

Next Generation Higher National Unit Specification

Professional Considerations in Accounting (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: J6E1 47
SCQF level: 7 (24 SCQF credit points)
Valid from: session 2022–23

Prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 2.0) July 2023

This unit specification provides detailed information about the unit to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year.

This unit specification is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information required to deliver and assess the unit.

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This edition: July 2023 (version 2.0)

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Unit purpose

This unit develops the basics of corporate social responsibility, including ethics and risk. It allows learners to develop the skills of researching and critically reviewing a business. They investigate their own feelings on these areas and determine how to bring them into a business environment.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

- 1 develop meta-skills in a vocational or academic context
- 2 discuss and apply ethical principles and practices in accounting
- 3 explain the importance of, and apply, risk management practices in business
- 4 explain and apply sound corporate governance and corporate social principles in business
- 5 explain the importance of sustainability in business

Evidence requirements

We recommend you assess the unit through a project.

Outcome 1

Learners develop meta-skills in the course of doing all the units as part of this HNC. In this unit, you also assess their meta-skills development as an outcome, following the evidence requirements set out below.

Evidence

Learners must produce evidence that shows they have:

- ◆ self-assessed their meta-skills baseline
- ◆ created a plan for their own meta-skills development
- ◆ carried out activities to develop and demonstrate their meta-skills
- ◆ used reflective practice to monitor and assess the meta-skills they have improved and developed

[Skills 4.0, a skills model to drive Scotland's future](#), outlines three categories of meta-skills:

- ◆ self-management
- ◆ social intelligence
- ◆ innovation

Each of these comprises four meta-skills and a number of sub-skills.

There are many interrelationships and dependencies between these skills and, at SCQF level 7 and 8, learners should focus on holistic development relevant to their vocational or academic context.

See the Educator Guide for more information.

You must assess outcomes 2, 3, 4 and 5 as an individual or group project where learners must provide advice to clients using real-life examples.

Outcome 2

Learners must show they can advise a client on the importance of good ethical practices in the role of an accountant. They must show they can:

- ◆ discuss the importance of, and apply, the fundamental ethical principles for a professional accountant
- ◆ discuss ethical concepts in business
- ◆ explain ethical contradictions in business
- ◆ discuss the threats to independence for the professional accountant
- ◆ discuss the safeguards against the threats to independence
- ◆ provide advice on ethical practices to clients

To achieve this outcome, learners need a minimum mark of 70%.

Outcome 3

Learners must show they can provide risk management advice to a client. They must show they can:

- ◆ explain the importance and the principles of a good risk management system
- ◆ apply a risk management model to a given scenario
- ◆ provide risk management advice to a business client

To achieve this outcome, learners need a minimum mark of 70%.

Outcome 4

Learners must show they can provide corporate governance and corporate social responsibility advice to a client. They must show they can:

- ◆ explain the principles of good corporate governance in the UK
- ◆ explain the relationships between corporate governance, risk, and ethics
- ◆ explain the importance of good corporate social responsibility
- ◆ explain different theories of good corporate social responsibility
- ◆ apply good governance and corporate social responsibility practices to business scenarios

To achieve this outcome, learners need a minimum mark of 70%.

Outcome 5

Learners must show they can advise a client on good sustainability practices. They must show they can:

- ◆ explain what is meant by sustainability in the business environment
- ◆ explain how to measure sustainability
- ◆ discuss and apply sustainability models

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- ◆ advise a client on good sustainability practices

Learners must relate their submission to specific and relevant [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#).

To achieve this outcome, learners need a minimum mark of 70%.

Knowledge and skills

The following table shows the knowledge and skills covered by the unit outcomes:

Knowledge	Skills
<p>Outcome 1 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ meta-skills, specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — the categories of self-management, social intelligence and innovation, and associated meta-skills, as described in Skills 4.0 — the importance of developing meta-skills, including employability, adaptability and effectiveness — what meta-skills are most relevant to their vocational context ◆ approaches to developing meta-skills, in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — self-awareness: analysing preferences, strengths and weaknesses; meta-skills self-assessment — goal setting and action planning — reflective practice: principles of reflective practice; tools and approaches for effective reflective practice 	<p>Outcome 1 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ plan a strategy for meta-skills development ◆ implement and review plans for their meta-skills development ◆ assess their meta-skills development
<p>Outcome 2 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the fundamental ethical principles for professional accountants ◆ basic ethical concepts in business ◆ the threats to independence for the professional accountant ◆ how to safeguard against threats 	<p>Outcome 2 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ discuss the importance of, and the application of, the fundamental ethical principles for professional accountants ◆ discuss ethical concepts in business ◆ explain ethical contradictions in business ◆ discuss the threats to independence for the professional accountant ◆ discuss the safeguards against the threats to independence

Knowledge	Skills
<p>Outcome 3 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the principles of risk management ◆ how to apply a risk management model in a business environment 	<p>Outcome 3 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ explain the principles of good risk management ◆ explain the benefits of good risk management ◆ apply a risk management model
<p>Outcome 4 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the principles of good corporate governance ◆ the relationships between corporate governance, risk, and ethics ◆ the importance of good corporate social responsibility ◆ theories of corporate social responsibility 	<p>Outcome 4 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ explain the principles of good corporate governance ◆ explain the relationships between corporate governance, risk, and ethics ◆ explain the principles of good corporate social responsibility ◆ apply a relevant corporate social responsibility model
<p>Outcome 5 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ what sustainability is ◆ how to measure sustainability ◆ how to apply models of sustainability ◆ good sustainability practices 	<p>Outcome 5 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ define sustainability in business ◆ explain how to measure sustainability ◆ define the pillars of sustainability ◆ advise on good sustainability practices

Meta-skills

Throughout the unit, learners develop meta-skills to enhance their employability in the accounting sector.

Self-management

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ focusing: researching and presenting information on a given brief; filtering and sorting the information needed for the project
- ◆ integrity: exploring the moral, ethical, environmental and risks elements of the unit

Social intelligence

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ communicating: receiving and conveying information; using relevant methods of communication to convey the information to their intended audience
- ◆ feeling: enhancing their social conscience and that of others by investigating the social and ethical elements of the unit

Innovation

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ curiosity: investigating the interlocking elements of the unit and their impact on the business, environment, economy and society as a whole; questioning actions and their impact

Literacies

Learners develop core skills in the following literacies.

Communication

Learners develop communication skills by receiving a wide range of information and advising clients using different means of communication.

Digital

Learners develop digital skills and computer literacy by:

- ◆ using information and communications technology (ICT) to present information
- ◆ using digital skills to research and filter information by electronic means

Delivery of unit

This unit is a mandatory unit in the Higher National Certificate (HNC) Accounting. It can be delivered on a stand-alone basis or partially integrated with parts of the Financial Accounting Principles at SCQF level 7 or Management Accounting Principles at SCQF level 7 units.

The notional time for delivery and assessment is 120 hours. The amount of time you allocate to each outcome is at your discretion.

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Approaches to delivery

We recommend you deliver the unit so learners can work on a project over a period of time. You can use real-life reports, news articles or legal cases. To allow learners to consolidate their learning and apply it as they progress through the unit, you can use group formative tasks at different stages.

In outcome 2, the fundamental ethical principles for accountants should include:

- ◆ integrity
- ◆ objectivity
- ◆ professional competence and due care
- ◆ confidentiality and professional behaviour

Threats to the independence of a professional accountant should cover self-interest, self-review, familiarity, advocacy and intimidation.

In outcome 3, the application of a risk management model could include the control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring activities.

Approaches to assessment

Outcome 1 does not contribute to the marks for the overall unit score or qualification grading. This is because outcome 1 focuses on developing meta-skills. You assess the process of self-review, planning, development and reflection rather than the standard of meta-skills learners demonstrate.

To assess the unit, you can use a range of sources such as case study scenarios or individual tasks with learners producing business reports, presentations, or other communication methods.

With the exception of outcome 1, you can assess the outcomes as one project task with evidence gathered over a period of time. You can assess the outcomes separately or combine all outcomes together.

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 should take into account the needs of individual learners when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

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

www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Information for learners

Professional Considerations in Accounting (SCQF level 7)

This section 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 explores the many professional considerations that impact the role of accountants, business and society as a whole.

You develop your own meta-skills as you complete a project exploring many considerations of the professional accountant.

You study the ethical considerations of a professional accountant, the impact of these considerations and how to safeguard against the ethical risks faced by accountants in business.

You explore corporate governance implications affecting businesses and accountants, and how good corporate governance and social responsibility is not only vital but mandatory to business success.

You investigate the importance of good risk management practices to organisations and how to implement sound risk management practices.

Finally, you explore the impact of businesses on society, the environment and the economy through the research of sustainability. You explore the role of business in protecting not only their own future but the future of others and you'll have the opportunity to provide advice on your findings.

You do not need prior knowledge to do the unit, but you should be willing to explore the unfamiliar and consider the wider consequences of decisions and actions in the business world.

Once you complete the unit as part of the Higher National Certificate (HNC) Accounting, you may have the opportunity to progress to further learning in accounting professional or degree qualifications.

Administrative information

Published: July 2023 (version 2.0)

Superclass: AF

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	<p>Outcome 1: meta-skills wording changed to new standard wording in Unit outcomes, Evidence requirements and Knowledge and skills table.</p> <p>Evidence requirements outcome 2 wording changed from 'critically analyse ethical contradictions in business' to 'explain ethical contradictions in business'. Knowledge and skills table also updated.</p> <p>Evidence requirements outcome 5 wording added: 'Learners must relate their submission to specific and relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.'</p>	July 2023

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