NextGen: HN unit specification

Health and Wellbeing in the Perinatal Period (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: JRFA 47

SCQF level: 7 (8 SCQF credit points)

Valid from: August 2026

This unit specification provides detailed information about the unit to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It is for lecturers and assessors, and contains all the mandatory information you need to deliver and assess the unit.

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Contents

Unit purpose

It helps learners develop their knowledge and skills in understanding the factors that influence health and wellbeing during the perinatal period. It explores:

- the barriers that women and individuals, infants and families may face
- the role of legislation and policy in shaping care
- the impact of health promotion strategies

Learners investigate how personal behaviours, social determinants, and systemic structures contribute to health outcomes and inequalities, and how healthcare professionals and organisations can work to improve access, equity, and support across the perinatal continuum.

The unit is suitable for learners studying health and social care, early years, or related disciplines. It is primarily intended for learners who want to take up a career or further study in midwifery, but is also appropriate for those who want to develop their understanding of health promotion, policy, and inclusive practice in perinatal and infant care.

Learners should have good communication skills, both written and oral. Entry to the unit is at your centre's discretion. Before they start the unit, we recommend learners have one or more of the following:

- Higher English or a qualification equivalent to SCQF level 6
- the completion of a pre-course interview, part of which could take the form of a written assignment
- an employer's reference, or be in the process of application and interview
- work experience, paid or voluntary, in a healthcare setting

This unit is mandatory in the HNC Healthcare Practice perinatal care pathway, but you can also deliver it as a stand-alone unit. Learners can use the knowledge from the unit in their everyday life and work, or they may progress to further study, including Higher National Diploma (HND) or degree-level courses.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1. investigate the barriers to health and wellbeing for women and individuals, infants and families
2. investigate government targets, legislation and local policies, in relation to the health and wellbeing of women and individuals, infants and families
3. evaluate health promotion campaigns that target health and wellbeing during the perinatal continuum

Evidence requirements

Learners must provide evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills by showing that they can:

- investigate two barriers to health and their impact on perinatal outcomes
- discuss how individual and societal factors contribute to health inequalities in perinatal care
- investigate one piece of government legislation and one policy that influences perinatal care
- identify the connection between policy development and the delivery of care services
- describe the roles of a statutory and non-statutory organisation in promoting health and wellbeing
- explain the role of healthcare workers in supporting perinatal health
- define health and compare two models of health promotion
- investigate a health promotion campaign and its impact on perinatal health outcomes
- discuss reasons for poor engagement or response to health promotion efforts

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 1 Learners should understand: • the range of barriers to health and wellbeing, including economic, social, cultural and environmental barriers • how lifestyle choices, such as nutrition, physical activity, smoking, alcohol and substance use or misuse influence perinatal health • the disproportionate risks and barriers to perinatal health and wellbeing experienced by women and individuals with disabilities, those from LGBTQIA+ communities and Black, Asian, mixed heritage, and other racially minoritised groups • the impact of these barriers on women and individuals, infants and families during the perinatal period • the relationship between individual behaviours and wider societal structures in contributing to health inequalities	**Outcome 1** Learners can: • explain economic, social, cultural, and environmental barriers to perinatal health and wellbeing • investigate how lifestyle choices and personal behaviours affect health outcomes for women and individuals, infants and families • discuss the risks and barriers experienced by those from minority groups in perinatal health and wellbeing • discuss how individual and structural factors contribute to health inequalities in perinatal care • apply knowledge to real-world scenarios, demonstrating an understanding of how inclusive, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive care can reduce barriers • reflect on how healthcare professionals and systems can promote equity and improve access to care for all women and individuals, infants and families

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 2 Learners should understand: • the role and impact of government legislation and national policy in shaping perinatal care and promoting health and wellbeing • how local and national initiatives aim to improve outcomes for women and individuals, infants and families during the perinatal period • the functions of statutory organisations (such as national health services and local authorities) and non-statutory or third sector organisations (such as charities, advocacy groups, and community-based services) in supporting perinatal health • the contribution of healthcare professionals, including midwives, health visitors, maternity support workers and others, in delivering inclusive, person-centred care • the connection between policy development and the delivery of care services, including how public health data, lived experience, and advocacy inform service planning and improvement	**Outcome 2** Learners can: • investigate and explain the relevance of one key piece of legislation and one policy or strategy that influence perinatal care • identify how policy decisions are translated into practical care delivery at both local and national levels • describe the roles of statutory and non-statutory organisations in promoting equitable access to perinatal health and wellbeing • explain how healthcare workers support women and individuals, infants and families through education, advocacy, and collaborative working • apply their understanding to real-world examples, demonstrating how policy and practice intersect to support diverse women and individuals, infants and families during the perinatal period

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 3 Learners should understand: • the concept of health, including definitions from public health perspectives (for example the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition) and how health is influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors • two models of health promotion • national and local health promotion campaigns that aim to improve perinatal adult and infant health • how health promotion campaigns impact health outcomes • reasons for poor engagement or response to health promotion efforts • the role of personal responsibility in health promotion, including how women and individuals are encouraged to make informed choices about their health and wellbeing during the perinatal period	**Outcome 3** Learners can: • define health using appropriate terminology and frameworks • compare two models of health promotion, identifying their strengths, limitations, and relevance to perinatal care • investigate one national or local health promotion campaign, describing its aims, delivery methods, and impact on health outcomes • evaluate two health promotion campaigns, using evidence to assess their effectiveness and reach • discuss reasons for poor engagement with health promotion efforts, considering social, cultural, and systemic factors • apply knowledge to real-world examples, demonstrating how health promotion strategies influence perinatal health and wellbeing

Meta-skills

You must give learners opportunities to develop their meta-skills throughout this unit. We have suggested how to incorporate the most relevant ones into the unit content, but you may find other opportunities.

Self-management

This includes focusing, integrity, adapting and initiative. The most relevant are:

- focusing:
    - reflecting on understanding of health inequalities, policy, and health promotion
    - researching health campaigns and policies
- integrity:
    - reflecting on own values and assumptions about health, equity, and care, through class discussions and written evaluations
    - honest self-evaluation
    - using sources ethically
- adapting:
    - using group work and scenario-based tasks to adapt to different perspectives and roles in perinatal care
    - responding to feedback and adjusting approach to research and analysis
- initiative:
    - independently researching local and national campaigns, to foster self-direction
    - exploring real-world examples and current issues or innovations in perinatal health

Social intelligence

This includes communicating, feeling, collaborating and leading. The most relevant are:

- communicating:
    - participating in group discussions and presentations, sharing insights on health promotion, policy, and inequalities
    - using inclusive and respectful language when discussing sensitive topics
- feeling:
    - exploring the emotional and social dimensions of perinatal care, including trauma-informed and culturally-sensitive approaches
    - taking part in reflective activities, and considering the lived experiences of women and individuals, infants and families
- collaborating:
    - working together on group tasks and scenario-based activities that simulate interdisciplinary teamwork in perinatal care
    - developing skills in listening and negotiating
    - co-producing ideas and solutions

Innovation

This includes curiosity, creativity, sense-making and critical thinking. The most relevant are:

- curiosity:
    - asking questions about health inequalities, campaign effectiveness, and service delivery
    - exploring diverse case studies and community responses to foster inquisitiveness and deeper understanding

- sense-making:
    - interpreting complex information from health data, policy documents, and campaign evaluations
    - connecting theory to practice by applying understanding to real-world examples
- critical thinking:
    - analysing the effectiveness of health promotion strategies and policies
    - evaluating barriers to engagement
    - proposing evidence-based improvements to support perinatal health and wellbeing

Literacies

This unit provides opportunities to develop the following literacies:

- academic writing and referencing: learners develop skills in structuring written work, citing sources accurately, and using appropriate academic conventions in assessments and portfolios
- using domain-specific language: learners become familiar with key terminology related to perinatal health, policy, and health promotion, and apply this language confidently in discussions and written tasks
- understanding evidence-based literature: learners engage with current research, policy documents, and campaign evaluations to support learning and develop critical-reading skills

Numeracy

Learners develop numeracy skills by:

- analysing statistics and relevant data: learners interpret health data, campaign outcomes, and public health reports to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and understand trends in perinatal health

Communication

Learners develop communication skills by:

- discussing theory and personal reflections: learners share their understanding and perspectives in group discussions, encouraging active listening and respectful dialogue
- collaborating with peers and professionals: learners work in groups to complete tasks, simulate care planning, and evaluate health promotion strategies
- crediting sources and understanding their impact: learners acknowledge information sources and reflect on how evidence shapes their knowledge and decision-making

Digital

Learners develop digital skills by:

- using digital platforms to access information: learners use the virtual learning environment, online databases, government websites, and digital libraries to support research and learning
- creating digital portfolios and assessment work: learners use PCs or digital devices to compile, format, and present their work in a clear and professional manner

Learning for Sustainability

Throughout this unit, you should encourage learners to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of sustainability.

This includes:

- a general understanding of social, economic and environmental sustainability
- a general understanding of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- a deeper understanding of subject-specific sustainability
- the confidence to apply the skills, knowledge, understanding and values they develop in the next stage of their life

The sustainability goals that are most relevant for this unit are:

- SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing: this unit encourages learners to explore how inclusive, person-centred perinatal care contributes to healthier outcomes for women and individuals, infants and families. Learners examine how to reduce maternal mortality and preventable newborn deaths through:
    - early intervention and access to care
    - promoting mental health and wellbeing during the perinatal period
    - supporting the prevention and treatment of alcohol or substance use or misuse in pregnancy
    - ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health services
    - including culturally appropriate education and support
    - advocating for equitable access to high-quality, affordable healthcare for all families, regardless of background or status
- SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities: this unit helps learners understand how social, economic, and cultural barriers affect access to perinatal care. Learners explore how to:
    - promote the inclusion of marginalised groups, including ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+ families, refugees, and people with disabilities

- challenge discriminatory practices and assumptions in healthcare settings
- support equal access to services for non-traditional family structures, such as single parents, same-sex parents, and kinship carers
- understand the impact of systemic inequality on health outcomes
- advocate for fairer, more inclusive policies and services

Delivery of unit

You can deliver this unit as a stand-alone unit for CPD. When you deliver it as part of a qualification, you can integrate teaching, learning and assessment with other units.

The notional design length of the unit is 40 hours. We suggest the following distribution of time, including assessment:

Outcome 1 — Investigate the barriers to health and wellbeing for women and individuals, infants and families (15 hours)

Outcome 2 — Investigate government targets, legislation and local policies, in relation to the health and wellbeing of women and individuals, infants and families (10 hours)

Outcome 3 — Evaluate health promotion campaigns that target health and wellbeing during the perinatal continuum (15 hours)

You should support learners to carry out autonomous learning and independent research and use tutorials and group exercises to consolidate learning.

You should use a variety of teaching methods to stimulate and promote independent learning in addition to taught hours.

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

This unit is mandatory in the HNC Healthcare Practice perinatal care pathway. You should deliver the unit in 40 hours. It helps learners to understand the factors that influence health and wellbeing during the perinatal period, and to access degree-level care-related courses.

Investigate the barriers to health and wellbeing for women and individuals, infants and families (outcome 1)

This outcome requires that learners understand the barriers that prevent positive health and wellbeing outcomes. Learners develop an understanding of the complex and interrelated barriers that can affect health and wellbeing during the perinatal period. These include:

- economic barriers (for example poverty, unemployment)
- social factors (for example isolation, lack of support)
- cultural influences (for example language, beliefs, stigma)
- environmental conditions (for example housing, access to services)

Learners should explore how these barriers can negatively impact perinatal outcomes, such as increased risk of complications, poor mental health, or reduced access to care. In addition, they should examine how lifestyle choices can influence perinatal health, and include:

- nutrition
- physical activity
- smoking
- alcohol and substance use or misuse
- engagement with healthcare

Learners explore the differences between social substance use and substance use disorder.

Learners must consider how individual behaviours, institutional practices, and wider societal structures contribute to persistent health inequalities in perinatal care. Particularly, they should pay attention to the experiences of marginalised and disadvantaged groups who face disproportionate risks. This includes:

- women and individuals with disabilities
- women and individuals from LGBTQIA+ communities
- those affected by socio-economic disadvantage
- Black, Asian, mixed heritage, and other women and individuals from racial minorities

Learners must also consider how these barriers may be experienced differently by women and individuals in non-traditional or non-stereotypical family structures, including single parents, same-sex parents, co-parenting arrangements, and kinship carers. Learners should examine the unique challenges faced by marginalised groups, such as discrimination in healthcare settings, lack of inclusive language or services, and assumptions about gender identity or sexual orientation.

You should encourage learners to explore the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees, who may face compounded barriers, such as:

- insecure immigration status
- trauma
- language barriers
- limited access to healthcare
- fear of authority

These factors can significantly impact their ability to access timely and appropriate perinatal care and may contribute to poorer health outcomes. Encourage learners to apply this knowledge to real-world scenarios and reflect on how healthcare professionals can work to reduce these barriers through inclusive, person-centred care.

Investigate government targets, legislation and local policies, in relation to the health and wellbeing of women and individuals, infants and families (outcome 2)

Learners should explore the policy and legislative frameworks that underpin perinatal care in Scotland. This includes identifying one key piece of government legislation and one policy or strategy that directly influences the planning and delivery of perinatal services. Examples may include legislation that establishes national care structures or policies that promote continuity of care, early intervention, and the reduction of health inequalities in maternity and neonatal services. Learners should explore the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (the Code) as an international health policy framework that regulates the marketing of breastmilk substitutes to protect breastfeeding and chestfeeding. Learners should understand how these frameworks aim to shape the provision of care, including access to services, promotion of health equity, and support for marginalised populations. Building on their learning from outcome 1, learners could examine how policy and legislative frameworks, while designed to support equitable care, may not always fully address the needs of all communities. In some cases, these frameworks may unintentionally exclude or disadvantage certain groups due to systemic bias, lack of representation, or assumptions about family structures and identities. Learners should consider:

- LGBTQIA+ women and individuals, who may face discrimination, assumptions about gender identity or family roles, and a lack of inclusive language or recognition in policy and service design
- asylum seekers and refugees, who may encounter trauma, language and cultural barriers, insecure immigration status, and limited entitlement to healthcare services
- women and individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds, who may experience systemic racism, cultural insensitivity, or underrepresentation in policy development
- those in non-traditional family structures, such as single parents, same-sex parents, or kinship carers, who may face social stigma or find that services are not tailored to their needs

You should encourage learners to reflect on how inclusive, person-centred, and rights-based approaches can help address these gaps, and how healthcare professionals and organisations can advocate for more equitable and representative policy development. Learners should investigate the roles of statutory organisations (for example NHS Scotland, local authorities) and non-statutory or third sector organisations (for example charities, advocacy groups) in supporting perinatal wellbeing. These organisations often provide specialist support for marginalised groups, including culturally appropriate care, translation services, and trauma-informed approaches. Learners should explore the role of healthcare workers, including midwives, maternity support workers, and health visitors, in the context of multi-agency collaboration, early intervention, and advocacy. They should reflect on how these professionals contribute to promoting positive outcomes through inclusive, person-centred care that recognises and responds to the diverse needs of all women and individuals, infants and families.

Evaluate health promotion campaigns that target health and wellbeing during the perinatal continuum (outcome 3)

Learners should begin by developing a clear definition of health, drawing on both medical and holistic perspectives. They should then explore and compare two models of health promotion, such as the medical model, behaviour change model, or social model of health, to understand how different approaches influence campaign design and delivery. Learners should investigate at least one national or local health promotion campaign focused on perinatal health (for example infant feeding, smoking cessation, mental health awareness), and evaluate its impact on health outcomes. They should also evaluate a second campaign to compare effectiveness, reach, and engagement. In doing so, learners should consider the barriers to engagement, such as cultural relevance, accessibility, or lack of awareness, and discuss how these factors can limit the success of health promotion efforts. You should emphasise the importance of tailored messaging, community involvement, and inclusive practice.

Resources

There is a variety of media resources that you can use to support your delivery of the unit. In addition, learners' experiences in their practice placements enhance their learning and application in the unit.

Learners may find the following resources useful:

- Allan, H. and Traynor, M. (2023) *Researching Racism in Nursing*, Taylor & Francis
- Birthrights, (2024) *Birthrights — Your Human Rights during Pregnancy and Maternity Care*, Birthrights. Available at: https://birthrights.org.uk/ [accessed February 2026]
- Bowden, J. and Bassett, S. (2024) *Health Promotion in Midwifery*, Routledge.
- Greenfield, M. et al. (2025) *A Guide to Providing LGBTQ+ Inclusive Reproductive Health Care*, Routledge eBooks. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003305446 [accessed February 2026]
- Health Improvement Scotland, *Right Decisions for Health and Care*. Available at: https://rightdecisions.scot.nhs.uk/ [accessed February 2026]
- NHS Education for Scotland (2019). Available at: https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/ [accessed February 2026]
- NICE (2022). Available at: https://www.nice.org.uk/ [accessed February 2026]
- Pickles, C. and Herring, J. (2019) *Childbirth, Vulnerability and Law*. Routledge
- Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (2019). Available at: https://www.rcog.org.uk/ [accessed February 2026]
- SIGN (2019). Available at: https://www.sign.ac.uk [accessed February 2026]
- Silver, A. (2022) *Supporting Queer Birth*, Jessica Kingsley

Approaches to delivery

We recommend that you deliver the unit through:

- lectures
- group work
- practical classroom activities
- visiting speakers
- visits to appropriate practice settings

If you deliver the unit as a stand-alone unit, you should consider assessing the outcomes holistically. If you deliver it as part of the qualification, you can integrate teaching, learning and assessment with the remaining units.

Assessment should allow learners to demonstrate knowledge and understanding across all four outcomes. Assessment methods may include:

- written reports or essays
- case study analyses
- oral presentations or recorded discussions
- reflective journals or portfolios

Assessment evidence can be gathered over time and presented in a range of formats, including written, oral, or digital. You should explore e-assessment opportunities, such as online quizzes, video submissions, or digital portfolios. All evidence must be authenticated and demonstrate the learner's ability to apply knowledge in a practical, person-centred context.

Approaches to assessment

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.

Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, it helps them to develop different skills that should be transferrable to work or further and higher education.

You can assess this unit through a single integrated project. This allows learners to apply their knowledge holistically across all three outcomes. The project could take the form of a case study, report, or presentation that explores the key themes of perinatal health and wellbeing, including barriers to care, the impact of policy and legislation, and the effectiveness of health promotion campaigns.

This approach enables learners to demonstrate their understanding of the complex factors influencing perinatal adult and infant health, and to evaluate the roles of women and individuals, professionals, and organisations in promoting positive outcomes.

Alternative assessment methods may include:

- a portfolio of evidence, including research tasks, reflective accounts, and campaign evaluations
- group presentations or discussions based on real-world scenarios
- written assignments or essays focused on specific outcomes

Assessment should encourage critical thinking, personal reflection, and the application of theory to practice. Wherever possible, you should support learners to draw on their own experiences or placements to contextualise their learning.

Equality and inclusion

This unit is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

You must consider the needs of individual learners when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and those with additional support needs is available on the assessment arrangements web page.

Information for learners

Health and Wellbeing in the Perinatal Period (SCQF level 7)

This information explains:

- what the unit is about
- what you should know or be able to do before you start
- what you need to do during the unit
- opportunities for further learning and employment

Unit information

This unit focuses on the health and wellbeing of women and individuals, infants and families during the perinatal period — the time before, during, and shortly after pregnancy. You explore the complex factors that influence maternal and infant health, including individual behaviours, social and environmental conditions, and the role of health promotion and public policy.

There are three outcomes in the unit.

In outcome 1, you learn about the barriers that can affect perinatal health, such as poverty, housing, cultural beliefs, and access to services. You also explore how lifestyle choices like nutrition, smoking, alcohol and substance use or misuse impact health outcomes for women and individuals, infants and families. You further explore the differences between social substance use and substance use disorder.

In outcome 2, you examine how government legislation, national policy, and local initiatives shape perinatal care and influence service delivery. You also consider the role of statutory and non-statutory organisations in supporting families.

In outcome 3, you evaluate health promotion campaigns, comparing different models of health promotion and assessing their effectiveness in improving perinatal health outcomes.

Throughout the unit, you develop a strong understanding of the social determinants of health and how they relate to perinatal care. You build skills in research, critical thinking, academic writing, and reflective practice. These skills help you analyse health promotion strategies, evaluate policy, and apply your learning to real-world scenarios.

You are assessed through a project-based approach that allows you to apply your knowledge across all three outcomes. You may complete tasks such as researching health campaigns, analysing policy documents, evaluating service delivery, and reflecting on case studies. These assessments help you demonstrate your understanding in a meaningful and practical way.

You can use the knowledge from the unit in your everyday life and work, or you may progress to further study, including Higher National Diploma (HND) or degree-level courses.

Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, you develop meta-skills that are useful for the healthcare practice sector.

Meta-skills are transferable behaviours and abilities that help you adapt and succeed in life, study and work. There are three categories of meta-skills: self-management, social intelligence and innovation.

Self-management

You develop self-management by learning how to:

- plan and carry out independent research
- manage your time effectively
- reflect on your own values and assumptions about health and wellbeing

Through formative assessments and project work, you build the ability to:

- stay focused
- adapt to feedback
- take initiative in applying your learning to real-world contexts

These skills are essential for working in dynamic care environments where personal responsibility and resilience are key.

Social intelligence

The unit encourages you to develop social intelligence by:

- working collaboratively with others
- participating in group discussions
- exploring the emotional and cultural dimensions of perinatal care
- learning how to communicate sensitively and effectively
- considering different perspectives
- understanding the lived experiences of women and individuals, infants and families

These skills are vital for building trust and delivering inclusive, person-centred care in professional settings.

Innovation

You strengthen your innovation skills by:

- engaging in critical thinking
- problem-solving
- creatively exploring health promotion strategies and policy responses
- asking questions
- making connections between theory and practice
- evaluating the effectiveness of real-world interventions

These abilities help you respond to challenges in the healthcare sector with curiosity, insight, and informed decision-making.

Learning for Sustainability

Throughout this unit, you develop skills, knowledge and understanding of sustainability.

You learn about social, economic and environmental sustainability principles and how they relate to the healthcare practice sector. You also develop an understanding of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The sustainability goals that are most relevant for this unit are:

- SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing: this unit encourages you to explore how inclusive, person-centred perinatal care contributes to healthier outcomes for women and individuals, infants and families. Learners examine how to reduce maternal mortality and preventable newborn deaths through:
    - early intervention and access to care
    - promoting mental health and wellbeing during the perinatal period
    - supporting the prevention and treatment of alcohol or substance use or misuse in pregnancy
    - ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health services
    - including culturally appropriate education and support
    - advocating for equitable access to high-quality, affordable healthcare for all families, regardless of background or status
- SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities: this unit helps you understand how social, economic, and cultural barriers affect access to perinatal care. Learners explore how to:
    - promote the inclusion of marginalised groups, including ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+ families, refugees, and people with disabilities
    - challenge discriminatory practices and assumptions in healthcare settings

- support equal access to services for non-traditional family structures, such as single parents, same-sex parents, and kinship carers
- understand the impact of systemic inequality on health outcomes
- advocate for fairer, more inclusive policies and services

Administrative information

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Superclass: PA

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Please check our website to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this unit.