



Handbook for writing Higher National Units and Higher National Graded Units

Publication Date: March 2019

Publication Code: CA8008

Published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow G2 8DQ
Lowden, 24 Wester Shawfair, Dalkeith, EH22 1FD

www.sqa.org.uk

The information in this publication may be reproduced in support of SQA qualifications. If it is reproduced, SQA should be clearly acknowledged as the source. If it is to be used for any other purpose, written permission must be obtained from the Editorial Team at SQA. It must not be reproduced for trade or commercial purposes.

© *Scottish Qualifications Authority*

For an up-to-date list of prices visit the **Publication Sales and Downloads** section of SQA's website.

This document can be produced, on request, in alternative formats, including large type, Braille and numerous community languages. For further details telephone SQA's Customer Contact Centre on 0845 279 1000.

SQA is committed to using plain English. We will try to make our publications as easy and straightforward to understand as we can, and will try to avoid all unnecessary jargon. If there's any language in this document that you feel is hard to understand, or could be improved, please write to Editor, Editorial Team, at the Glasgow address or e-mail: editor@sqa.org.uk.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	How to use this handbook	1
2	Before you start writing	2
2.1	Support for writers	2
2.2	SQA's principles	3
2.3	Quality assurance	3
3	Writing a Higher National Unit Specification	4
3.1	The unit writer brief	4
3.2	Planning your writing	5
3.3	Writing a Higher National Unit Specification: General Information	6
	Unit title	6
	SCQF level	6
	Unit code	7
	Unit purpose	7
	Outcomes	8
	Credit points and level	8
	Recommended entry to the unit	9
	Core skills	9
	Context for delivery	10
	Equality and inclusion	10
3.4	Writing a Higher National Unit Specification: Statement of Standards	11
	Outcomes	11
	Equality	12
	Knowledge and/or skills statements	13
	How to write evidence requirements	14
	Accessibility and barriers to achievement	16
3.5	Writing a Higher National Unit specification: Support Notes	16
	Guidance on the content and context for this unit	17
	Guidance on approaches to delivery of this unit	17
	Guidance on approaches to assessment of this unit	17
	Opportunities for e-assessment	20
	Opportunities to develop Core and other essential skills	20
3.6	Writing a Higher National Unit specification: General Information for Learners	21
4	Writing a Higher National Graded Unit Specification	22

4.1 The HN Graded Unit writer brief	23
4.2 Writing a Higher National Graded Unit specification: General Information Section	23
Unit title	24
Unit code	24
Type of Graded Unit	24
Graded Unit purpose	24
Credit level and points	24
Recommended entry to the Graded Unit	24
Core Skills	25
Assessment Support Pack	25
Equality and inclusion	25
4.3 Project-based Higher National Graded Unit specification: designing the project and assessing learners	26
Selecting the most appropriate instrument of assessment	26
Assessment	28
Evidence requirements	28
Assessing and grading learners	32
4.4 Project-based Higher National Graded Unit specification: Support Notes	32
Guidance on approaches to delivery and assessment of this Graded Unit	32
Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills	32
4.5 Project based Higher National Graded Unit Specification: General Information for Learners	32
4.6 Examination-based Higher National Graded Unit specification: designing the examination and assessing learners	33
Assessment	33
Conditions of assessment	33
Assessing and grading learners	34
4.7 Examination-based Higher National Graded Unit specification: Support Notes	34
Guidance on approaches to delivery and assessment of this Graded Unit	34
Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills	34
4.8 Examination-based Higher National Graded Unit Specification: General Information for Learners	34

1 Introduction

This handbook provides advice and guidance for writers of SQA Higher National Units and Higher National Graded Units. It sets out the essential steps in the development of a Higher National Unit specification, the selection of assessment methods and the writing of support notes.

We hope that this handbook will help you to develop best practice in writing Higher National Units and Higher National Graded Units that provide nationally and internationally recognised standards of attainment. It aims to help you to:

- ◆ understand what makes a good Higher National Unit/Graded Unit specification
- ◆ write units in plain English
- ◆ understand your obligations in terms of equality legislation
- ◆ include Core Skills
- ◆ produce material that complies with SQA's copyright policy

1.1 How to use this handbook

Section 2 provides information for all writers of Higher National Unit Specifications and Higher National Graded Unit Specifications.

Section 3 provides guidance on writing a Higher National Unit Specification. It explains what is required in each section of the specification: General Information; Statement of Standards; Support Notes and Information for learners.

Section 4 provides guidance on writing a Higher National Graded Unit Specification. It explains what is required in each section of the specification: General Information; Designing the project/examination; Support Notes and Information for learners.

2 Before you start writing

The decision to develop or revise a Higher National Unit or Higher National Graded Unit is made through a structured process within SQA and on-going consultation with industry, business and professional bodies. Once the development or revision is approved, a Qualification Development Team (QDT) is set up. The QDT is made up of experienced practitioners from colleges, representatives from industry and an SQA Lead Officer.

The QDT provides an overview for each proposed unit within an HNC or HND to ensure that there is no overlap with any other existing or proposed unit and subsequently provides a more detailed brief for each unit writer. This unit writer brief sets out the information needed to develop that particular Higher National Unit Specification. All completed Higher National Unit and Graded Unit Specifications must go through a series of quality checks before they can be published on SQA's website.

2.1 Support for writers

SQA Academy delivers an on line programme to support the unit writing process. It contains a range of information, including guidance on designing inclusive and accessible assessment and exemplification. If you are a new unit writer, you should take the *HN/NQ Training for Unit Writers* course and the *Equality and Diversity Awareness for SQA Appointees* course. Your SQA Lead Officer will arrange access to the Academy for you. Face to face training may also be available.

As well as the Academy courses, SQA has a range of guidance material to help you to develop your unit Specification. The following list may initially appear daunting, but explanations on how and when to apply this information when developing your unit Specification are provided in the following documents:

- ◆ *Design Principles for Higher National Qualifications*
- ◆ *SCQF Level descriptors*
- ◆ *Higher National Unit Specification (template)*
- ◆ *Higher National Graded Unit Specification – Project/Examination (template)*
- ◆ *Guide to Assessment*
- ◆ *Equality and Inclusion guidance*
- ◆ *Core Skills Framework*
- ◆ *Essential Skills Framework*
- ◆ *Unit Quality Checklists*
- ◆ *Equality Review of National and Higher National Unit Specifications – Guidance for Writers*

2.2 SQA's principles

Rather than using prescriptive rules, SQA has principles for the design and the assessment of our qualifications. As a Higher National Unit/Higher National Graded Unit writer, you have to meet three sets of principles: Design; Assessment; Equality of Access.

The Design Principles for Higher National qualifications set out the requirements for SCQF levels and credit points and Core Skills that all Higher National Units and Higher National Graded Units must meet.

The Assessment Principles require that all SQA assessment are valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair.

The Principles of Equality of Access to SQA qualifications ensure that the diverse needs of learners are met in our qualifications and assessments.

You must ensure that your unit specification meets these principles. More detail on each set of SQA Principles, together with guidance on how you can meet them, is given in sections 3 and 4.

2.3 Quality assurance

All draft unit specifications go through a series of quality assurance checks to ensure that the published unit meets the national standard. You will be asked to complete a unit writer checklist to review your final draft before submitting it to SQA.

A subject specialist/Vetter will then check your unit specification to ensure that its content is technically correct and that it is ready for use by practitioners, or to highlight any issues to be addressed. They are also required to send a completed checklist to SQA.

The SQA lead officer is responsible for carrying out a technical edit of the specification and an equality review to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers within the unit. After these stages have been successfully completed, the unit specification goes through our validation process. Any claims for embedded Core Skills are sent to auditors for their decision.

3 Writing a Higher National Unit Specification

A Higher National Unit Specification is a document which defines the boundaries within which a learner is assessed and the standards that must be met.

Each Higher National Unit Specification contains the four following sections which you have to complete.

General information: In this section you should summarise the purpose of the unit and its outcomes, give the SCQF credit points and level, and state the recommended entry level as well as any Core Skills included in the unit. You should recommend the context for delivery and indicate any equality and inclusion issues.

This section also contains administrative information which is completed by SQA officers.

Statement of standards: This section is the mandatory part of the unit specification. You have to state the outcomes of the unit, the knowledge and/or skills, and the evidence required to demonstrate that the learner has met the outcome or to allow the assessor to infer their achievement.

Support notes: This section allows you to expand on the information in the statement of standards and to give clear advice on content and context, approaches to delivery and assessment and developing Core Skills. This helps the development of good practice in all centres offering the unit.

General information for learners: This section allows you to provide a brief overview of the unit. You should state its purpose and the knowledge and skills which learners will gain through successfully completing the unit.

This handbook follows the order of the unit specification, but it is good practice to develop the statement of standards first as this then allows you to complete the other sections.

3.1 The unit writer brief

The unit writer brief, provided by the QDT, outlines the content of the unit which you are developing. It sets out:

- ◆ the purpose of the unit
- ◆ the working title
- ◆ SCQF level and credit points

- ◆ any relevant national occupational standards (NOS) or other industry/professional body requirements
- ◆ any related units and any related NOS or industry/professional body requirements
- ◆ the recommended entry/prior knowledge and skills
- ◆ the target learner group
- ◆ inclusion of Core Skills
- ◆ possible content and outcomes
- ◆ suggested evidence requirements
- ◆ possible assessment methods/alternative assessment approaches

It will also state whether an Assessment Support Pack (ASP) is required.

This unit writer brief forms the basis of the unit. It is your role to expand this brief into a full specification. It is important to use the content of the brief to ensure that the unit is the appropriate size and level of demand and that there is no duplication with other units. If you find any difficulties with the unit writer brief, you should contact the SQA lead officer.

3.2 Planning your writing

It is good practice to create a plan before you start writing, using the brief as your basis. You should be very clear about the overall purpose of the unit and how you will ensure that it is as inclusive as possible before you start writing.

The first step should be to think about what you want learners to be able to do once they have completed the unit. You should think about what evidence would be needed to demonstrate competence. This will lead you to consider the balance between each of the following aspects of the unit:

- ◆ level
- ◆ content
- ◆ delivery
- ◆ assessment

SQA's design principles for Higher National Qualifications state that HNCs are designed to be at SCQF level 7 and HNDs at SCQF level 8. Your Unit writer brief will outline the SCQF level for your unit, and you must bear this in mind to set the correct level of demand. When planning, it is sensible to draft the unit outcomes in the order that the learner will follow. This will enhance the overall coherence of the unit.

You should think about what evidence requirements would be needed to meet the outcomes and the conditions in which the assessment should be carried out. You should identify opportunities for e-assessment where appropriate. You should also consider whether it would be possible to assess all the outcomes together ie holistically, or whether two or more outcomes

could be assessed together ('integrative assessment') or whether each outcome should be assessed separately.

It is very important that unit assessment should be accessible to learners and not create unnecessary barriers. It should also be manageable and practicable for centres and learners so you need to bear in mind the balance between the content and the timescales for delivery and assessment.

The current specification template is provided as Appendix 1. You may find it helpful to use it alongside the following guidance, but you should always check with your SQA lead officer that you are using the most up-to-date version.

3.3 Writing a Higher National Unit Specification: General Information

Unit title

A working title will have been given in the unit writer brief. You may suggest alternative titles if you feel that it does not reflect the content of the unit and the skills and/or knowledge that learners will achieve. Remember that the title is the first (and perhaps only) thing that people will read before deciding whether to use the unit. Your title should be concise and informative.

There are some technical aspects around the unit title. These are:

- ◆ SQA's HN catalogue lists units alphabetically, so you should not start the title with 'a', 'an' or 'the'. For example, 'Using Accounting Information' rather than 'The Use of Accounting Information'.
- ◆ If the unit is 'An Introduction to...' or 'Introduction to...' the main part of the title should be first, then a colon followed by 'An Introduction to...' or 'Introduction to...' For example, 'Working in a Business Enterprise: An Introduction'.
- ◆ If the unit title has sub-divisions, these should be preceded by a colon. For example, 'Manufacturing Systems: Characteristics'.
- ◆ Brackets should not be used in unit titles because the SCQF level for the unit is given in brackets after the title.

SCQF level

The SCQF is Scotland's lifelong learning framework. The SCQF level descriptors describe in broad terms what learners should be able to do or demonstrate at a particular level. They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements of required learning for individual qualifications. The five characteristics are:

- ◆ Knowledge and understanding
- ◆ Practice: Applied knowledge, skills and understanding
- ◆ Generic cognitive skills
- ◆ Communication, numeracy and ICT skills
- ◆ Autonomy, accountability and working with others

Some characteristics may not be relevant to your unit, so they should not be regarded as a required checklist. Most HN Units will be SCQF level 7 or 8. The descriptors are available at: https://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/SCQF-LevelDescriptors.pdf

The SCQF level will have been determined by the QDT and is given in the unit writer brief. Your unit should be written in language that is consistent with the language of the SCQF level descriptor. The level of demand of the unit should comply with the implied level of demand of the appropriate level descriptor. For example, the level descriptor for SCQF level 7 for generic cognitive skills is:

- ◆ Present and evaluate arguments, information and ideas that are routine to a subject/discipline/sector.
- ◆ Use a range of approaches to address defined and/or routine problems and issues within familiar contexts.

By contrast, the descriptor for generic cognitive skills for SCQF level 8 is:

- ◆ Undertake critical analysis, evaluation and/or synthesis of ideas, concepts, information and issues that are within the common understandings in a subject/discipline/sector.
- ◆ Use a range of approaches to formulate and critically evaluate evidence-based solutions/responses to defined and/or routine problems and issues.

Unit code

The unit code and superclass are allocated by SQA, as is all administrative information.

Unit purpose

The unit purpose should give a reader a clear idea of the content and objectives of the unit, and should be based on the writer's brief. It should be as comprehensive as possible but must not go beyond what is covered in the unit. It should give an overview of the content, indicate the level/depth/complexity of knowledge and skills to be achieved, and the learner target group for the unit. You may include information about possible progression opportunities on successful completion of the unit but this is not compulsory. This example is from an SCQF level 7 HN Unit Health Wellbeing and Safeguarding:

The purpose of this unit is to enable learners to gain an understanding of the health wellbeing and safeguarding issues for those who access provision from social services care

and/or education settings. Learners will learn the importance of the holistic nature of health wellbeing and safeguarding, the impact of socio-economic factors and the need to apply a person-centred approach in the delivery of services.

Outcomes

Outcomes tell the reader precisely what the learner will be able to do on successful completion of the unit. Outcomes are always written in terms of final output or achievement of skills or knowledge. It should always be possible to preface the wording with the phrase, 'The learner will be able to...'

The outcomes must be consistent with the unit purpose and must specify exactly what the learner is able to do. They must be clear and concise and should be in a logical order. They must begin with an active verb that is appropriate to the SCQF level, and they must be capable of being assessed.

More information about writing outcomes is provided in the Statement of Standards section.

Credit points and level

You have to specify three things here: SQA credit value, the SCQF level, and the number of SCQF credit points.

The SQA credit value gives an indication of the contribution the unit makes to the HNC/HND. An HN Unit with an SQA credit value of 1 represents approximately 40 hours of programmed learning, teaching and assessment. This is the norm, but we also have HN Units with an SQA credit value of 2 which have a notional 80 hours of programmed learning, teaching and assessment; and HN Units with an SQA credit value of 3, which equates to a notional 120 hours of programmed learning, teaching and assessment.

As stated in the earlier section on SCQF, the QDT will have provided you with the SCQF level of the unit in your writer brief.

SCQF credit points are a way of showing how much time it takes, on average, to complete a qualification or learning programme. One credit point represents the amount of learning achieved through a notional 10 hours of learning time which includes everything a learner has to do to achieve the outcomes in a qualification including independent study and the assessment procedures.

An HN Unit at SCQF level 7 with a notional 40 hours of programmed learning, teaching and assessment is allocated 8 SCQF credit points while an HN Unit at SCQF level 8 with a notional 80 hours is allocated 16 SCQF points. These would appear in the unit specification as follows:

1 HN credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7)

2 HN credits at SCQF level 8: (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8)

3 HN credits at SCQF level 8: (24 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8)

Recommended entry to the unit

You should give guidance on the level of knowledge, skills, experience or qualifications which learners should have achieved before they start the unit. Entry is always at the discretion of the centre and you should only recommend prior knowledge and experience if it is appropriate. Some learners may not have had the same access to prior learning and may be denied access. It is helpful to give examples of the type and level of qualification or examples of other kinds of experience that might demonstrate prior knowledge and skills. For example, the HNC in Health, Wellbeing and Safeguarding states,

Entry is at the discretion of the centre. However, it would be beneficial for learners to have effective communication and interpersonal skills and be able to use these skills to give an account of their experiences, reflect on them, make valid conclusions and express strengths and development needs, both personal and organisational.

This may be demonstrated by relevant qualifications at SCQF level 5 or above with relevant experience in a social services or other relevant setting as a student or a care worker, or SVQ level 3 in Health and Social Care, Early Education or one of their predecessor qualifications.'

Alternatively, you may have a statement such as,

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, learners would normally be expected to have attained one of the following, or equivalent:

- ♦ *National 5 and/or Higher in a broadly related subject*
- or*
- ♦ *National Certificate or National Progression Award at SCQF level 6*

Core skills

SQA's design principles state that Higher National qualifications shall incorporate opportunities for learners to develop Core Skills required by the occupations or progression pathways that the particular HNC/D supports. You should indicate clearly which Core Skills are 'signposted', ie developed naturally as part of the assessment requirements for the unit or 'embedded' within the unit and therefore automatically certificated. Core Skills should only be embedded in units where this is natural and does not distort the unit or create unnecessary barriers to achievement. If you do decide to embed Core Skills, you should inform the Qualifications Manager, who will arrange additional quality assurance procedures.

Where no Core Skill or Core Skill component is embedded in the unit, you should use the default statement:

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill component in this unit.

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the support notes of the unit specification.

If you are embedding Core Skills, the assessment evidence should be stated in the evidence requirements.

Information on Core Skills is available at <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/65025.html>

Context for delivery

This standard statement is used in all HN Units:

If this unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed in the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

If an Assessment Support Pack (ASP) is to be developed for this unit you should add the following statement:

The Assessment Support Pack (ASP) for this unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable and practicable assessment.

Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the ASP to ensure a comparable standard. A list of existing ASPs is available to download from SQA's website at <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/46233.2769.html>

Equality and inclusion

This standard statement is used in all HN units:

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 at <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14976.html>

This statement can only be applied because each SQA unit is subject to an equality review. You will be asked to review your final draft prior to submitting it to SQA, and an equality review will

form part of the checks carried out by a subject specialist who acts as the unit vetter. There is more information about how you can ensure that your unit has no unnecessary barriers in the statement of standards section.

3.4 Writing a Higher National Unit Specification: Statement of Standards

The statement of standard section is the mandatory part of the Higher National Unit specification. It tells the reader the outcomes that have to be achieved, the required standard of achievement and the evidence to be produced.

In Higher National Units, the statement of standards comprises:

- ◆ outcomes
- ◆ knowledge and/or skills
- ◆ evidence requirements

Outcomes

Outcomes tell the reader precisely what a learner will be able to do as a result of learning. The main feature of an outcome is that it is written in terms of final output or achievement of skills or knowledge. It should always be possible to preface the wording with the phrase 'The learner will be able to ...'

As a guide, each unit specification should have between three and five outcomes. This is not a hard and fast rule, but writing a large number of outcomes can lead to a fragmented experience for the learner and make it difficult to integrate assessment. The number of outcomes is less important than whether the outcomes are necessary and whether they clearly state the skills and knowledge that must be demonstrated by learners. There should be a clear link between different outcomes in the same unit specification, and there should be a clear link between the outcomes and the title, purpose and objectives of the unit.

Outcomes must be capable of being assessed. You should aim to write the outcomes in the order that is most logical for delivery and assessment and which may facilitate holistic or integrated assessment.

When writing outcomes, it is useful to ask yourself, 'What is the learner to do? What is the purpose of this activity? Would any learners have difficulty carrying out this activity?' This will help you to ensure that each outcome is clear and precise. Each outcome must begin with an active verb which is appropriate to the SCQF level of the unit.

This example from the SCQF level 7 HN unit Supply Chain Organisations: Structure and Functions illustrates these points. The outcomes are:

On completion of the unit the learner should be able to:

- 1 Describe the characteristics of various organisations and identify the factors that have influenced organisational design.*
- 2 Describe the communication systems and information technology used by organisations within the supply chain, emphasising the role of e-commerce.*
- 3 Describe the process of organisational development.*

The SCQF level 7 characteristic of knowledge and understanding contains the statement that the learner should have, 'an overall appreciation of the body of knowledge that constitutes a subject/discipline/sector'.

You must be very careful when you select verbs for your outcomes, as they must be capable of being assessed. For example, if the writer had selected 'Demonstrate' instead of 'Describe' in the outcomes above, they would be difficult to assess. It could be appropriate to use 'demonstrate' in a practical assessment but the point remains that you should be alert to any possible confusion and review your choice against the SCQF level descriptor.

Equality

It is also crucial that your unit contains no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

Under the Equality Act (2010) it is unlawful to discriminate against people because of their disability, race, age, religion or belief, sex, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity or sexual orientation (the protected characteristics). SQA qualifications must not be unlawfully discriminatory for any learner on the grounds of these protected characteristics and due consideration must be given to the reasonable adjustments which can be made to provide access to the qualifications for disabled learners.

You should therefore proactively consider if any of your outcomes specify a skill that may present a barrier to a learner on grounds of protected characteristics.

The presence of a particular barrier may be obvious from the outset but it may only be when you are writing your outcomes that you become aware that less obvious barriers are present within the unit. For instance, one might expect to find barriers for some physically disabled learners in a Professional Cookery qualification because of practical activities, but there may also be barriers to learners with autistic spectrum disorders because of the need to work with others.

You should therefore use your professional knowledge to reflect on the skills that are important in the unit and consider whether any aspects could potentially adversely affect learners on the

grounds of any of the protected characteristics. If so, you must consider whether it is necessary to incorporate that aspect into the outcome for all learners. You have two choices:

- ◆ decide that this aspect could be removed because removing it would not have a significant impact in terms of maintaining the integrity of the qualification
- ◆ decide that this aspect should not be removed because it can be justified in terms of maintaining the integrity of the qualification.

Please note that 'justified' has a technical meaning in the Equality Act. It means that you must be able to show that it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, in this case how important its inclusion is to the aim and purpose of the unit and whether it is fair and balanced in relation to the adverse impact on a learner.

If you decide that this aspect of the unit should not be removed, you should also consider what assessment arrangements could be made to mitigate the adverse impact on a disabled learner. Information on assessment arrangements is available at

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14976.779.html>

SQA's Equality Review of Qualifications process is carried out at unit level. The Qualifications Manager/Lead Officer will supply you with a unit quality checklist to allow you to indicate where barriers were identified and record your consideration of these issues, including any reasonable adjustments that could be made. The Qualifications Manager is responsible for completing an Equality Review form and for referring any issues to SQA committees where a barrier has been identified but cannot easily be removed or mitigated.

Knowledge and/or skills statements

You must write a knowledge and/or skills statement for each outcome unless you have decided that the assessment of the unit should be integrated. In this case you should write a knowledge and/or skills statement for a combination of outcomes or for the unit as a whole. This section should cover only the knowledge and/or skills that are essential for achieving the outcome and for which the learner would have to produce evidence. It should not be used to give details of teaching as such additional information should be included in the support notes section.

Knowledge and/or skills statements are lists of the essential content of the outcome. For example, outcome 1 of the unit *Supply Chain Organisations: Structure and Functions* is:

Describe the characteristics of various organisations and identify the factors that have influenced organisational design. The knowledge and/or skills statements are listed as:

- ◆ *Organisational structures*
- ◆ *Public and private sector organisations*
- ◆ *Classical, modern and post-modern organisational configurations*
- ◆ *Internal structuring and functioning*
- ◆ *Influence of internal and external forces on organisational design*

You should expand upon your knowledge and/or skills statements in the support notes and level of knowledge and/or skill which is to be assessed should be clear from your evidence requirements.

How to write evidence requirements

Evidence requirements must be written for the whole unit. This may be for each individual outcome, a combination of outcomes or for the unit as a whole. There is no standard format for writing evidence requirements but they must be clear and unambiguous. You may decide to write your evidence requirements in paragraphs or as a series of bullet points or to list them by letter or number. The important point is that they can be easily understood by all users of the unit.

Your evidence requirements must clearly and unambiguously:

- ◆ give information about the type of evidence that learners must provide and the standard of that evidence
- ◆ state the quantity of evidence required **if** this is crucial to meeting the standard required for the outcome
- ◆ state any restrictions on the way in which evidence can be generated to ensure that a reliable assessment of a learner's achievement can be made — for example, some evidence may be required to be generated (in a real or simulated work environment) through workplace practice
- ◆ state when assessment should occur - at specific points throughout the unit, or on one assessment occasion
- ◆ detail any conditions of assessment which apply

The conditions of assessment may include one or more of the following but this will depend on the type of evidence which is required:

- ◆ **Closed-book:** no materials are allowed in the assessment.
- ◆ **Open-book:** learners are allowed access to materials. Details of prescribed materials can be given if appropriate. This includes the type, the amount, named texts or any other sources of information.
- ◆ **Unseen:** learners have not seen the assessment in advance. There might be instances where part of the assessment is seen and part unseen. For example, learners might be asked to look at a case study in advance and then answer unseen questions on it at a later date.
- ◆ **Supervised:** when authentication of the learners' work is necessary. Supervised conditions may be required for open or closed-book assessment.
- ◆ **Timed:** learners must complete the assessment in a given time. If using this condition, you must be satisfied that it is necessary to meeting the standard required. If a timed assessment is not necessary to meeting the standard required, you can give guidance on timing in the assessment guidelines.

You should not specify the instrument of assessment such as a report, or a set of extended response questions in the evidence requirement unless this is essential to meeting the standard required. Evidence can often be generated using different instruments of assessment, and recommendations on which ones to use should be made in the assessment guidelines. Advice on instruments of assessment should be given in the support notes section.

Evidence requirements should be written to allow centres to construct assessments relevant to the needs of their learners. So, for example, the evidence requirements should not be restrictive in referring to particular cultural contexts, unless this is necessary to the standard. Likewise, you should write the evidence requirements to allow for e-assessment and digital evidence, where appropriate.

Practicability is one of SQA's principles of assessment so you must ensure that assessments are manageable for learners and centres.

Well written evidence requirements will tell learners the standards of achievement expected from them. They will also inform assessors and verifiers of the level of knowledge and/or skills to look for to make a reliable judgement on whether an outcome/unit has been achieved.

You should always be as specific as possible, and make certain that everything in the evidence requirements is an essential part of what it is to be competent in that outcome/unit. Evaluative statements such as 'correctly' or 'accurately' should only be used where it is meaningful in conveying the standard required. Using these terms where there is no one right or wrong answer or method of carrying out an action will be meaningless to an assessor.

You must also make sure that your evidence requirements cover the full breadth of achievement of skill, knowledge, or understanding required by the outcome/unit. Anyone reading the unit specification should have no doubt about the national standard for each outcome and for the unit as a whole.

Sampling can help to reduce the volume of assessment for learners. This is particularly the case where assessing all the knowledge and/or skills would require a very high volume of evidence. It may be the case that your unit requires learners to demonstrate total competence across all the evidence requirements but for most units it is possible to infer competence through sampling. There is no minimum size for a sample but if you select a low proportion then the evidence generated by the sample may make it difficult to infer that the learner is competent across the unit. SQA advises that a sample of between 50 and 60 percent of the knowledge and skills allows for strong inference of competence.

The sample should reflect the competence stated in the unit title and the information provided in the unit purpose. It should focus on the most important knowledge and/or skills and identify the required level of demand to allow a valid assessment to be produced.

You should include a statement such as:

Where evidence requirements are assessed on a sample basis, all content in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Learners should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and a different sample must be used in each assessment occasion.

You should also consider whether the use of a pass mark or threshold score would allow sufficient inference of competence across the knowledge and skills of the unit. Most SQA units do not require learners to achieve full marks or meet every technical skill in full. The requirement is that a learner demonstrates that they have met the standard for the unit. SQA considers that a pass mark of at least 50% in an assessment involving written or oral questioning allow sufficient inference that the learner has met the evidence requirements. The pass mark may be higher than 50% if you consider that this is necessary to allow sufficient inference of competence.

Other methods of assessment such as practical activities may not lend themselves to the application of a pass mark but you should consider the expected performance levels and/or the acceptable technical tolerances against the standard which would allow sufficient inference of competence.

Accessibility and barriers to achievement

Evidence Requirements should not place any restrictions on centres and learners that are not justified by the outcomes. For example, the phrase 'written and/or oral evidence' is commonly used in evidence requirements. This indicates that learners can provide oral evidence either as an alternative to written evidence or to supplement written evidence.

You should not normally insist on written evidence only, because this is a potential barrier to achievement. Remember that oral evidence can be recorded in a variety of ways, for example, through audio or video recordings, or by the use of question and answer checklists.

3.5 Writing a Higher National Unit specification: Support Notes

The Support Notes section is often the most useful part of the unit specification for users. It is an opportunity for you to expand on the information given in the statement of standards and give clear advice on all aspects of delivery and assessment. This benefits all users and helps to share best practice in the area being covered. Support notes are guidance and are not mandatory.

Guidance on the content and context for this unit

This section of the unit specification allows you to contextualise and expand on the statement of standards. You should provide more information on the purpose of the unit and give more detail for each of the outcomes, and any other information that would be useful for someone using the unit for the first time. While the knowledge and/or skills section covers the essential knowledge on which learners will be assessed, there may well be other areas of content they should be aware of, or which it would be helpful to cover if they are to gain full benefit from taking the unit.

You should also provide details of any recognition given by professional bodies or other organisations, the relationship of specific outcomes to National Occupational Standards, and progression pathways.

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this unit

You should provide advice on how the unit could be taught by a range of delivery methods, for example:

It is recommended that learners work through this unit in class groups and small groups in order to be able to give and receive feedback.

Group and individual presentations provide opportunities for each learner to demonstrate their learning and increase their self-awareness.

Parts of this unit could be supported using learning from relevant field trips, and or visits, for research purposes.

You should also provide guidance where integration with other units may be possible, for example:

Learners would normally work individually but should be encouraged to participate in group work and discussion in relation to their own studies or experiences. Although assessment must be focused on the individual achievement of each learner, group work may contribute as appropriate. Integrative project work might assist in linking this unit with other related units. Appropriate attention must be given to health and safety arrangements in relation to the topics covered.

Guidance on approaches to assessment of this unit

There is a standard opening statement in this section:

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable for learners.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

You should therefore give some detail on possible assessment approaches to the unit. Information on different methods of assessment is available in SQA's *Guide to Assessment* which is available at https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Guide_To_Assessment.pdf

You should also consider whether it would be most appropriate to assess each outcome separately. This can fragment the learning process and possibly lead to over assessment for learners. However, it can be the most appropriate approach for some units. It can also allow for re-assessment of a single outcome which the learner has not achieved.

Alternatively, you may decide that the unit best lends itself to integrative assessment in which evidence can be gathered for two or more outcomes through one assessment. You may also be able to indicate where integration could take place across outcomes in different units if the QDT has identified related units in the writer brief.

Integrated assessment can take less time and be more meaningful for learners. However, you must take care that an integrated assessment would not create a higher level of demand than an outcome-by-outcome approach. You should also consider how any re-assessment could be carried out. For example, in a practical activity, it might not be possible to re-assess only those areas in which the learner has failed the evidence requirements and so the learner might have to be given a completely new assessment. On the other hand, if the evidence is to be generated over a period of time, such as compiling a portfolio, it may be possible to simply re-assess those areas which did not meet the evidence requirements.

You may decide that it would be possible to assess the unit holistically by developing an overarching task which allows the evidence for the full unit to be gathered by a single coherent activity. This reduces the number of assessment occasions for learners and can be motivating. It also provides assurance of overall competence. However, you should consider how your unit fits into the overall structure of the HNC/HND and possible delivery patterns. It could be daunting for learners to take a holistic assessment early in their studies but it could be entirely appropriate later in their course. The same considerations around re-assessment in an integrative approach also apply for holistic assessment although in this case it is very likely that the learner would have to be re-assessed for the full unit.

Example 1 Health, Wellbeing and Safeguarding

Centres are encouraged to adopt a holistic approach to the assessment of this unit where it forms part of a Group Award. It is suggested that the assessment for this unit could be a research project based on their own area of practice with adults, children or young people.

Each section of the project should contain evidence of:

- ◆ *Knowledge of the main theories, concepts and principles*

- ◆ *Ability to present and evaluate information, ideas and arguments related to health wellbeing and safeguarding*
- ◆ *Ability to convey complex ideas in a structured and coherent form*
- ◆ *Evidence of initiative in the approach taken to research the area*

It is recommended that each section of the project is approximately 500-750 words.

Example 2 Supply Chain Organisations: Structure and Functions

This unit could be assessed by three separate reports based on the learner's experiences of working in a supply chain related environment. Reports can be supplemented with additional questions to ensure all aspects of the evidence requirements are met. The reports may be presented in any suitable format. Where evidence is presented as written reports it is recommended that each report is approximately 1,000 words in length. Where appropriate, diagrams may be included.

However, it is recognised that not all learners will have the necessary industrial experience when embarking on the course and where this is the case learners may be assessed using reports or questions based on an appropriate case study for outcomes 1 and 3.

Where a case study with associated questions is used for assessment, the case study should be issued 2–3 weeks before the assessment event to give learners the opportunity to research relevant points. At the assessment event a fresh copy of the case study along with the questions should be issued to learners. The assessment should be carried out under open-book supervised conditions. Where this type of assessment is used it is recommended that the assessment last no longer than one hour for each outcome.

In all cases, the assessment of outcome 2 should remain as an open book report.

If you have identified the use of sampling when writing your evidence requirements, you should provide more information here by stating the knowledge and skills from which the sample may be selected so that, whatever the sample chosen, learners, assessors and verifiers will be aware of the national standard which is to be achieved. There is no minimum size of sample but if you select a low proportion of the content for sampling, it becomes more difficult for assessors and verifiers to infer that the learner is competent across the unit. You should also state if certain knowledge/skills must always be assessed to ensure competence and so cannot be sampled.

A sample of 50-60% of the unit content would allow inference of competence across the full unit. A sample should focus on the most important knowledge and skills in the unit but this will depend on the content and context of the unit.

You must take care to be as inclusive as possible, making sure that you are not inadvertently creating any barriers to achievement, eg for learners who require additional support or who are undertaking the unit by open or distance learning.

If you have decided that a minimum pass mark or required performance level should be applied, you should provide more detail here.

Opportunities for e-assessment

You should decide if your unit is ideally suited to e-assessment. If so, you should provide information on how to do this. For example:

The evidence for outcomes 1 and 2 could be held in an e-portfolio while the oral presentation required for outcome 3 could be recorded. This evidence should be accessed by the assessor following the centre's procedures.

On the other hand, you may decide that it would be technically possible to use e-assessment but that it would be complicated to arrange. In these cases, you should advise centres accordingly. For example:

Although this unit could be assessed by e-assessment, it would require a considerable degree of planning by the centre to ensure the sufficiency and authenticity of learner evidence. Arrangements would have to be made to ensure that the practical activity in outcome 1 is supervised by a responsible person and a clearly recorded checklist is available for the assessor and that the assessor is, able to question the learner on that performance online. The closed-book test for outcomes 2 and 3 should be delivered in a supervised environment.

However, it may not be feasible to use e-assessment for your unit. You should explain the reason for this. For example:

This unit is not suited to delivery by e-assessment because it requires learners to be observed and questioned by a qualified practitioner on site to meet health and safety requirements and/or statutory/professional body requirements.

Opportunities to develop Core and other essential skills

You should signpost any opportunities to develop Core Skills or Core Skill components. You should give details of the Core Skills that might be developed, their SCQF levels, the outcomes they relate to, and details of the ways in which they might be developed, through particular teaching or learning strategies, learner self-study, formative assessment. Further information is available at

http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/CA2801_Guidance_on_Core_Skills_using_design_principles_for_HNCDs.pdf

You should also identify any broader skills in the areas of enterprise, employability, sustainable development and citizenship which can be developed by this unit.

3.6 Writing a Higher National Unit specification: General Information for Learners

There is a standard opening statement in this section:

This section will help you decide whether this is the unit for you by explaining what the unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

You should then provide a brief overview of the unit – its purpose, the knowledge and skills learners will gain through successfully completing the unit, for example:

The unit aims to enable you to gain an understanding of health wellbeing and safeguarding issues, for those who access provision from social services, care and/or education settings.

In order to achieve these aims you will learn the importance of the holistic nature of health wellbeing and safeguarding and the need to apply a person centred approach to the care of those they are working with.

Alternatively, you may wish to outline the outcomes and the method of assessment. For example:

This unit covers some of the aspects of management accounting that you will require in Hospitality Management. The unit has three outcomes:

- ◆ *The first outcome covers the analysis of a statement of cash flows. This looks at the sources of business funds and their uses over the financial period.*
- ◆ *The second outcome covers departmental accounts for a hospitality business such as a hotel and incorporates apportioned costs.*
- ◆ *The third outcome covers the production of ratios and statistics and your analysis of these. You will be given a case study and will be required to produce a report to include calculation of operating ratios, your findings and recommendations.*

In order to complete the unit successfully you will be required to complete three assessments.

You should also give details of the opportunities within the unit to develop Core skills and other broader skills as well as any professional body recognition.

4 Writing a Higher National Graded Unit Specification

Higher National Graded Units have three key purposes. These are to assess learners' ability to integrate and apply the knowledge and/or skills gained in the individual HN Units, to demonstrate that they have met the principal aims of the HNC/HND and to grade learners' achievement.

All HNCs must include one Graded Unit of 8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7.

All HNDs must include one Graded Unit of 8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7, and 16 SCQF credit points from one or more Graded Units at SCQF level 8.

Centres are required to develop the assessment instrument in accordance with the specification which you develop, subject to its successful validation.

Each Higher National Graded Unit specification contains the following four sections which you must complete.

General information: In this section you should state the HNC/D to which the Graded Unit contributes, its purpose, and the type of project/examination. You should state the SCQF credit points and level for the Graded Units, and the units that learners should have completed or are in the process of completing. You should indicate any Core Skills included in the Graded Unit as well as any equality and inclusion issues.

The administrative information within this section will be completed by SQA officers.

Designing the project/examination and assessing learners: This is the most important section of the Higher National Graded Unit specification. You must provide instructions that centres should follow in the development of the assessment instrument and its use in assessing learners and grading their achievement. You have to develop the evidence instructions and contextualise grade related criteria for the assessment. This section contains a number of standard statements on conditions of assessment which you must follow, in relation to your selected instrument of assessment.

Support notes: In this section you should provide information that will support lecturers/assessors. This could cover planning and delivery. For project-based Graded Units, you may provide guidance on Core Skills development and resources. For examination-based Graded Units, you could give guidance on compiling examination questions and marking instructions.

General information for learners: This section allows you to set out the principal aims of the Graded Unit, how they will be assessed and the basis for grading their achievement.

4.1 The HN Graded Unit writer brief

The HN Graded Unit writer brief provided by the QDT outlines the content of the Graded Unit which you are developing. It sets out:

- ◆ the principal aims of the HNC/D which the Graded Unit should be designed to assess
- ◆ the title of the HNC/D to which it contributes and its number (1,2, or 3)
- ◆ the Graded Unit type, ie project or examination*
- ◆ the possible assessment instrument: for a project, either a case study, investigation or practical assignment; for an examination, either closed book or open book
- ◆ the titles of HN Units which should be completed by learners before taking the Graded Unit
- ◆ the SCQF credit points and level

*Please note that the inclusion of an examination-based Graded Unit at SCQF level 7 in an HNC of the first year of an HND is by exception. An examination-based Graded Unit worth 8 SCQF points can be included in the second year of an HND, but an examination-based Graded Unit worth 16 SCQF points at SCQF level 8 will be by exception. In cases where exceptions apply, your Qualifications Manager will need to gain approval by submitting a rationale to senior SQA staff demonstrating that the inclusion of an examination-based Graded Unit meets specific criteria which are stated in Appendix 4.

This handbook follows the order of the Graded Unit specification, but most writers will begin developing the design of the assessment instrument (ie the project or examination) which then allows them to complete the other sections.

The current specification templates are provided as Appendix 2 for project-based Graded Units and Appendix 3 for examination-based Graded Units. You may find it helpful to use them alongside the following guidance, but you should always check with your SQA lead officer that you are using the most up-to-date versions.

4.2 Writing a Higher National Graded Unit specification: General Information

The general information section is common to project-based and examination-based Graded Units.

Sections 4.3–4.5 set out the information for a project-based Graded Unit. Sections 4.6–4.8 provide the information for an examination-based Graded Unit.

It should be noted that the inclusion of an examination-based Graded Unit at SCQF level 7 in an HNC or the first year of an HND will be by exception. An examination-based Graded Unit worth 8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8 can be included in the second year of an HND but

examination based Graded Units worth 16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8 will be by exception. In cases where exceptions apply, approval has to be given by SQA's Qualification Development Management Team. Your SQA lead officer will advise of the criteria that must be met to offer an examination-based Graded Unit by exception and of the process to be followed.

Unit title

The title of the Graded Unit should be the title of the HNC/D in which it belongs. It should include a number. The number 1 indicates that the Graded Unit belongs to an HNC or the first part of an HND. The numbers 2 or 3 indicate that the Graded Unit belongs to the second part of an HND.

Unit code

The Graded Unit code is allocated by SQA, as well as all administrative information.

Type of Graded Unit

If you are developing a project-based course, you should state whether it is a case study, an investigation or practical assignment. If it is an examination, you should state whether it is closed book or open book.

Graded Unit purpose

In this section you should detail the principal aims of the HNC/HND that the Graded Unit is designed to assess.

Credit level and points

The SCQF credit level and points of a Graded Unit are predetermined and will be set out in your HN Graded Unit writer brief.

Recommended entry to the Graded Unit

You should list the units that the learner should have completed or be in the process of completing before starting the Graded Units.

Core Skills

This section will be completed by SQA. You should record signposting of Core and other skills development in the Support Notes under the heading *Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills*.

SQA will insert one of the following statements as appropriate.

Achievement of this Graded unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Core Skill component(s)

There are also opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills which are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Graded unit specification.

OR

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

Assessment Support Pack

If an ASP has been developed for this Graded Unit, the following standard statement should be included.

The Assessment Support Pack for this unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable and practicable instrument of assessment. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the Assessment Support Pack to ensure a comparable standard. Assessment Support Packs are available on SQA's secure website.

Equality and inclusion

This standard statement is used in all HN Graded Units:

This Graded 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 at <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14976.html>

However, this statement can only be applied because each SQA unit is subject to an equality review. You will be asked to review your final draft prior to submitting it to SQA, and an equality review will form part of the checks carried out by a subject specialist who acts as the unit vetter.

4.3 Project-based Higher National Graded Unit specification: designing the project and assessing learners

Selecting the most appropriate instrument of assessment

All project-based Graded Units are designed to test the application of knowledge and skills in the planning, execution and evaluation of a given task. You should select the most appropriate assessment instrument for your Graded Unit, depending on the skills that you wish to test that will show that the learner has met the principal aims of the HNC/D.

Case study

You should select a case study as your instrument of assessment if the principal aims of the HNC/D are around skills in gathering and interpreting information, analysing, decision-making, and planning for action.

In this type of assessment, learners are given an outlined scenario that involves, typically, an organisation, client, service, product, process, or system. The scenario consists of a description of a scenario, followed by a series of instructions that prompt learners to use the information they have gathered to interpret, analyse, and respond to the scenario. They then have to put forward recommendations for follow-up action. Case study scenarios need to reflect the diversity and complexity of society, and the content must not cause offence or impose barriers to achievement.

Learner evidence requirements are:

- ◆ a plan of action
- ◆ a case study report with conclusions and recommendations
- ◆ evidence showing evaluation/review of the case study

Learners will be asked to:

- ◆ interpret the outlined scenario
- ◆ identify and research associated cases and/or issues
- ◆ consult relevant individuals, organisations, and agencies
- ◆ develop the outlined scenario
- ◆ analyse and compare responses to the outlined scenario

- ◆ recommend action
- ◆ evaluate the case study

Investigation

You should select an investigation as your instrument of assessment if the principal aims of the HNC/D are skills in research, analysis, evaluation, and reporting are being tested.

In this type of assessment instrument, the assessor can direct the choice of investigation, usually by providing learners with a topic or brief for the subsequent investigation. Alternatively, learners can select a topic in consultation with the assessor.

Learner evidence requirements are:

- ◆ a plan of action
- ◆ an investigation report with conclusions and recommendations
- ◆ evidence showing evaluation/review of the investigation

Learners will be asked to:

- ◆ plan the investigation
- ◆ identify issues for research
- ◆ generate and collect data
- ◆ select/devise and use research methods
- ◆ collate, interpret, and analyse data
- ◆ present findings and conclusions
- ◆ evaluate the investigation

If the investigation is carried out as part of a group investigation, the specification must clearly state how individual contributions will be assessed to ensure **each** learner has fully met the evidence requirements.

Practical assignment

You should select a practical assignment as your instrument of assessment if the principal aims of the HNC/D are the application of practical skills (and knowledge and understanding) to a situation that involves task management.

Practical assignments are not concerned exclusively with practical activity. Learners are provided with a brief that allows them to demonstrate their creative, interpersonal, and/or management skills directly. Learner evidence requirements are:

- ◆ a plan of action
- ◆ evidence of a product, organised activity/event, or performance

- ◆ evidence that documents the processes underpinning the practical hands-on activity
- ◆ evidence showing an evaluation of the practical assignment

The assessment should be based on a combination of the end-result of the activity (the product or performance) and the carrying out of the activity (the process).

Learners will be asked to:

- ◆ interpret the brief
- ◆ gather information to clarify the brief
- ◆ decide on a product, activity, event, or performance to develop
- ◆ select and manage materials and/or resources
- ◆ produce the product, organise the activity or event, or deliver the performance
- ◆ evaluate the product, activity/event, or performance (through feedback)

If the investigation is carried out as part of a group investigation, the specification must clearly state how individual contributions will be assessed to ensure **each** learner has met fully the evidence requirements.

Assessment

This section of the Graded Unit specification contains two parts. The first gives general instructions and standard statements which specify the minimum design requirements of any project-based task. You should provide additional contextualised information specific to your Graded Unit. The aim is to ensure consistency of interpretation across all centres offering the HNC/D.

Conditions of assessment

This second section contains a standard statement about the time and completion date for the project. You should contextualise this to complement the standard statement for your Graded Unit. This section also contains SQA's formal policy statements on reasonable assistance and remediation. These apply to all Graded Units and may not be amended.

Evidence requirements

The project undertaken by learners consists of three stages: planning; developing; and evaluating. You should identify the minimum evidence required to pass each stage of the project and insert the statements in the accompanying table. You should also allocate a % mark for each stage. Some projects use a 20%/60%/20% while other may use a 30%/40%/30% or 30%/60%/10% allocation. Any allocation of marks should be consistent with the aims of the Graded Unit and the HNC/D. For example, if the development of planning skills is an aim of the

HNC/D, then it may be given a larger allocation of marks. You must use your professional judgement to reach this decision, although the QDT may have advised on this.

These percentage marks may be further split into marks for each aspect of a stage. As learners must meet the minimum evidence requirements before progressing to the next stage by achieving at least half of the marks available, it is important to consider the weightings in relation to the assessment instrument which you have selected.

Examples of evidence requirements for each type of project-based Graded Unit assessment instruments are given below.

Example A: Case study evidence requirements

Evidence of Planning	<p>An Action Plan that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the aims of the assessment task including research, development, and evaluation ◆ timescales for achieving these aims ◆ identification of those aspects of the task that require further research ◆ identification of the methods of research and sources to be used.
Evidence of Developing	<p>A Case Study Report including evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ collection and collation of any further research undertaken ◆ analysing the case study scenario ◆ drawing conclusions ◆ presenting recommendations <p>The report should also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ a contents page ◆ a list of acknowledgements of sources and references
Evidence of Evaluating	<p>An Evaluation Report, which should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ briefly outline the case study ◆ review and update the action plan in light of experience ◆ assess the effectiveness of the action plan ◆ assess the effectiveness of the research methods used ◆ identify any knowledge and skills that have been gained and/or developed.

Example B: Investigation evidence requirements

Evidence of Planning	<p>An Action Plan that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the aims of the assessment task including research, development, and evaluation ◆ timescales for achieving these aims ◆ the rationale for selecting the topic to be researched, if choice has been allowed ◆ identification of the main issues for research ◆ identification of the methods of research and sources to be used.
Evidence of Developing	<p>An Investigation Report, including evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ collection and collation of data ◆ interpretation/analysis of data ◆ summary of the findings and conclusions drawn. <p>The report should also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ a contents page ◆ a list of ◆ acknowledgements of sources and references.
Evidence of Evaluating	<p>An Evaluation Report, which should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ briefly outline the investigation ◆ review and update the action plan in light of experience ◆ summarise any unforeseen events and how they were handled ◆ identify any knowledge and skills that have been gained and/or developed ◆ assess the effectiveness of the research methods used ◆ assess the strengths and weaknesses of the main body of the investigation report ◆ determine to what extent the investigation covers the topic.

Example C: Practical assignment evidence requirements

Evidence of Planning	<p>An Action Plan that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the learner's interpretation of the brief ◆ any information gathered to clarify the brief ◆ aims of the practical assignment ◆ identification of information sources to be used ◆ identification of materials and resources required and how they will be accessed ◆ identification of the stages involved and the timescales for completion of each stage.
Evidence of Developing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Output of the practical activity that meets required quality <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Record of the processes underpinning the activity, eg logbook, diary.
Evidence of Evaluating	<p>An Evaluation Report, which should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ briefly outline the assignment ◆ review and update the action plan in light of experience ◆ summarise any unforeseen events and how they were handled ◆ identify any knowledge and skills which have been gained and/or developed ◆ assess the strengths and weaknesses of the output of the practical assignment ◆ determine to what extent the assignment met the original brief.

Assessing and grading learners

This section contains standard statements on the aggregation of marks, grade boundaries, reassessment and awarding the final grade.

Learners who meet the evidence requirements will have their achievement graded as C (competent), A (highly competent) or B (somewhere between A and C).

This section also contains generic Grade Related Criteria setting out attainment at A (highly competent) or C (competent) grade. You must contextualise these criteria to provide guidance to assessors to judge learner attainment at A or C in relation to your specific HNC/D.

4.4 Project-based Higher National Graded Unit specification: Support Notes

Guidance on approaches to delivery and assessment of this Graded Unit

In this section, you should provide information that will support lecturers on aspects such as planning, timing, delivery, assessment, Core Skills development, and resources. For example, you could include advice on the sequence of delivery of the Graded Unit in relation to the mandatory HN Units which underpin it or the use of progress interviews with learners

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

This section should be used to signpost where Core Skills are developing naturally within the Graded Unit. You may also wish to highlight additional opportunities to develop Core Skills through suggested learning and teaching approaches. In addition, the opportunity to develop broader skills in the areas of enterprise, employability, sustainable development and citizenship should be noted here.

4.5 Project based Higher National Graded Unit Specification: General Information for Learners

You should state clearly the principal aims of the Graded Unit and the topics from the underpinning mandatory HN Units. You should also inform them of the assessment instrument which will be used, timings and submission dates. You should also tell the basis for grading their achievement and if there are any opportunities to develop Core Skills.

4.6 Examination-based Higher National Graded Unit specification: designing the examination and assessing learners

Assessment

This section contains a number of standard statements. Graded Unit examinations normally last for three hours. If you wish to reduce this or divide the examination into separate components, you should discuss this with your SQA lead officer — such proposals must be agreed with the SQA validation panel. You should specify whether the examination will be open or closed book.

You should choose a closed-book examination where learners are expected to be able to recall and apply knowledge without recourse to source materials. Learners are given no information other than the question paper and script book, and are expected to answer examination questions without the aid of reference material.

You should select an open-book examination if you wish to test the ability to apply knowledge and understanding. In addition to the question paper and script book, learners are allowed to use prescribed materials. Details of these materials must be included in the Graded Unit specification.

For both types of examination, you must supply the following information:

- ◆ the key topics and critical knowledge and skills from within or across the underpinning mandatory units on which examination questions will be based
- ◆ the level of demand for each key topic (description, explanation, analysis, application)
- ◆ a set number of questions
- ◆ an appropriate relative weighting/mark allocation to each topic
- ◆ marking instructions

If the examination is open-book you should provide details of the permitted reference and/or source materials.

Conditions of assessment

This section contains standard statements about the conduct of the examination and SQA's formal policy statement on reasonable assistance. You may provide additional information to contextualise these statements but you should not alter them.

Assessing and grading learners

Learners who meet the minimum evidence requirements will have their achievement graded as an A, B or C. Generic Grade Related Criteria are provided in this section setting out attainment at A (highly competent) or C (competent) grades. You must contextualise these criteria to provide guidance to assessors to judge learner attainment at A or C in relation to your specific HNC/D.

Standard statements on grade boundaries, reassessment and final grading is also provided in this section.

4.7 Examination-based Higher National Graded Unit specification: Support Notes

Guidance on approaches to delivery and assessment of this Graded Unit

In this section, you should provide information that will support lecturers on aspects such as planning and delivery and appropriate resources for open-book examinations.

You should provide information for assessors on writing valid examination questions and detailed marking instructions to improve reliability.

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

You should state whether Core Skills are embedded/not embedded within the Graded Unit assessment.

4.8 Examination-based Higher National Graded Unit Specification: General Information for Learners

You should state clearly the principal aims of the Graded Unit and the key topics from the underpinning mandatory HN Units. You should also inform them of the assessment instrument which will be used ie a three hour examination, and assessment conditions. You should also inform them of the basis for grading their achievement.

Appendix 1: Higher National Unit Specification template



Higher National Unit Specification

General information

Unit title: See unit writer brief

Unit code: completed by SQA

Superclass: completed by SQA

Publication date: completed by SQA

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: completed by SQA

Unit purpose

Text

Note to unit writers: *You must include information about the purpose of this unit and the learner group/who unit is suitable for. See unit writer brief.*

You may also wish to include information about possible progression opportunities on successful completion of this unit.

Outcomes

On successful completion of the unit the learner will be able to:

- 1 Text
- 2 Text

Credit points and level

See unit writer brief — X Higher National Unit credit(s) at SCQF level X: (X SCQF credit points at SCQF level X)

Recommended entry to the unit

Text

Note to unit writers: Under this heading you will give guidance on the level of knowledge, skills, experience or the qualifications that learners should have achieved before they start the unit, if they are to be able to achieve the unit within the time allotted.

Core Skills

Note to unit writers: This section will be completed by SQA. You should record signposting of Core and other skills development in the Support Notes under the heading 'Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills'.

SQA's Qualification Portfolio Management Team will arrange for one of the following statements to be inserted as appropriate.

Achievement of this unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Complete Core Skill(s) (insert Core Skill title and level/none as appropriate)

Core Skill component(s) (insert component title and level/none as appropriate)

There are also opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills which are highlighted in the support notes for this unit specification.

OR

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the support notes for this unit specification.

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

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.

Text

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**](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements).

Higher National Unit Specification: Statement of standards

Unit title: See unit writer brief

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.

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. Learners 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

Text

Knowledge and/or skills

Text

Outcome 2

Text

Knowledge and/or skills

Text

Outcome 3

Text

Knowledge and/or skills

Text

Higher National Unit Specification: Statement of standards (cont.)

Unit title: See unit writer brief

Evidence requirements for this unit

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills across all outcomes by showing that they can:

Text

Text

Note to unit writers: *You should give details of the most appropriate way of assessing here. Assessment may be carried out:*

Outcome by outcome

Two or more outcomes together

All outcomes together — holistic assessment of the unit



Higher National Unit Support Notes

Unit title: See unit writer brief

Unit support notes are offered as guidance and are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is XX hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this unit

Text

Note to unit writers: This section should include information on the following features where appropriate.

expand on unit purpose

expand on unit outcomes

contextualise

identify specific vocational/subject knowledge and skills

recognition by professional bodies

relationship to NOS and/or other industry standards

whether the unit provides underpinning knowledge for SVQs or other qualifications

progression pathways

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this unit

Text

- **Note to unit writers:** This section should provide the reader with details of any specific delivery criteria for the unit, eg specific teaching qualifications, access to physical/specialist resources, legislation, examination/assessment administered on or behalf of another agency, environmental setting (workplace/simulated). It should also provide readers with suggestions of how teaching or delivery might be organised, for example:

-

a preferred order of teaching (and assessing) certain topics.

ideas about possible delivery methods including classroom activities, field trips, visits and group work, the aim being to encourage the use of learning and teaching approaches that are

varied and appropriate to the aims of the unit — so your advice might be to encourage a learner-centred, participative and practical approach.

Guidance on approaches to assessment of this unit

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

Text

Note to unit writers: *This section should include information on the following features where appropriate:*

how assessment could be carried out

possible instruments of assessment

conditions of assessment

how to integrate assessment in an outcome and/or across outcomes or as a whole unit

details of how sampling should be carried out

advice on how a learner's work can be authenticated

Opportunities for 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 and other essential skills

Text

Note to unit writers: *This section should be used to signpost where Core Skills are developing naturally. It can also be used to highlight additional opportunities to develop Core Skills through suggested learning and teaching approaches. In addition, broader skills development in the areas of enterprise, employability, sustainable development and citizenship should be recorded here.*

History of changes to unit

Version	Description of change	Date

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 20XX

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational purposes provided that no profit is derived from reproduction and that, if reproduced in part, the source is acknowledged.

Additional copies of this unit specification can be purchased from the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Please contact the Business Development and Customer Support team, telephone

0303 333 0330.

General information for learners

Unit title: See unit writer brief

This section will help you decide whether this is the unit for you by explaining what the unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

Text

Note to unit writers: *This section will include information on the following features where appropriate.*

brief overview on what the unit is about

what learners will do/learn while working through the unit

the subject specific knowledge and skills they will develop

how they will be assessed

Core Skills they will develop, how they will be developed and whether they will be certificated

other skills development in enterprise, employability, sustainable development, citizenship

professional body recognition/exemplification (if applicable)

Appendix 2: Higher National Graded Unit Specification template

Project based



Higher National Project-based Graded Unit Specification

General Information

This graded unit has been validated as part of the (insert title). Centres are required to develop a project-based assessment in accordance with this validated specification.

Graded unit title: Text

Graded unit code: XXXX XX

Type of project: Case study/Investigation/Practical assignment

(delete as appropriate)

Publication date: completed by SQA

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: completed by SQA

Graded unit purpose

This graded unit is designed to provide evidence that the learner has achieved the following principal aims of the (insert title):

Text

Credit points and level

X Higher National Unit credit(s) at SCQF level X: (X SCQF credit points at SCQF level X)

Recommended entry to the graded unit

It is recommended that the learner should have completed or be in the process of completing the following units relating to the above principal aims prior to undertaking this graded unit:

Text

Higher National Project-based Graded Unit Specification: General Information (cont.)

Graded unit title: Text

Core Skills

Note for unit writers: *This section will be completed by SQA. You should record signposting of Core and other skills development in the Support Notes under the heading 'Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills'.*

SQA's Qualification Portfolio Management Team will arrange for one of the following statements to be inserted as appropriate.

Achievement of this graded unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Core Skill component(s) (insert *component title and level/none* as appropriate)

There are also opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills which are highlighted in the support notes of this graded unit specification.

OR

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the support notes of this graded unit specification.

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

Assessment support pack

The assessment support pack for this unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable and practicable instrument of assessment. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the assessment support pack to ensure a comparable standard. Assessment support packs are available on SQA's secure website.

Equality and inclusion

This graded unit 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 SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements

Higher National Project-based Graded Unit Specification: Designing the project and assessing learners

Graded unit title: Text

Assessment

This graded unit will be assessed by the use of a project-based *case study/investigation/practical assignment (delete as appropriate)* developed by centres. The project should provide the learner with the opportunity to produce evidence that demonstrates they have met the aims of this graded unit.

The project undertaken by the learner must be a complex task which involves:

variables which are complex or unfamiliar
relationships which need to be clarified
a context which may be unfamiliar to the learner

The project must require the learner to:

analyse the task and decide on a course of action for undertaking the project
plan and organise work and carry it through to completion
reflect on what has been done and draw conclusions for the future
produce evidence of meeting the aims which this graded unit has been designed to cover

Note to unit writers: *Here you may include further instructions specific to the HNC and/or HND to which the graded unit contributes.*

Text

Conditions of assessment

The learner should be given a date for completion of the project. However, the instructions for the project should be distributed to allow the learner sufficient time to assimilate the details and carry out the project.

Note to unit writers: *Here you may include additional contextualised information that complements the information in the standard statement above.*

Text

Reasonable assistance

Reasonable assistance is the term used by SQA to describe the difference between providing learners with some direction to generate the evidence for assessment and providing too much support which would compromise the integrity of the assessment.

Reasonable assistance is part of all learning and teaching processes. In relation to the project, assessors may provide advice, clarification and guidance during the time between the distribution of the project instructions and the completion date ie, at each stage of the project.

Higher National Project-based Graded Unit Specification: Designing the project and assessing learners

Graded unit title: Text

Remediation

Remediation allows an assessor to clarify learner responses, either by requiring a written amendment or by oral questioning, where there is a minor shortfall or omission in evidence requirements. In either case, such instances must be formally noted by the assessor, either in writing or recording and be made available to the external verifier.

Learners must be given the opportunity for remediation at each stage of the project.

Higher National Project-based Graded Unit Specification: Designing the project and assessing learners (cont.)

Graded unit title: Text

Evidence requirements for this graded unit

The project undertaken by learners will consist of three stages: planning; developing; and evaluating. The following table specifies the minimum evidence required to pass each stage.

Note to unit writers: *Here you should detail the minimum evidence requirements for each of the three stages of the project (planning, developing, and evaluating).*

Project stage	Minimum evidence requirements	% mark allocation
Stage 1 — Planning		
	<i>The learner must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the planning stage.</i>	
Project stage	Minimum evidence requirements	% mark allocation
Stage 2 — Developing		
	<i>The learner must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the developing stage.</i>	
Project stage	Minimum evidence requirements	% mark allocation
Stage 3 — Evaluating		
	<i>The learner must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the evaluating stage.</i>	

Higher National Project-based Graded Unit Specification: Designing the project and assessing learners

Graded unit title: Text

Assessing and grading learners

The overall project will be marked out of **100**. Only whole marks should be used.

The percentage of marks allocated to each stage of the project is outlined in the **evidence requirements**.

It is a requirement that learners must meet the minimum evidence requirements for the *planning* stage before progressing to the *developing* stage before progressing to the *evaluating* stage. Learners may produce evidence over and above that specified in the minimum evidence requirements and deserve more than half the available marks for that stage. Assessors should use the grade related criteria outlined below to judge learner performance.

Learners are required to work independently to meet the evidence requirements of the graded unit. At the same time, learners need appropriate support. At the end of each stage there should be opportunities for remediation and re-assessment of learners for that particular stage. This includes the final evaluation stage.

Note to unit writers: *Here you should define, tailor, contextualise and supplement the generic criteria to provide guidance to assessors on what learner attainment at A or C would be in relation to a specific group award.*

Grade related criteria	
Grade A	Grade C
<p>Is a seamless, coherent piece of work which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ <i>has sufficient evidence for the three essential phases of the project, is produced to a high standard, and is quite clearly inter-related</i> ♦ <i>demonstrates an accurate and insightful interpretation of the project brief</i> ♦ <i>is highly focused and relevant to the tasks associated with the project brief</i> ♦ <i>is clear and well-structured throughout and language used is of a high standard in terms of level, accuracy and technical content</i> ♦ <i>effectively consolidates and integrates required knowledge and skills</i> ♦ <i>demonstrates the learner's ability to work autonomously</i> 	<p>Is a co-ordinated piece of work which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ <i>has sufficient evidence of the three essential phases of the project, is produced to an adequate standard</i> ♦ <i>demonstrates an acceptable interpretation of the project brief</i> ♦ <i>is focused and relevant to the tasks associated with the project brief</i> ♦ <i>is satisfactorily structured and language used is adequate in terms of level, accuracy and technical content</i> ♦ <i>consolidates and integrates knowledge and skills but this may lack some continuity and consistency</i> ♦ <i>demonstrates independent learning with minimum support and revision during project</i>

Higher National Project-based Graded Unit Specification: Designing the project and assessing learners (cont.)

Graded unit title: Text

The marks allocated to each stage will then be aggregated to arrive at an overall mark for the project. Assessors will then assign an overall grade to the learner for this graded unit based on the following grade boundaries.

A = 70%–100%

B = 60%–69%

C = 50%–59%

These grade boundaries are fixed and should **not** be amended.

Reassessment

The evidence for a project is generated over time and involves three distinct stages, each of which has to be achieved before the next is undertaken. This means that any reassessment of stages must be undertaken before proceeding to the next stage. The overall grade is derived from the total number of marks across *all* sections, and should reflect the ability of the learner to work autonomously and the amount of support required. In relation to project-based graded units, learners who have failed any stage of the project and have been unable to provide the necessary evidence through remediation must be given the opportunity for reassessment of that stage.

Any learner who has failed their graded unit or wishes to upgrade their award must be given a reassessment opportunity, or in exceptional circumstances, two reassessment opportunities. In the case of project-based graded units, this must be done using a substantially different project.

Final learner grade

The final grading given must reflect the quality of the learner's evidence *at the time of the completion* of the graded unit. Learners must be awarded the highest grade achieved through any reassessment, remediation and/or reasonable assistance provided.



Higher National Project-based Graded Unit Support Notes

Graded unit title: Text

Guidance on approaches to delivery and assessment of this graded unit

Note to unit writers: *Here you should provide information that will support lecturers on aspects such as planning, timing, delivery, assessment, Core Skills development, and resources. For example, you could include advice on:*

how to plan within a course team

sequence of delivery of the graded unit in relation to the subject units that underpin it

useful recommendations such as the use of progress interviews with learners

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

Note to unit writers: *This section should be used to signpost where Core Skills are developing naturally. It can also be used to highlight additional opportunities to develop Core Skills through suggested learning and teaching approaches. In addition, broader skills development in the areas of enterprise, employability, sustainable development and citizenship should be recorded here.*

Text

History of changes to graded unit

Version	Description of change	Date

© Scottish Qualifications Authority [year]

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational purposes provided that no profit is derived from reproduction and that, if reproduced in part, the source is acknowledged.

Additional copies of this unit specification can be purchased from the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Please contact the Business Development and Customer Support team, telephone

0303 333 0330.

General information for learners

Graded unit title: Text

Note for unit writers: *This section should always start on a new page so it can be photocopied and given out to learners at the start of the graded unit delivery. It should be written in simple, plain English and should include information on:*

Text

what the unit is about e.g. principal aims
what they have to know e.g. topics from underpinning units
how they will be assessed i.e. investigation, or case study, or practical assignment
timing of assessment e.g. when will the project begin, interim interviews, final submission date
what the basis of grading achievement will be
any opportunities to develop Core Skills e.g. through particular activities

Text

Appendix 3: Higher National Graded Unit Specification template Examination based



Higher National Examination-based Graded Unit Specification

General Information

This graded unit has been validated as part of the (insert title). Centres are required to develop the assessment instrument in accordance with this validated specification.

Graded unit title: Text

Graded unit code: XXXX XX

Type of examination: Open-book/Closed-book

(delete as appropriate)

Publication date: completed by SQA

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: completed by SQA

Graded unit purpose

This graded unit is designed to provide evidence that the learner has achieved the following principal aims of the (insert title):

Text

Credit points and level

X Higher National Unit credit(s) at SCQF level X: (X SCQF credit points at SCQF level X)

Recommended entry to the graded unit

It is recommended that the learner should have completed or be in the process of completing the following units relating to the above principal aims prior to undertaking this graded unit:

Text

Core Skills

There are no Core Skills embedded in this graded unit specification.

Higher National Examination-based Graded Unit Specification

Graded unit title: Text

Assessment support pack

The assessment support pack for this unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable and practicable instrument of assessment. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the assessment support pack to ensure a comparable standard. Assessment support packs are available on SQA's secure website.

Equality and inclusion

This graded unit 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 SQA's website: **www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements**

Higher National Examination-based Graded Unit Specification: Designing the examination and assessing learners

Graded unit title: Text

Assessment

This graded unit will be assessed by the use of a *closed-book* or *open-book* examination (*delete as appropriate*) developed by centres. The examination should provide the learner with the opportunity to produce evidence that demonstrates they have met the aims of this graded unit.

The assessment is an examination lasting three hours.

The examination should be designed to assess the learner's critical knowledge and understanding of the topics relating to the specific aims which this graded unit is designed to cover.

The examination will be marked out of **100**. Only whole marks should be used.

The questions and corresponding marks should be designed in accordance with the key topics (ie, the critical knowledge and skills to be covered in the examination), level of demand (eg, description, explanation, analysis, application) and relative mark allocation for each key topic outlined in the table below.

Note to writers: *Here you must provide the following information:*

- the key topics from within or across the units on which examination questions will be based
- the level of demand for each key topic
- a set number of questions
- an appropriate relative weighting/mark allocation to each topic
- if an open-book examination — details of the reference and/or source materials to which learners will have access to

Key topics	Level of demand	% mark allocation for each key topic
Total marks for examination		100

Higher National Examination-based Graded Unit Specification: Designing the examination and assessing learners (cont.)

Graded unit title: Text

Conditions of assessment

The examination is *open-book/closed-book*. (Delete as appropriate).

The examination should be unseen and the assessment should be conducted in controlled and supervised conditions.

At all times, the security, integrity and confidentiality of the examination must be ensured.

Reasonable assistance

Reasonable assistance is the term used by SQA to describe the difference between providing learners with some direction to generate the required evidence for assessment and providing too much support which would compromise the integrity of the assessment.

Reasonable assistance is part of all teaching and learning processes.

Assessors may provide advice and guidance on examination technique and clarification on the meaning of command words which may appear in an examination paper, prior to the formal examination.

Note to unit writers: *Here you may include additional contextualised information that complements the information in the standard statement above. Please also note that if the examination is to be less or more than three hours' duration, this must be prior approved by SQA.*

Text

Higher National Examination-based Graded Unit Specification: Designing the examination and assessing learners (cont.)

Graded unit title: Text

Assessing and grading learners

Learners who meet the minimum evidence requirements will have their achievement graded as an A, B or C. The grade related criteria to be used to judge learner performance for this graded unit is specified in the following table.

Note to unit writers: *Here you should define, tailor, contextualise and supplement the generic criteria to provide guidance to assessors on what learner attainment at A or C would be in relation to a specific group award. These criteria will be used in conjunction with information given above to provide the basis for the marking scheme for the assessment.*

Grade related criteria	
Grade A	Grade C
<p>Is a seamless, coherent piece of work or exam script which consistently:</p> <p><i>interprets and understands the question in a way that demonstrates insight and clear understanding of issues and relationships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>demonstrates a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of relevant information</i> ◆ <i>offers logically structured and coherently expressed responses, demonstrating consistent use of correct terminology</i> ◆ <i>is clear and well-structured throughout, with language and terminology used of a consistently high standard in terms of level, accuracy, and technical content</i> ◆ <i>consolidates and integrates required knowledge and skills, linking concepts and ideas, and relating answers explicitly to the question</i> ◆ <i>provides evidence of possible alternative approaches and arguments as well as understanding of different interpretations</i> 	<p>Is a co-ordinated piece of work or exam script which:</p> <p><i>interprets and understands the question in a way that enables the learner to meet the basic criteria required</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>demonstrates limited analysis, evaluation, and explanation of the question and other relevant information</i> ◆ <i>offers uneven responses that convey limited understanding although some relevant points are made</i> ◆ <i>is satisfactorily structured, with language and terminology used adequate, although not always consistent, in terms of level, accuracy, and technical content</i> ◆ <i>consolidates and integrates knowledge and skills but may lack continuity and consistency and fail to show clear links to concepts and ideas</i> ◆ <i>is likely to show only one approach and limited understanding of different interpretations</i>

Grade related criteria	
Grade A	Grade C
♦ <i>convincingly argues and shows links between discussions and conclusions, demonstrating comprehensive knowledge and understanding as well as analysis and evaluation skills</i>	♦ <i>argues and justifies conclusions in an acceptable way but these conclusions may lack reasoned understanding, may not link well to discussions, and may show limited knowledge</i>

The marks achieved by the learner in the examination should be aggregated to arrive at an overall mark for the examination. Assessors will then assign an overall grade to the learner for this graded unit based on the following grade boundaries.

A = 70%–100%

B = 60%–69%

C = 50%–59%

These grade boundaries are fixed and should **not** be amended.

Higher National Examination-based Graded Unit Specification: Designing the examination and assessing learners (cont.)

Graded unit title: Text

Remediation

Remediation is not allowed in examination-based graded unit assessments.

Reassessment

Any learner who has failed the examination or who wishes to upgrade their award must be given a reassessment opportunity, or in exceptional circumstances, two reassessment opportunities. This must be done using a substantially different examination.

Final learner grade

The final grading given must reflect the quality of the learner's evidence at the time of the completion of the graded unit. Learners must be awarded the highest grade achieved, whether through first sitting or through any reassessment.



Higher National Examination-based Graded Unit Support Notes

Graded unit title: Text

Guidance on approaches to delivery and assessment of this graded unit

Note to writers: *Here you should provide information that will support lecturers on aspects such as:*

compiling examination questions and marking instructions
planning, timing, delivery, assessment and verification

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

There are no Core Skills embedded in this graded unit specification.

History of changes to graded unit

Version	Description of change	Date

© Scottish Qualifications Authority [year]

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational purposes provided that no profit is derived from reproduction and that, if reproduced in part, the source is acknowledged.

Additional copies of this unit specification can be purchased from the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Please contact the Business Development and Customer Support team, telephone

0303 333 0330.

General information for learners

Graded unit title: Text

Note to writers: *This section should always start on a new page so it can be photocopied and given out to learners at the start of the graded unit delivery. It should be written in simple, plain English and should include information on:*

Text

what the unit is about e.g. principal aims
what they have to know e.g. examination
timing of assessment e.g. end of course
what will be the basis of grading achievement

Text

Appendix 4: Criteria for the inclusion of examination-based Graded Units: guidance for Qualification Design Teams and Qualifications Managers

The inclusion of an examination-based Graded Unit at SCQF level 7 in an HNC or the first year of an HND is by exception. An examination-based Graded Unit worth 8 SCQF points can be included in the second year of an HND but an examination-based Graded Unit worth 16 SCQF points at level 8 will be by exception.

An examination-based Graded Unit may only be approved for inclusion if it meets most of the following criteria:

- ◆ it supports the primary purpose of the award i.e. it is the main progression pathway to employment or further study
- ◆ the choice is supported by destination statistics of candidates. For example, professional recognition may be given for an examination-based Graded Unit but this would have to be supported by evidence that the majority of candidates gaining the award take advantage of that professional recognition
- ◆ the choice supports the aims of the award, e.g. development of theoretical knowledge and the need for professional registration might support the use of an examination but the development of practical skills and project management would be better served by a project-based Graded Unit
- ◆ the choice is supported by market research e.g. from a professional body
- ◆ examination-based Graded Units are necessary for exemption from professional examinations
- ◆ examination-based Graded Units are necessary for professional recognition
- ◆ examination-based Graded Units are necessary for progression
- ◆ if an examination-based Graded Unit is proposed for inclusion in an HNC/HND, then the relationship to other types of Graded Units included in the qualification must be balanced

*Even where examination evidence/experience is required, QDTS must provide justification why the Graded Unit has been chosen as the vehicle for this. For example, other subject Units may include examination type assessment, formative assessment could be used for examination experience or examination experience could be developed through the Personal Development unit.