birds but any other groups of organisms could be monitored and may be supplemented from other records of the area. Observations and investigations should be used to help raise the candidate awareness of the surrounding environment and develop observation skills.

The resources used in the land and water based industries of the locality should be noted and may include physical, natural and human resources. Some of the issues or conflicts affecting industries, resources or the area should be described. Conflicts may exist where more than one activity requires or uses the same resource. It could be that the issues or conflicts are of a more subtle nature or that they may arise in the future with changes in the area. Ways in which problems have been or might be resolved could also be described. There will also be other issues affecting human activities and wildlife in the area. These could be very varied in nature and may be positive or negative issues that are having an important effect on the area to people, the economy or wildlife. For example: opening or closing of a business, pollution/damage or designation/protection of an area.

Guidance on learning and teaching approaches for this Unit

A candidate-centred approach should be adopted wherever possible during fieldwork and class-based investigation and research activities. The emphasis should be on first hand experience, site visits, observations, investigation and interaction with people who manage and use the land and water resources. Evidence should be accumulated on an ongoing basis and use should be made of relevant reports, records and local information to supplement information that candidates gain by first hand investigation. Significant use should be made of project work with the candidates working individually or in small groups. Group discussions should also make an important contribution in the development of the work.

Team working activities during investigations, research, group discussions and recording and presenting information will play an important part in the Unit and will provide opportunities for candidates to develop their skills in communication and working with others. The use of maps and data will also provide opportunities to develop some numeracy skills relating to data and graphical information. Due to the variable nature of the investigation and research work there will also be opportunities for candidates to develop their problem solving skills.

National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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Guidance on approaches to assessment for this Unit

Centres may use instruments of assessment which are considered to be the most appropriate to the candidates and situation. Examples of instruments of assessment which could be used to cover all Outcomes would be open-book written and/or oral project work in the form of candidate's paper-based or electronic log book, diary or portfolio recording all relevant information to meet the Unit requirements. This could be supplemented by tutor observation of activity recorded by adequate checklists/notes.

Opportunities for the use of e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this Unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

The Unit will provide opportunities to develop aspects of the Core Skills of *Communication* and *Working with Others* at during group discussions, team working, investigation, research, analysis and evidence recording activities. There may also be potential to develop some skills in *Numeracy* at through measurement and data handling when looking at maps and climate information relating to temperature and rainfall.

Equality and inclusion

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

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

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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