

NextGen: HN unit specification

Specialist Farming Systems (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: JHY7 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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Unit purpose

This unit allows learners to gain knowledge and skills related to a range of specialist livestock and cropping farming systems. These may include:

- regenerative agriculture
- organic production systems
- soft fruit farms
- potato growers
- pig breeders
- poultry
- deer farms
- any other alternative systems

It also gives learners the opportunity to look at where environmentally friendly farming practices fit into these systems.

Entry requirements

Entry to this qualification is at your centre's discretion. Before they start the unit, learners would benefit from having completed Mathematics and English at National 5, or equivalent. We recommend that learners have also completed one or more of the following:

- two Highers, preferably including a science
- an NC or SVQ Agriculture at SCQF level 6, or a relevant, alternative subject
- relevant work experience

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1. describe the main components of a specialist farming production system
2. identify areas where environmentally sustainable farming practices could be included within the system

Evidence requirements

Outcome 1

Under open-book conditions, learners must:

- provide a brief description of the production system
- describe the inputs and outputs of the system

They do this for one of the following specialist systems:

- deer
- poultry breeders
- pig breeders
- meat or dairy goats
- game birds
- soft fruit
- vegetables (excluding potatoes)
- organics
- flowers
- seed (non-cereal)
- Christmas trees
- biomass

Learners generate evidence for this outcome by gathering and reporting the information they gather from farm visits. You should select farms to visit that demonstrate appropriate specialist farming systems.

Outcome 2

Under open-book conditions, learners must:

- identify one area where environmentally sustainable practices are currently carried out within the system selected from outcome 1
- identify one area of environmentally sustainable practices that could be improved

You could assess outcomes 1 and 2 together to minimise the assessment load on learners. Learners can demonstrate the evidence requirements and be assessed through a report, poster or presentation.

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 1 Learners should understand: • a range of different specialist farming production systems within both livestock and cropping • specialist farming systems could include: ○ meat or dairy goats ○ deer ○ game birds ○ poultry breeders ○ pig breeders ○ soft fruit ○ vegetables ○ organics ○ flowers ○ seed (non-cereal) ○ Christmas trees ○ biomass	Outcome 1 Learners can: • describe the main components of the production systems • describe the inputs and outputs of the processes of the production systems
Outcome 2 Learners should understand: • environmentally sustainable farming practices that could be included within these systems covered in outcome 1	Outcome 2 Learners can: • identify areas to improve environmentally sustainable practices of the system

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.

Throughout the unit, learners develop meta-skills to enhance their employability in the agriculture sector. Where possible you should deliver and assess the unit holistically, in accordance with the integrated nature of agriculture, so that learners gain and develop meta-skills throughout the unit.

Self-management

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

- focusing:
 - filtering information for assessment and research tasks
- adapting:
 - learning to use new farming systems and being open to new ideas

Social intelligence

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

- communicating:
 - developing skills in receiving information and listening while visiting both arable and livestock farms
- collaborating:
 - building strong peer-to-peer relationships through group activities

Innovation

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

- curiosity:
 - asking questions in a classroom setting and on farm visits
- creativity:
 - working on their assessments if they choose to do a poster or presentation

Literacies

This unit provides opportunities to develop the following literacies.

Numeracy

There is no direct learning of numeracy in this unit, however, learners may learn aspects of costs related to farming systems.

Communication

Learners can develop their communication skills through attending field visits and having discussions with farmers. They can also develop their writing and presentation skills during the assessment.

Digital

Learners develop digital skills and computer literacy when carrying out research, and using word-processing or presentation software to create their assessments.

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

Delivery of unit

We recommend that centres organise multiple visits to relevant businesses, so that learners can experience a range of specialist systems. You can deliver this unit alongside Diversified Enterprises in Rural Businesses.

The amount of time you allocate to this unit is at your discretion. The notional delivery time is 40 hours.

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

This unit introduces learners to a range of specialist farming systems and provides an overview of the main components of these systems. It also provides insight into how these systems can incorporate environmentally sustainable practices.

Approaches to delivery

You can deliver this unit as a mix of lectures, tutorials and farm visits. The specialist farming systems available will naturally depend on your centre's location.

You should carefully select farm visits to demonstrate good examples of the range of livestock, crop and other production systems. Learners should be able to extract the necessary information during farm visits to adequately describe the production system present. They should visit a range of different farms across both livestock and crops. You should arrange a minimum of two livestock and two crop visits.

Describe the main components of a specialist farming production system (outcome 1)

Learners gain knowledge of:

- crop and livestock husbandry
- resources required (for example, buildings, machinery)
- inputs and outputs of the production systems
- customers and marketing of specialist products
- cost implications
- integration with other farming practices (if applicable)

Identify areas where environmentally sustainable farming practices could be included within the system (outcome 2)

Learners gain knowledge of:

- environmental considerations
- sustainable practices within these systems

Approaches to assessment

Learners can generate evidence for both outcomes in a written report of approximately 1,000 words, or a 10-minute presentation followed by 5 minutes of questions on their chosen system. Alternatively, they could create a poster illustrating their specialist farming system.

You can use farm visits on the chosen farming systems as a basis for the assessment. If necessary, learners could carry out a research task on an appropriate farming system as an alternative.

Resources

Learners must have access to specialist farming enterprises, and make a minimum of two livestock and two crop visits.

Centres delivering this qualification must have suitably qualified staff for each of the subject components. Your centre should already have established processes to ensure staff are appropriately qualified to deliver in this subject area.

Assessors and internal verifiers must hold an industry and/or subject-specific qualification equivalent to the qualification. Centre staff should have relevant industry experience and be able to demonstrate industry-relevant CPD to maintain their subject-specific knowledge and skills.

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

Specialist Farming Systems (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 a range of specialist farming systems. As you learn about the main components of these farming systems, you look at both crop and livestock husbandry and the resources they require. You gain a basic knowledge of the marketing of products from these systems, and an introduction to the cost implications. The unit also gives you an insight into some of the environmentally sustainable practices that farms carry out to help mitigate climate change.

The unit gives you the knowledge and skills to:

1. describe the main components of a specialist farming production system
2. identify areas where environmentally sustainable farming practices could be included within the system

The unit involves several field visits to a range of different specialist farming systems. The types of farms you visit will depend on the location of your centre.

Prior knowledge and skills

Before you start the unit, you would find it helpful to have completed Mathematics and English at National 5, or equivalent. We also recommend that you have completed one or more of the following:

- two Highers, preferably including a science
- an NC or SVQ Agriculture at SCQF level 6, or a relevant, alternative subject
- relevant work experience

You do not need to have prior experience or knowledge in any of the specialist farming systems you look at in this unit.

Assessment

You must collect and report information that you gather on a chosen farm visit to create a report, poster or presentation, which constitutes your assessment. Your lecturer may assess outcomes 1 and 2 together to help reduce the assessment load.

Future progression and employment

If you study this unit as part of HNC Agriculture, you may have the opportunity to progress to a HND or degree-level course in agriculture or a related subject. Alternatively, your skills and knowledge could lead to employment at an operational level on a farm as, for example, a stockperson, general farm worker or tractor operations worker.

Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, you develop meta-skills that are useful for the agriculture 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 your self-management skills as you focus on filtering information for assessment and research tasks, learn to adapt to using new farming systems, and stay open to new ideas and approaches.

Social intelligence

You develop your social intelligence skills as you communicate with your peers and farming specialists while visiting arable and livestock farms, and build strong peer-to-peer relationships through group activities

Innovation

You build innovation skills as you ask questions in class and on farm visits, and as you nurture your creativity working on their assessments.

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

Administrative information

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Superclass: SA

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.

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