

NextGen: HN unit specification

Administration Applications in Practice (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: J99X 47

SCQF level: 7 (24 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 | 1 |
| Unit outcomes | 2 |
| Knowledge and skills | 6 |
| Meta-skills | 10 |
| Literacies | 12 |
| Learning for Sustainability | 14 |
| Delivery of unit | 15 |
| Additional guidance | 16 |
| Equality and inclusion | 18 |
| Information for learners | 19 |
| Administrative information..... | 24 |

Unit purpose

This unit develops knowledge and practical skills in using software applications in the business environment. Learners also improve their problem-solving skills by identifying issues, analysing situations and implementing solutions.

It is suitable for learners studying administration and business. It is primarily intended for learners who want to pursue a career or further study in administration, but is also appropriate for those who want to improve their practical IT skills.

The unit provides a comprehensive foundation in administrative principles and practices, ensuring that learners are well-prepared for the demands of the workplace.

By incorporating meta-skills — such as critical thinking, creativity and adaptability — the unit ensures learners can thrive in dynamic and ever-evolving professional environments.

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:

- a basic knowledge of word-processing, spreadsheet and database software applications
- an understanding of the administrative function
- previous experience in an administrative role

This is a mandatory unit in Higher National Certificate (HNC) Administration and Digital Business Technologies. Learners can also complete it on a stand-alone basis.

Learners who complete the unit as part of the HNC can progress to HND Administration Management and Digital Business Technologies (SCQF level 8) or to degree-level study. They can also find employment in senior administration or supervisory roles in a business environment.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1. use word-processing software to produce professional business documents
2. apply spreadsheet functions and tools to analyse and manage business data
3. manage databases to support business operations and decision making
4. create a presentation using presentation software
5. integrate multiple applications to improve business processes and productivity

Evidence requirements

Assess all outcomes under open-book conditions.

Learners must use relevant software to meet the evidence requirements.

Outcome 1

Using word-processing software, learners must produce evidence to show they can:

- apply consistent and professional formatting styles, including headings, subheadings, bullet points and numbering
- use critical thinking to choose formatting that enhances readability and solves common design issues
- structure content logically, with clear sections and paragraphs
- use tables and images appropriately
- use problem-solving skills to organise information in a way that meets the audience's needs and resolves potential comprehension challenges
- ensure documents are free from errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation
- identify and correct inconsistencies, solving issues related to clarity and professionalism
- use advanced features such as mail merge, track changes and comments for collaborative editing and document management
- address collaboration and version control issues

- create and use templates and styles to maintain consistency across multiple documents
- develop templates that solve common formatting and design challenges, ensuring uniformity and efficiency

Outcome 2

Using spreadsheet software, learners must produce evidence to show they can:

- accurately enter and manage data using appropriate data types and formats
- use critical thinking to ensure data integrity and solve issues related to data accuracy and consistency
- use a range of formulas and functions (such as SUM, AVERAGE, IF statements) to perform calculations and data analysis
- use problem-solving skills to select and apply the most appropriate formulas for given scenarios
- create charts and graphs to visually represent data trends and insights
- choose the most effective visualisation methods to solve communication challenges and highlight key data points
- use tools — such as conditional formatting, sorting and filtering, and slicer — to analyse and interpret data to uncover patterns and insights, and address data analysis challenges
- use macros and dynamic array functionality to automate repetitive tasks and design solutions that solve efficiency problems and reduce manual effort

Outcome 3

Using database software, learners must produce evidence to show they can:

- analyse existing databases to understand their structure, content and applications to identify areas for improvement and solve issues related to database design and functionality
- enter, update and retrieve data accurately, using forms and queries to ensure data is accurate and managed effectively

- construct and execute queries to extract meaningful information from the database
- design queries that solve specific data retrieval challenges and provide valuable insights
- generate reports that summarise and present data in a clear and actionable format
- create reports that meet the needs of stakeholders and highlight key findings
- ensure data integrity and security through validation rules, access controls and regular backups
- develop strategies that solve potential data integrity issues and protect sensitive information

Outcome 4

Using presentation software to create a presentation, learners must produce evidence to show they can:

- design visually appealing content with a consistent theme, layout and colour scheme
- use critical thinking to ensure the design enhances readability and solves visual communication challenges
- organise content logically, with clear headings, bullet points and succinct text
- use problem-solving skills to structure information in a way that meets the audience's needs and resolves potential comprehension issues
- incorporate multimedia elements — such as images, videos and audio — to enhance the presentation
- select and integrate multimedia that supports the content and solves engagement challenges
- use transitions and animations to keep audiences engaged without overloading the presentation
- use techniques to balance visual interest with clarity, ensuring animations enhance rather than distract
- create an interactive, self-running presentation that solves specific business challenges and engages the audience effectively

Outcome 5

Using different applications together, learners must produce evidence to show they can:

- carry out cross-application integration:
 - link data and content across different software applications (for example embedding a spreadsheet in a word-processing document, using database queries in a presentation)
 - use critical thinking to ensure seamless integration and solve compatibility issues
- develop automated workflows that integrate multiple applications to perform complex tasks efficiently
- use problem-solving skills to design workflows that meet specific business needs and improve productivity
- ensure data consistency and accuracy when transferring data between applications
- identify potential discrepancies and solve issues related to data integrity
- troubleshoot, identify and develop effective solutions for integration challenges

Knowledge and skills

| Knowledge | Skills |
|--|---|
| <p>Outcome 1</p> <p>Learners should understand essential word-processing functions and how to apply them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • solve problems • express content creatively • show attention to detail • think critically • work with others effectively • manage information | <p>Outcome 1</p> <p>Using word-processing software, learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use page layout, page margins, orientation and size • insert headers, footers and page numbers • create and format sections and breaks • insert and format tables • create and embed charts from spreadsheet software • apply styles and themes for consistent formatting • use themes to ensure a cohesive look throughout the document • insert and manage citations and bibliographies • create a table of contents, footnotes and endnotes • use track changes and comments for collaboration • compare and merge documents • create and use templates for consistent document structure • design and use forms for data entry • address any issues that arise during document creation • meet professional standards of accuracy and presentation |

| Knowledge | Skills |
|--|---|
| <p>Outcome 2</p> <p>Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • essential spreadsheet functions and how to apply them to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ solve problems ○ express content creatively ○ show attention to detail ○ think critically ○ adapt to different contexts ○ make decisions ○ work with others effectively • what data literacy is and how to interpret data | <p>Outcome 2</p> <p>Using spreadsheet software, learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enter and organise data in cells • use shortcut keys: FLASHFILL (or equivalent) • apply cell formatting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ bold ○ italics ○ borders ○ colour • apply basic formulas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SUM ○ AVERAGE ○ COUNT ○ MIN ○ MAX ○ LEFT ○ RIGHT ○ CONCATENATE • apply date functions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ TODAY ○ NETWORKDAYS • apply conditional functions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ IF ○ NESTEDIF ○ COUNTIF ○ SUMIF • use data analysis tools to summarise and analyse large pre-populated data sets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ counting ○ frequency distribution ○ slicer |

| Knowledge | Skills |
|--|---|
| | <p>Outcome 2 (continued)</p> <p>Using spreadsheet software, learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use sparklines to show data trends • create visual representations of data (for example bar charts, pie charts and line graphs) • apply conditional formatting to highlight cells based on specific criteria • ensure data accuracy • address issues such as missing or inconsistent data • use trends function to recognise patterns and identify trends in the data • create and run macros to facilitate business productivity • use dynamic array functions like FILTER, SORT and UNIQUE to automate data manipulation and analysis |
| <p>Outcome 3</p> <p>Learners should understand database application functions and how to apply them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manage customers • solve problems • express content creatively • show attention to detail • think critically • adapt to different contexts | <p>Outcome 3</p> <p>Using database software, learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interpret data sets and identify trends or patterns • examine existing tables, forms and reports • recognise trends, correlations and anomalies within the data • determine the underlying causes of data issues or performance problems • import data for analysis |

| Knowledge | Skills |
|--|--|
| <p>Outcome 4</p> <p>Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presentation design principles • how to plan and structure a presentation so it can be delivered in the allocated time • how to show data using visual elements, such as charts and graphs • how to deliver a presentation | <p>Outcome 4</p> <p>Using presentation software, learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use different layouts and themes • use transitions and animations • add multimedia elements • create dynamic links between software applications • develop custom templates relevant to any given project • solve common issues • create self-running presentations • add navigation and action buttons • design a presentation that meets the needs of the audience |
| <p>Outcome 5</p> <p>Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to integrate multiple applications to improve business processes and productivity, and how to apply them to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ solve problems ○ show attention to detail ○ think critically ○ make decisions ○ communicate effectively ○ integrate and analysis data • how to design and implement data models that support business processes | <p>Outcome 5</p> <p>Integrating multiple applications, learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • map out existing business processes to identify areas for improvement • integrate and/or link data for reporting purposes • ensure that updates are dynamic and accurately reflected in business documents, including any related spreadsheets or databases • draw conclusions and make informed decisions based on data analysis • present findings in a clear and understandable way |

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:
 - filtering out non-essential information, sorting information into categories and understanding the relationship between information
- integrity:
 - being self-aware and exercising self-control in reporting insights
- adapting:
 - accepting new ideas and reflecting critically on them, self-educating and responding constructively to change
- initiative:
 - taking responsibility for actions and managing risks in processing data, underpinned by self-belief and trust in their own judgment

Social intelligence

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

- communicating:
 - listening to and understanding instructional content, including the directions given in relation to practical work
 - communicating data insights through reporting and visualisations
 - knowing the audience
- collaborating:
 - using technology to co-ordinate and convey information
- leading:
 - being able to self-motivate to achieve results

Innovation

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

- curiosity:
 - exploring software functionality and asking questions to increase understanding about the subject to advance skills, knowledge and performance
- creativity:
 - generating ideas, constructing solutions and presenting findings using digital technologies
- sense-making:
 - analysing and interpreting data to solve problems or influence change

- critical thinking:
 - in word-processing software, choosing formatting that enhances readability and solves common design issues
 - in word-processing and presentation software, using problem-solving skills to organise information in a way that meets the audience's needs and resolves potential comprehension challenges
 - ensuring data integrity and solving issues related to data accuracy and consistency
 - selecting and applying the most appropriate formulas for given scenarios
 - in presentation software, ensuring the design enhances readability and solves visual communication challenges
 - using problem-solving skills to design workflows that meet specific business needs and improve productivity
 - applying logical thinking and judgement while completing tasks

Literacies

This unit provides opportunities to develop the following literacies.

Numeracy

Learners develop both basic and advanced skills in numeracy and data analysis methods.

Communication

Learners develop communication skills throughout the unit by following instructions and conveying data-driven insights clearly and engagingly using various digital technological software.

Digital

Learners develop a broad set of essential digital skills and computer literacy by using information and communications technology (ICT), making learners more capable and confident in transitioning into the workplace.

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

Developing skills and knowledge in office-based digital software helps build the technical and analytical skills needed to support sustainable development. It empowers individuals with the tools and ability to use data effectively, make informed decisions and drive positive change toward a more sustainable future.

Delivery of unit

This is a mandatory unit in HNC Administration and Digital Business Technologies. You can also deliver it as a stand-alone unit.

The notional time for delivery and assessment is 120 hours. The amount of time you allocate to each outcome is at your discretion. We suggest the following distribution of time, including assessment:

Outcome 1 — use word-processing software to produce professional business documents (30 hours)

Outcome 2 — apply spreadsheet functions and tools to analyse and manage business data (35 hours)

Outcome 3 — manage databases to support business operations and decision making (20 hours)

Outcome 4 — create a presentation using presentation software (15 hours)

Outcome 5 — integrate multiple applications to improve business processes and productivity (20 hours)

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

We recommend you begin by dedicating time to developing learners' skills, and culminate in a substantial project-based assessment.

You can assess learners incrementally or through a comprehensive final task. The underlying principle is to ensure a real-world, task-based assessment that equips learners with transferable skills.

You can integrate assessments with other mandatory units in HNC Administration and Digital Business Technologies. This can make the assessment process more coherent and effective, and allows for a more holistic approach to evaluating performance.

Approaches to delivery

You can:

- provide access to tutorials, guides and other resources to support learning
- make learning more interactive by encouraging learners to ask questions and participate in discussions
- promote collaboration by having learners work in groups for certain tasks
- provide constructive feedback on learners' progress and suggest improvements
- use real-world examples to illustrate concepts and make the learning experience more relatable

Approaches to assessment

You could use existing systems (such as dBase) to create a new system to manage learners' information, grades and attendance (for example, a spreadsheet).

You could use the following approaches.

Database analysis

- Use an existing database that stores learners' information, grades and attendance records. Analyse how this works and what the problems are with the system.
- Use and/or analyse tables and/or different data sets (for example learners, courses, grades). Examine existing forms and reports.

Data analysis

- Use a spreadsheet software application to analyse learners' grades and attendance (imported from dBase).
- Create visual representations of the data, such as bar charts, pie charts and line graphs.
- Apply formulas to calculate averages, totals and other statistics.

Document production

- Write a project report that includes the project objective, methodology and results.
- Create a user manual explaining how to use a system.
- Design templates for data entry forms and reports.

Presentation

- Use a presentation software application to present the outcomes, incorporating dynamic links.

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

Administration Applications in Practice (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 helps you develop your knowledge and practical skills in using software applications in the business environment. You also improve your problem-solving skills by identifying issues, analysing situations and implementing solutions.

Who is it for?

Are you studying administration and business and want to take up a career or further study in administration, or improve your practical IT skills? Then this unit is for you.

Before you start, we recommend you have one or more of the following:

- a basic knowledge of word-processing, spreadsheet and database software applications
- an understanding of the administrative function
- previous experience in an administrative role

What do you learn?

- **Software applications:** get hands-on experience with different software tools.
- **Problem-solving skills:** develop techniques to identify, analyse and solve problems effectively.

Why is this important?

- **Career preparation:** ensure you are well-prepared for the demands of the workplace.
- **Meta-skills:** be empowered to thrive in dynamic and ever-evolving professional environments by developing your critical thinking, creativity and adaptability.
- **Professional development:** whether you want to specialise in administration or improve your IT skills, gain valuable knowledge and skills to support your professional growth.

If you complete the unit as part of HNC Administration and Digital Business Technologies, you can progress to HND Administration Management and Digital Business Technologies (SQCF level 8) or to degree-level study. You can also find employment in senior administration or supervisory roles in a business environment.

Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, you develop meta-skills that are useful for the administration and business 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

Focusing

Develop the ability to filter out non-essential information, sort information into relevant categories and understand the relationships between different pieces of information. This helps you concentrate on what truly matters and make sense of complex data.

Integrity

Cultivate self-awareness and exercise self-control when reporting your insights. This means being honest and ethical in your analysis and presentation of information, ensuring that your work is trustworthy and reliable.

Adapting

Embrace new ideas and reflect critically on them. This involves being open to learning and self-educating, as well as responding constructively to changes and challenges. By doing so, you stay current and relevant in a rapidly evolving environment.

Initiative

Take responsibility for your actions and manage risks effectively when processing data. This requires self-belief and trust in your own judgement, enabling you to make informed decisions and take proactive steps in your work.

Social intelligence

Communicating

Develop your ability to listen to and understand instructions, including directions for practical work. Learn how to effectively communicate your data insights through reports and visualisations, and tailor your communication to suit your audience.

Collaborating

Use technology to co-ordinate and share information with others. This includes working effectively in teams, using digital tools to manage projects, and ensuring clear and efficient communication among team members.

Leading

Cultivate self-motivation to achieve your goals. This involves setting personal targets, staying focused and driving yourself to accomplish tasks and projects successfully.

Innovation

Curiosity

Encourage your curiosity by exploring the functionality of different software applications. Do not hesitate to ask questions to deepen your understanding of the subject. This helps you advance your skills, knowledge and overall performance.

Creativity

Use your creativity to generate new ideas, construct innovative solutions and present your findings using digital technologies. This enables you to approach problems from unique angles and develop effective solutions.

Sense-making

Develop your ability to analyse and interpret data to solve problems or influence change. This helps you make sense of complex information and use it to make informed decisions.

Critical thinking

Apply logical thinking and sound judgement while completing tasks. This involves evaluating information critically, considering different perspectives and making reasoned decisions based on evidence.

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 administration and business sector. You also develop an understanding of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#).

Administrative information

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Superclass: CC

History of changes

| Version | Description of change | Date |
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