

Appendix: course support notes

Introduction

These support notes are not mandatory. They provide advice and guidance to teachers and lecturers on approaches to delivering the course. You should read these in conjunction with this course specification and the specimen question paper and coursework.

Developing skills, knowledge and understanding

This section provides further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding that you could include in the course. You have considerable flexibility to select contexts that will stimulate and challenge candidates, offering both breadth and depth.

The following tables provide suggested experiences and activities that teachers and lecturers could use to deliver the course.

Approaches to learning and teaching

Administrative theory and practice (embedded throughout the course)

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
Role of Administrative Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ awareness of the tasks, duties and support that both the Administrative Assistant and Senior Administrative Assistant are expected to provide in an organisation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — the ability to compare the job description and person specification of an Administrative Assistant to those of a Senior Administrative Assistant 	<p>Discussing theory covered at National 5 level and the nature of the IT skills developed to date. Comparing this with the Higher course, including reference to the increased degree of problem solving in the course assignment and the ability to apply knowledge to situations and contexts.</p> <p>Referring to different administration jobs (for example, school office) and online research of job vacancies for Administrative Assistants. This could also encompass research of higher and further education courses and different types of apprenticeships.</p> <p>Highlighting the difference in the nature of tasks and levels of responsibility that a Senior Administrative Assistant has compared to an Administrative Assistant, by creating and comparing job descriptions.</p> <p>Discussing the type of personality most suited to a supervisory or senior role, by creating and comparing person specifications.</p> <p>Note: you should teach knowledge and develop digital literacy in the context of a supervisory or team leader position.</p>

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
Strategies for effective time and task management, and their importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ skills required: planning, delegating, organising, directing, and controlling ◆ setting targets for the individual and the organisation, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — personal development planning — action plans — to-do lists — priorities lists — Gantt charts — e-diary ◆ dealing with changes in priorities ◆ monitoring and evaluating progress through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — meetings — accessing files — buddy system — Gantt charts ◆ time stealers and strategies to minimise their effect in independent working, group working and meetings ◆ benefits of good time and task management, to the individual and organisation ◆ consequences of bad time and task management, to the individual and organisation 	<p>Discussing personal effectiveness and strategies for coping with the demands of studies, jobs and hobbies.</p> <p>Discussing the impact of being poorly organised, based on prior experiences.</p> <p>Researching the effects of stress on the individual and on the organisation, for example, developing strategies to combat stress, covering for staff and the implications of legal action.</p>

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
<p>Characteristics and the importance of effective teams</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ features of effective teams: including size, attitude to risk, interdependency, time together, shared goals, leadership, and positive environment ◆ team formation: the process teams go through when first formed (forming, storming, norming and performing), the need for different personality types as suggested by Belbin ◆ skills of team members: for example, leadership skills, conflict resolution, listening skills, and communication skills ◆ benefits of teams to individuals and the organisation 	<p>Discussing what teams or groups candidates may be members of and the issues that may prevent their teams from being successful.</p> <p>Raising self-awareness of the part they play in being a member of an effective team.</p> <p>Using a questionnaire to identify each candidate's most likely Belbin team role.</p> <p>Interviewing department or faculty heads on what they believe are the characteristics of good teams.</p> <p>Researching leadership skills and qualities, then matching their own qualities with those that are desirable in a leader.</p> <p>Participating in team building games and challenges.</p> <p>Discussing the reasons why there may be conflict in a team and how to resolve it.</p>

Administrative theory and practice (embedded throughout the course)

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
<p>Knowledge of workplace legislation and strategies for ensuring compliance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ employee and employer responsibilities under current legislation and regulations in the areas of health, safety, security, and data handling ◆ compliance with the legislation through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — informing, training, risk assessments, monitoring behaviour and processes — disciplinary action (both internal and external) taken against staff who breach company and legal guidelines ◆ analysis of the most appropriate methods to train, remind and update staff about current legislation ◆ main provisions and safety legislation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 — Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 — Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 — Fire Precautions (Workplace) (Amendment) Regulations 1999 ◆ UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) ◆ Computer Misuse Act 1990 ◆ Freedom of Information Act 2000 ◆ Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 	<p>Discussing health, safety and security measures in the centre and in other organisations.</p> <p>Comparing effective communication methods to inform and remind staff of their responsibilities.</p> <p>Producing a leaflet or a presentation for employees, highlighting the main points of different health and safety laws and how they affect different employees.</p> <p>Researching real cases and consequences of non-compliance by employers and employees, by looking at news articles and the Health and Safety Executive's website www.hse.gov.uk.</p>

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
Impact of digital technology on the layout, working practices, communication methods, data handling and file management of an organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ office layout and ergonomics ◆ flexible working options, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — homeworking — job share — flexible hours ◆ employee morale and wellbeing ◆ customer care ◆ communication methods ◆ data management, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — software applications — networks — security — confidentiality ◆ file management, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — naming conventions — version control — restricted access — file location — housekeeping — backup procedure 	<p>Discussing advantages and disadvantages of different types of office layout within the workplace.</p> <p>Researching current thinking on office layout — looking at leading-edge office design, furniture and equipment.</p> <p>Discussing different working practices that allow remote working, sharing of work and team working, through the availability of digital technology.</p> <p>Researching the effect on employee morale of surroundings and physical environment.</p> <p>Researching communication methods, using digital technology in a working environment, for both internal and external communication.</p> <p>Raising awareness of different security systems, studying the centre’s policies and procedures for ensuring the security of information, and matching them to organisational responsibilities.</p> <p>Using good file-management techniques throughout the course.</p>

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
Features of good customer care, mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the quality of customer care, benefits of good and consequences of poor customer care	<p>Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ written customer care policy, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — mission and vision statements — service standards — complaints procedures ◆ loyalty schemes <p>Monitoring and evaluating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ market research (desk and field) ◆ surveys (questionnaires, comment cards, telephone interviews, online surveys, and in-store surveys) ◆ customer focus groups ◆ mystery shopper ◆ suggestion schemes ◆ websites and forums 	<p>Discussing and sharing good and bad experiences of customer care.</p> <p>Inviting guest speakers (for example, customer care managers and store managers) to share their customer care policy and the benefits of looking after customers.</p> <p>Carrying out internet research to look at the customer care statements of well-known organisations.</p> <p>Making use of consumer affair programmes to research customer care experiences.</p> <p>Evaluating the quality of the customer care given by the centre's canteen or reception services using, for example, questionnaires and observation.</p> <p>Discussing the benefits of good customer care and the consequences of poor customer care.</p>
Procedures for organising and supporting a range of meetings and events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the role of an Administrative Assistant and a Chairperson in planning a meeting ◆ duties and tasks to be completed before, during and after the meeting or event ◆ documentation relating to meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — notice of meeting and agenda — minutes (including action minutes) ◆ evaluation forms ◆ the use of digital technology to aid planning and organising meetings and events 	<p>Role playing meetings, with candidates taking notes and transcribing.</p> <p>Using wizards to create agendas.</p> <p>Researching and selecting venues to suit different types of events.</p> <p>Preparing relevant documentation with standard items.</p> <p>Designing evaluation forms.</p>

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
Appropriate methods of communication and research	<p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ an overview of different communication methods available, both traditional and digital, to receive, process and transmit information including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — letters, memos and reports — face-to-face — meetings (group and formal) — telephone calls — e-mail — e-diary — presentations — social media — internet, websites and blogs — online groups and forums — networks ◆ using digital technology to communicate information — in ways appropriate to its context, audience and purpose ◆ making appropriate adjustments when communicating information — for example, e-mail etiquette ◆ showing an understanding of the possible barriers to ensuring information is received and understood <p>Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ assessing the reliability and value of the information gathered and comparing it to alternative sources 	<p>Discussing the need for different methods of communication.</p> <p>Using the collaborative resources available, for example, SharePoint, Yammer or Edmodo. Candidates may already have experience of social media or online groups.</p> <p>Researching and presenting information using resources available, for example, SharePoint, MS teams, and presentation software.</p> <p>Note: communication and research can permeate the course.</p> <p>Covering some of the theory regarding research and appropriate communication methods at the start of the course ensures that candidates can apply this knowledge to the documents and presentations they create.</p>

Word processing

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
<p>Creating and editing a wide range of business documents</p>	<p>Creating documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ letters ◆ forms ◆ itineraries ◆ business reports ◆ newsletters ◆ meetings documentation <p>Working with documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ references: creating, deleting and editing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — table of contents — bookmarks — cross references — endnotes and footnotes ◆ page and section breaks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — inserting — amending ◆ page orientation altered in different sections ◆ headers and footers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — linked and separated within different sections — different odd and even pages — different on first page 	<p>Working in word-processing applications to produce documents, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ personal CVs ◆ letters, for example, application, thank you and enquiry ◆ short letters or sections of a letter, for example, an opening or closing paragraph ◆ reports of research findings ◆ electronic forms <p>Note: you should make candidates aware of the purpose of different business documents. They should be able to discuss word-processing features that can be used to create and display information effectively.</p>

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ first page — formatting differently from subsequent pages, for example, borders and enhancement ◆ review functions, for example, comments, word count, and thesaurus ◆ watermarks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — insertion — amendment — deletion ◆ style gallery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — using — modifying ◆ tables <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — creating and editing a table — enhancing presentations using layout and design functions — converting text-to-table and table-to-text — inserting formulae in table — sorting table on one or 2 columns ◆ forms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — creating and editing forms which can be completed electronically — using different types of fields — protecting a form 	

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
	<p>Importing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ data from other applications, for example, database, spreadsheet, word file or the internet ◆ dynamically linked data and charts from a spreadsheet <p>Mail merge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ merging data from applications into business documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — spreadsheet — database — word processing <p>Printing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A4 ◆ multiple-page ◆ back-to-back ◆ booklets 	

Spreadsheets

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
<p>Formatting and editing complex spreadsheets to process data, problem solve and present information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ using functions, formulae and features, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — arithmetical — COUNTA — COUNTBLANK — SUMIF — COUNTIF — complex IF — rounding — vertical and horizontal lookups — naming cells and ranges — sorting: vertical (2 columns) and horizontal — filtering — grouping — subtotalling — conditional formatting — comments: add, edit, remove and print — charts: appropriate to the data given ◆ managing worksheets and workbooks, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — inserting, copying and deleting sheets 	<p>Working through various scenarios, allowing candidates to manipulate data within worksheets — this could involve working with costings, budgets, expenses, wages, and sales.</p> <p>Presenting information in chart format, for example, survey responses, budgets, and attendance.</p> <p>Raising awareness of the benefits of using spreadsheets when processing data and presenting information to others.</p> <p>Note: some of the functions and features cannot be tested in the assignment; however, candidates should be able to provide theoretical answers.</p>

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — using tabs — simultaneously inserting and formatting data — 3D formulae ◆ consolidating data, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — subtotalling — summary worksheets using 3D references — pivot tables — pivot charts ◆ importing and exporting data from and to external sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — word processing — database software ◆ creating dynamic links between software applications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — spreadsheet data as a table and chart from and to word-processing and presentation software ◆ printing results in a range of formats, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — worksheets and sections in value and formulae view on one page — separate and embedded charts — comments as shown and at the end of the document 	

Relational databases

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
<p>Working with relational databases to find and present information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ creating relationships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — using primary and foreign keys — creating and editing relationships between tables (one-to-many, many-to-many, one-to-one) — adding, deleting and modifying data in existing tables ◆ searching the database using advanced functions on a minimum of 2 fields from multiple tables using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — AND, OR, null, NOT, not null — between 2 numbers — between 2 dates — between 2 letters and 2 words in alphabetical order — greater than or less than, using number, date and text fields — wildcard(s) * used anywhere in a string of text ◆ using calculations, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — aggregate functions, for example, SUM, COUNT, AVERAGE, MAX and MIN — calculated fields: adding, subtracting, multiplying or dividing 	<p>Working with relational databases to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ mail merge delegate/customer/supplier information into, for example, letters, invitations and delegate lists ◆ interrogate the database to provide statistical information to managers on, for example, inventory levels, uptake figures and spending patterns <p>Understanding the structure of databases and the importance of primary keys and different types of relationships.</p> <p>Discussing the security aspect of information being held in different tables and the way in which data entry can be controlled in order to ensure integrity.</p> <p>Note: some of the features and functions cannot be tested in the assignment; however, candidates should be able to provide theoretical answers.</p>

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using 2 fields or by a given number and calculating percentages — formatting values appropriately, for example, currency and decimal places — labelling new fields appropriately — advanced sort — ordering of fields ◆ creating forms, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — modifying properties — enhancing appearance (move, align, delete, and edit components) — headers and footers ◆ creating reports, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — grouping data — sorting data — summary calculations — calculations within report — editing field names — inserting report and page headers and footers — inserting graphics ◆ exporting data to spreadsheet, word-processing and presentation applications 	

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ printing results in a range of formats: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — extracts of tables: sorted and in a specific field order — search results: sorted and in a specific field order — forms — reports 	

Presentations

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
<p>Working with existing presentations to create a final document</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ using editing, formatting, and reviewing features and functions by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — inserting slides and text within slides — adding data from the internet, spreadsheets and databases — customising animation and transition — embedding multimedia ◆ researching information and presenting it effectively, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — creating a hyperlink within a presentation to a URL and electronic documents ◆ using notes features by creating and amending notes ◆ managing the presentation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — creating a loop presentation — advancing slides automatically timed to accommodate speaker notes ◆ printing in a range of formats, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — full page — full page with notes — outline — handout 	<p>Practising creating and amending presentations using information provided and also information from the internet.</p> <p>Note: candidates are not asked to create a presentation in the assignment, but most centres teach from this starting point.</p> <p>Although candidates will be using these applications in a practical context, they should also be able to discuss both the features and the benefits of using them in the workplace.</p>

Communication

Topic	Further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding	Suggested experiences and activities
<p>Using digital technology to communicate information in ways appropriate to its context, audience and purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ using e-mail by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — sending, receiving and printing e-mails — creating and using mailing lists — creating and managing folders — managing messages automatically — creating automated responses — being aware of e-mail etiquette — printing evidence of sent and received e-mails ◆ using an e-diary with appointments and task functions by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — entering and editing appointments — entering recurring appointments — using task manager — using tasks and to-do lists functions — printing selected entries and tasks — printing different views, for example, daily ◆ using emerging technologies, for example, blogs, podcasts, online groups, webinars, and collaborative platforms 	<p>Practising communicating professionally in a range of different scenarios.</p> <p>Note: candidates will be using applications in a practical context, and they should also be able to discuss both the features and the benefits of using them in the workplace.</p>

Preparing for course assessment

The course assessment focuses on breadth, challenge and application. Candidates should apply the skills they have learned during the course.

In preparation, you should give candidates the opportunity to practise activities similar to those expected in the course assessment. For example, you could develop tasks and questions similar to those exemplified in the specimen coursework and specimen question paper.

Developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

You should identify opportunities throughout the course for candidates to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

Candidates should be aware of the skills they are developing and you can provide advice on opportunities to practise and improve them.

SQA does not formally assess skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

There may also be opportunities to develop additional skills depending on approaches being used to deliver the course in each centre. This is for individual teachers and lecturers to manage.

Skill	How it is developed
Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ listening to and following instructions◆ making presentations◆ participating in group discussions◆ asking and answering questions◆ listening to guest speakers◆ carrying out mystery shopping exercises◆ listening to audio-based material
Numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ extracting information from graphs◆ interpreting written information and data in tables, charts and graphs◆ interpreting information and data from the internet and intranet

Skill	How it is developed
Employability, enterprise and citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ researching the duties, skills and qualities of administrators ◆ working with others ◆ managing time and planning tasks ◆ being flexible and showing initiative ◆ using a range of software packages for research and accurate presentation of information ◆ using a range of digital media ◆ using digital technology responsibly and safely ◆ finding and evaluating information from the internet and intranet
Thinking skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ memorising and recalling administration and IT-related facts ◆ understanding and explaining the factors contributing to the effectiveness of administrative practices within organisations ◆ understanding and explaining the features and benefits of good customer care, and the consequences of poor customer care ◆ understanding the functions of spreadsheets, databases and word-processing software or emerging equivalent technologies ◆ applying knowledge of health, safety and security to different contexts ◆ applying administration and IT skills, knowledge and understanding to create, edit and update business documents ◆ understanding and explaining what constitutes a reliable source of information ◆ understanding and explaining the importance of the context, the audience and the purpose when communicating

Administrative information

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History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	Course support notes added as appendix.	June 2018
2.1	Pages 4 and 19 updated to read UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).	June 2021
2.2	Additional text added to 'Assessment conditions: resources' section to clarify that candidates can access spellcheck. Some changes made to the format to improve accessibility.	August 2024

Note: you are advised to check SQA's website to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.

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