NextGen: HN unit specification

Esports: Foundations (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: J9K0 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

This unit introduces learners to the fundamentals of the esports industry, including its history, structure and the key stakeholders involved. Learners explore career pathways, economic models, digital communication, technology and ethical considerations in esports. The unit also introduces concepts of esports entrepreneurship, encouraging learners to identify and evaluate opportunities for innovation, content creation, and business development in the industry. It also emphasises the importance of security and safety in esports, covering issues such as player welfare, data protection, online behaviour, and safe competitive environments.

Learners also develop their practical gaming skills, understanding game mechanics, teamwork, and strategic decision-making in competitive play. There is also a focus on professional behaviours, personal attributes, and player well-being.

The unit is suitable for learners who are studying esports or related areas. It provides a strong foundation in the esports industry, supporting further study and career progression in related areas, such as event management, business and technology. The unit is also relevant for people who want to develop their digital communication, teamwork and strategic thinking skills.

There are no formal entry requirements for the unit. We recommend that learners have basic digital literacy skills and an interest in esports, gaming, and/or digital industries, before starting the unit.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1. describe the structure of, and key stakeholders in, the esports industry
2. explain the roles, responsibilities and career pathways in esports
3. analyse the economic impact and revenue streams of the esports industry
4. apply fundamental digital and communication skills relevant to esports operations
5. explain the role of technology in esports development and competition
6. demonstrate key personal attributes, professional behaviours and ethical considerations relevant to esports
7. apply fundamental game-playing skills in a competitive environment

Evidence requirements

Learners must provide knowledge and performance evidence.

The standard of evidence should be consistent with the SCQF level of the unit.

Knowledge evidence

Knowledge evidence relates to outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 5. Minimal evidence can be used to infer competence. Knowledge evidence can be produced over the course of the unit, in lightly-controlled, open-book conditions.

Alternatively, you can sample knowledge evidence if you use testing. The sampling frame must include questions from each outcome. You must carry out testing in controlled conditions in terms of location, timing and supervision. Learners must not have access to reference materials, and are not permitted to use artificial intelligence (AI).

Performance evidence

Performance evidence relates to outcomes 4, 6 and 7. Learners participate in a competitive team-based gaming activity, demonstrating:

- hardware and software configuration for gameplay
- effective communication between team members
- personal attributes, professional behaviours and ethical considerations
- game-playing skills
- applying esports security and safety protocols

Performance evidence must be produced in lightly-controlled conditions, in terms of location and supervision.

Authentication is required when the evidence is produced in lightly-controlled conditions.

The ‘Approaches to assessment’ section provides advice on assessment methods suitable for generating this evidence.

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge	Skills
Learners should understand: • the history, structure and key stakeholders involved in the esports industry • career opportunities and required skills in esports, including entrepreneurial opportunities and the importance of safety and security protocols in various roles • game genres, mechanics, scoring systems, and strategies used in competitive play • esports industry stakeholders and governance • the economic impact of esports, including revenue models and business strategies • digital communication, social media, and streaming in esports • online safety, secure communication, and ethical engagement • the impact of gaming hardware, software, and performance optimisation on esports • professional behaviours, personal attributes, and ethical considerations in esports, including responsible entrepreneurship and the promotion of a secure, inclusive, and safe competitive environment • the fundamentals of teamwork, communication, and strategic decision-making in esports	Learners can: • use digital tools to create and manage esports-related content • demonstrate motor/mechanical game-playing skills • apply game mechanics and strategies in a competitive environment • optimise gaming hardware and software for performance • demonstrate professional behaviours, teamwork, and decision-making in esports • adhere to esports security and safety, encompassing both cybersecurity measures to protect against online threats and physical safety measures for players and attendees at events.

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:
    - maintaining attention and managing distractions in high-pressure or complex scenarios
    - identifying task priorities and structuring workflow accordingly
    - selecting appropriate environments and tools that enable concentration
    - extracting essential information from diverse sources to support strategic or research-based goals, and to prepare for performance analysis or presentations
- adapting:
    - responding flexibly to new technologies, game metas, or unexpected team roles
    - adjusting strategies in response to live feedback during gameplay
    - evaluating performance and changing approach accordingly in team environments
    - developing adaptability through reflection on ethical challenges, such as handling online behaviour, and when researching sustainable industry practices
    - adapting to rapid changes in industry trends, technologies, and audience behaviours by staying informed and responding with flexibility and initiative

Social intelligence

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

- communicating:
    - building advanced communication skills across digital, written, and spoken formats
    - using effective, professional language when delivering presentations or match analysis
    - providing and receiving constructive feedback in gameplay debriefs and peer-led projects
    - tailoring communication to suit different contexts and audiences, from tactical in-game calls to ethical debates, for example monetisation and inclusivity
- collaborating:
    - working in teams to complete shared projects, manage tasks, and problem-solve
    - evaluating different working styles and resolving conflict or miscommunication
    - supporting inclusive practices, actively recognising the value of diverse voices in group settings
    - building trust, managing group dynamics, and taking increasing responsibility for shared outcomes

Innovation

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

- critical thinking:
    - developing the ability to think deeply and systematically about complex issues and gameplay decisions
    - understanding the broader social and economic structures in esports

    - interpreting performance data to inform in-game strategy or team decisions
    - evaluating the impact of monetisation models, digital ethics, or sustainability challenges in the esports industry
    - recognising and evaluating different perspectives, predicting outcomes, and justifying decisions with evidence
    - making informed, ethical choices as future players, organisers, or content creators

Literacies

This unit provides opportunities to develop the following literacies.

Numeracy

Learners develop numeracy skills by:

- interpreting statistics related to gameplay performance (for example kill-death ratios, win rates, reaction times) and esports viewership, using these insights to inform strategic decisions during competitive play
- analysing financial elements of esports, such as prize pool distribution, tournament budgets, and evaluating return on investment for competitive events or team sponsorships

Communication

Learners develop written and verbal communication skills by:

- match analysis, team debriefs, strategic planning sessions, and formal presentations
- using clear and professional language to discuss competitive gameplay, analyse team roles, and explain game mechanics or industry practices, both during matches and in reflective tasks

Digital

Learners develop digital skills by:

- exploring digital platforms used for streaming, team co-ordination, and content sharing, gaining insight into how digital tools support the competitive ecosystem
- gaining hands-on experience with performance-enhancing technologies, including game optimisation tools, analytics software, and hardware setups, all of which contribute to skill development and strategic gameplay in a competitive esports setting

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

Social sustainability

Learners explore inclusion, diversity and well-being in esports teams and wider communities. In competitive settings, they reflect on the impact of digital behaviour, such as communication during gameplay, handling conflict, and supporting teammates. They discuss how respectful, inclusive team environments contribute to long-term player well-being and community health.

Economic sustainability

Learners analyse the sustainability of esports business models, including tournament funding, team sponsorship, and revenue for streaming or content creation. They explore how monetisation strategies, such as microtransactions or gambling models, impact players, especially in competitive environments, and consider ethical approaches that balance profit with fairness and accessibility.

Environmental sustainability

Learners examine the environmental impact of digital infrastructure used in esports, including high-performance gaming hardware, server use and large-scale local area

network (LAN) events. They explore sustainable alternatives, such as energy-efficient equipment and logistics operations. They also reflect on how competitive players and organisations must adopt environmentally responsible practices, for example the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).

Delivery of unit

This is a mandatory unit in HNC Esports. You can deliver it as a stand-alone unit, or partially integrate it with elements of the qualification.

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 — Describe the structure of, and key stakeholders in, the esports industry (15 hours)

Outcome 2 — Explain the roles, responsibilities and career pathways in esports (15 hours)

Outcome 3 — Analyse the economic impact and revenue streams of the esports industry (15 hours)

Outcome 4 — Apply fundamental digital and communication skills relevant to esports operations (20 hours)

Outcome 5 — Explain the role of technology in esports development and competition (15 hours)

Outcome 6 — Demonstrate key personal attributes, professional behaviours and ethical considerations relevant to esports (10 hours)

Outcome 7 — Apply fundamental game-playing skills in a competitive environment (30 hours)

If you are teaching this unit as part of HNC Esports, you should deliver this early in the programme of learning, as it provides foundational knowledge about esports that learners need to progress to other units in the qualification.

To make learning both engaging and relevant, you should combine theoretical understanding with practical, game-based experience. Learners should have regular opportunities to participate in structured competitive gameplay, where they can apply and refine core skills such as teamwork, communication, adaptability, and strategy.

These sessions can serve as a foundation for analysing real-time decisions, with learners reflecting on game performance and optimisation, and discussing wider industry topics.

You can enrich delivery by incorporating guest talks from esports professionals, live analysis of tournaments or scrims, and group projects that mirror real-world industry roles, such as team management, content creation, or event planning. These experiences allow learners to explore current trends, technologies, and sustainability challenges in the esports sector.

Learners should use digital tools throughout to support gameplay analysis, communication, and collaboration. For example, learners might use voice chat platforms, strategy boards, or replay analysis software to improve in-game performance and develop transferable digital skills.

You should embed ethical and sustainability issues, such as online behaviour, inclusivity, monetisation models, and environmental impact, throughout your delivery. You should encourage discussion and critical thinking around these topics, particularly in relation to how they affect competitive play and the broader esports ecosystem.

You should encourage learners to link their gameplay experiences to theoretical insights, industry practices, and future career aspirations within esports or related fields.

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

This unit is best delivered through real-world, relevant examples that reflect the current state and evolution of the esports industry. Learners should engage with a broad range of game genres and competitive formats, while exploring key stakeholder roles — from players and coaches to tournament organisers, broadcasters and publishers.

You must contextualise gameplay in relation to industry structures. For example, learners can examine how Riot Games runs its competitive League of Legends ecosystem — including its franchise leagues, tournaments operations, and live event production. Learners can compare this to more grassroots or community-led competitive scenes, such as those in fighting game communities, like Super Smash Bros. Learners can explore varying approaches to monetisation, audience engagement and online player behaviour.

Another valuable insight for learners is how the role of technology and data influences competitive performance. Learners can explore how professional teams in games like Overwatch or Dota 2 use performance analytics tools, coaching software, and real-time data tracking to inform strategy and training. This should help learners to critically examine how technology, data and community engagement contribute to the growth and complexity of the esports landscape.

Where possible, learners should analyse competitive formats, reflect on gameplay strategies and understand how communication, leadership and adaptability are demonstrated in different esports settings. They should also explore ways to optimise game performance through software settings, hardware configurations, and in-game adjustments to ensure a competitive edge.

Entrepreneurship, safety and security are critical components of the esports industry. Learners should explore how entrepreneurial thinking drives innovation in areas such as team formation, content creation, platform development, and tournament organisation. Real-world examples include esports start-ups that launch grassroots leagues, coaching services, or merchandise brands. At the same time, the growing scale of esports requires robust approaches to security and safety, including player welfare, anti-cheating measures, data protection, and safeguarding in digital spaces. Learners can investigate how organisations such as Riot Games, ESL, and FACEIT implement safety protocols and cybersecurity strategies, and how professional teams embed codes of conduct, mental health support, and online moderation. These aspects not only ensure sustainable and ethical growth but also reflect the professional standards expected in the industry. The units Esports: Business Management and Esports: Marketing and Sponsorship develop learners' practical, essential skills for esports entrepreneurship.

It is good to use up-to-date examples. Historical or well-documented case studies are also useful, particularly when they illustrate foundational concepts like industry structures, stakeholder relationships, changing meta-strategies, communication methods, sustainability or ethical considerations. These examples should support learners in making connections between gameplay experience and wider industry practices, helping them understand how competitive environments operate and evolve.

Resources

Access to a range of relevant tools and platforms enhances the delivery of this unit by supporting learning across different environments:

Industry publications, reports, and analytics platforms

Resources like Newzoo, Esports Insider, or Statista offer industry data and insights. Free alternatives include developer blogs (for example Riot Games Dev Blog), YouTube industry analysis, and esports news sites such as Dexerto or The Esports Observer.

Academic textbooks and scholarly sources

Texts such as Seth E Jenny, Nicolas Besombes, Tom Brock, Amanda C Cote, Tobias M. Scholz (2024), *The Routledge Handbook of Esports*, Routledge, and Tobias M Scholz (2019) *eSports is Business: Management in the World of Competitive Gaming*, Springer Nature Switzerland AG can support in-depth study. Learners can also be guided to open-access academic papers through platforms like Google Scholar, CORE, or institutional library services. Journals like *Games and Culture*, *Journal of Electronic Gaming and Esports* and the *International Journal of Esports* offer open-access peer-reviewed articles on industry, culture and player behaviour.

Streaming platforms and social media tools

Learners should explore free-to-access platforms such as Twitch, YouTube, and Kick for live esports broadcasts and content creation. Learners can also use social media tools like X (formerly Twitter), Instagram or TikTok to understand branding, audience engagement, and communication trends.

Digital collaboration tools

Free-to-access tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Discord can be used for project collaboration. Learners can also use shared drives like Google Drive or Microsoft OneDrive to co-create documents and presentations. Visual collaboration tools, such as Miro, Padlet, or Jamboard can support brainstorming, strategy planning and mind-mapping — which is useful for analysing esports ecosystems.

Access to esports hardware and software

This may include gaming personal computers (PCs) or consoles, monitors with high refresh rates, headsets, and peripherals such as gaming mice and keyboards. Where high-spec equipment is not available, entry-level gaming laptops or shared lab spaces can still support practical learning.

Approaches to delivery

You should deliver this unit through a diverse range of active, learner-centred approaches that reflect the dynamic and competitive nature of the esports industry.

Practical, scenario-based learning, including team scrims, roleplay, and industry simulations, should immerse learners in real-world contexts. These activities may involve analysing competitive game strategies, adapting communication styles under pressure, or managing in-game roles to reflect real-world team dynamics. Learners can also explore broader organisational structures and ethical issues through case-based tasks that connect gameplay to stakeholder responsibilities and digital platforms.

Collaborative and interactive learning should be central to delivery, supporting the development of key esports competencies such as communication, adaptability, and strategic thinking. Group activities, like reviewing match footage, evaluating ethical dilemmas, or creating digital content for esports audiences, enable learners to take on different roles, contribute unique perspectives, and practice peer-led problem-solving. These experiences foster active participation and reflection on both individual growth and team performance.

Research and creative tasks provide additional opportunities for exploration. Learners should investigate industry trends, analyse gameplay data, and present findings using varied formats, such as reports, videos, blogs, or live debriefs. Where appropriate, learners can prototype esports-related materials, including mock team brand kits, user inferface concepts for coaching tools, or social media campaigns. These activities encourage creative thinking, real-world application, and awareness of the sustainability challenges in digital media production.

Structured gameplay sessions should be an integral part of delivery. These sessions provide learners with an important introduction to competitive gameplay and allow them to improve their skills in a live setting. This also helps learners to develop performance strategies and encourage post-match reflection. Getting feedback from peers and tutors after gameplay or project work helps them become more self-aware, resilient and better at critical thinking.

Throughout the unit, ethical and sustainable decision-making should be a recurring theme. You should integrate topics such as online behaviour, accessibility, content responsibility, and the environmental impact of digital infrastructure across lessons. By connecting these issues to real-world esports environments, from grassroots communities to major tournaments, learners gain a comprehensive understanding of their responsibilities as future participants in a rapidly growing and influential sector.

Approaches to assessment

Centres are free to devise a range of approaches to evidence gathering. The following suggestions are for illustration only.

Knowledge evidence can be produced through testing. The test would sample from outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 5. The test could comprise a number of short-answer questions. Suitable questions include:

What are the key responsibilities of an esports team manager, and how do they differ from a traditional sports manager? **(3 marks)**

What career opportunities exist in esports outside of being a professional player, and which roles are in high demand? **(3 marks)**

How do esports teams and players differ from traditional sports teams in terms of structure and stakeholder influence? **(4 marks)**

Who are the primary revenue generators in the esports industry, and how do they monetise their involvement? **(3 marks)**

What is esports entrepreneurship, and give two real-world examples of how individuals or organisations have created business opportunities in the esports industry? **(4 marks)**

Describe two common safety or security risks in the esports environment and explain how they can be managed effectively. **(3 marks)**

You must use a marking scheme to award an overall score. A suitable pass mark is most likely 50% for this type of constructed-response test.

A more contemporary approach to assessment is for learners to create a portfolio to demonstrate their knowledge of the required topics (as referred to in the ‘Knowledge and skills’ section). If you use this approach, then sampling is not appropriate, and you must authenticate that the portfolio is the learner’s own work.

You can gather performance evidence by observing learners over an extended period of time. You must use an observation checklist. Learners either pass or fail key performance criteria relating to:

- hardware and software configurations for gameplay
- communication between team members
- personal attributes, professional behaviours and ethical considerations
- game playing skills
- applying esports security and safety protocols

Learners must achieve a certain level of competence in game playing. If they do not, then you should decide that they do not meet the required standard.

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

Esports Foundations (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 introduces you to the esports industry, including its history, structure, key stakeholders, and economic impact. You develop skills in digital communication, event co-ordination, and gaming technology.

You also improve your practical gaming skills, learning about game mechanics, teamwork, and strategies used in competitive play. You learn about professional behaviours, ethical considerations, and personal well-being in esports.

As part of this unit, you'll also learn about esports entrepreneurship — that means thinking creatively, spotting opportunities, and starting your own projects or businesses in esports, like a team, event, or content channel. You'll also learn why safety and security are important — including how to protect yourself and others online, follow fair play rules, and create a safe, respectful environment for players and fans.

You don't need any experience in esports, but we recommend that you have basic digital literacy and an interest in gaming before starting the unit. Throughout the unit, you engage in research, practical exercises, and gameplay to develop both industry knowledge and technical skills.

During the unit, you complete reports, presentations, and digital projects. You also participate in competitive gameplay and reflect on your learning through written and digital submissions.

On completion of the unit, you can:

1. describe the structure of, and key stakeholders in, the esports industry
2. explain the roles, responsibilities and career pathways in esports
3. analyse the economic impact and revenue streams of the esports industry
4. apply fundamental digital and communication skills relevant to esports operations
5. explain the role of technology in esports development and competition
6. demonstrate key personal attributes, professional behaviours and ethical considerations relevant to esports
7. apply fundamental game-playing skills in a competitive environment

You are well-prepared to continue studying esports event management, coaching, or business development. You can also find career opportunities in professional gaming, tournament organisation, content creation, and marketing in the esports sector.

Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, you develop meta-skills that are useful for the esports 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

This meta-skill includes:

- focusing:
    - maintaining attention and managing distractions in high-pressure or complex scenarios

    - identifying task priorities and structuring workflow accordingly
    - selecting appropriate environments and tools that enable concentration
    - extracting essential information from diverse sources to support strategic or research-based goals, and to prepare for performance analysis or presentations

- adapting:

    - responding flexibly to new technologies, game metas, or unexpected team roles
    - adjusting strategies in response to live feedback during gameplay
    - evaluating performance and changing approach accordingly in team environments
    - developing adaptability through reflection on ethical challenges, such as handling online behaviour, and when researching sustainable industry practices
    - adapting to rapid changes in industry trends, technologies, and audience behaviours by staying informed and responding with flexibility and initiative

Social intelligence

This meta-skill includes:

- communicating:

    - building advanced communication skills across digital, written, and spoken formats
    - using effective, professional language when delivering presentations or match analysis
    - providing and receiving constructive feedback in gameplay debriefs and peer-led projects
    - tailoring communication to suit different contexts and audiences, from tactical in-game calls to ethical debates, for example monetisation and inclusivity

- collaborating:
    - working in teams to complete shared projects, manage tasks, and problem-solve
    - evaluating different working styles and resolving conflict or miscommunication
    - supporting inclusive practices, actively recognising the value of diverse voices in group settings
    - building trust, managing group dynamics, and taking increasing responsibility for shared outcomes

Innovation

This meta-skill includes:

- critical thinking:
    - developing the ability to think deeply and systematically about complex issues and gameplay decisions
    - understanding the broader social and economic structures in esports
    - interpreting performance data to inform in-game strategy or team decisions
    - evaluating the impact of monetisation models, digital ethics, or sustainability challenges in the esports industry
    - recognising and evaluating different perspectives, predicting outcomes, and justifying decisions with evidence
    - making informed, ethical choices as future players, organisers, or content creators

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 esports sector. You also develop an understanding of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Social sustainability

You explore inclusion, diversity and well-being in esports teams and wider communities. In competitive settings, you think about how digital behaviour affects communication during gameplay, conflict resolution, and supporting teammates. You discuss how respectful, inclusive team environments help with long-term player well-being and community health.

Economic sustainability

You analyse the sustainability of esports business models, including tournament funding, team sponsorship, and revenue for streaming or content creation. You explore how monetisation strategies, such as microtransactions or gambling models, impact players, especially in competitive environments. You consider ethical ways to balance profit with fairness and accessibility.

Environmental sustainability

You examine the environmental impact of digital infrastructure used in esports, including high-performance gaming hardware, server use and large-scale local area network (LAN) events. You explore sustainable alternatives, such as energy-efficient equipment and logistics operations.You also reflect on how competitive players and organisations must adopt environmentally responsible practices, for example the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).

Administrative information

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Superclass: CB

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.