

NextGen: HN unit specification

Horticulture: Professional Practice (SCQF level 8)

Unit code: JI9E 48

SCQF level: 8 (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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Unit purpose

This unit provides learners with the knowledge and skills they need to enter the horticulture industry at an appropriate level. Learners gain authentic, practical and professional skills, in collaboration with industry partners. They carry out and reflect on two meaningful simulated and/or work-based learning placements throughout the year in areas of industry that are of interest to them. They also develop their meta-skills.

On completing the unit and on achieving the HND, learners may be able to progress to degree programmes in horticulture. Alternatively, they may want to go directly into employment in the horticulture industry or related work placements.

Entry requirements

Entry to this unit is at your centre's discretion. Before starting the unit, learners would benefit from having a foundation knowledge of horticulture, on which this unit expands.

We also recommend that learners have completed one or more of the following:

- HNC Horticulture
- a horticultural qualification at SCQF level 7
- appropriate work experience in horticulture

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1. demonstrate a range of skills in the context of horticulture
2. carry out organisational management activities
3. take part in and reflect on work placements
4. develop meta-skills in a vocational or academic context

Evidence requirements

You should assess the unit through a portfolio of evidence that learners produce over all the learning outcomes. Learners can present their evidence in a variety of ways, including video recordings, checklists, oral recordings and written work.

Learners can generate this evidence under unsupervised, open-book conditions.

Outcome 1

Learners must provide evidence that demonstrates their ability to perform a minimum of 20 horticultural skills. The skills are at your centre's discretion, but could fall under the following categories:

- business management and awareness
- plant propagation
- plant care and maintenance
- laboratory and research
- soil management
- ecology and environment
- sustainability
- botany and taxonomy
- stock management

Outcome 2

Learners gather evidence that demonstrates that they can:

- carry out a minimum of two risk assessments in different working environments
- create a minimum of two work plans for the supervision and management of others

Outcome 3

Learners gather evidence that demonstrates that they can:

- carry out a minimum of two meaningful work placements
- participate in a personal development and/or a career review meeting
- reflect on their own management and professional behaviours

For the purposes of the unit, the term 'work placement' can include any activity that offers an experience of work. Evidence from the following sources is acceptable:

- paid part-time employment during the learner's own time
- a placement organised directly by the learner or with their centre's assistance
- voluntary work

The work placement activity or activities used should be as flexible as possible. The activity, or activities (combined), should normally comprise a minimum of blocked time to allow learners to fully integrate with the business and be involved in a range of activities over time.

Outcome 4

Learners must produce evidence to show they can:

- self-assess their meta-skills baseline
- create a plan to develop their own meta-skills
- carry out activities to develop and demonstrate their meta-skills
- use reflective practice to monitor and assess the meta-skills they have improved and developed

For more information about meta-skills, see the educator guide, [Skills 4.0: A skills model to drive Scotland's future](#) and [our meta-skills web page](#).

In this unit, you assess a learner's meta-skills development as an outcome, following the evidence requirements set out below.

This meta-skills outcome is the same at SCQF level 7 as at SCQF level 8. Learners who progress from SCQF level 7 to SCQF level 8 should continue to develop their meta-skills. They should gather evidence in line with the outcome requirements as they work through the unit, or other units they may be studying, or projects they may be doing.

Skills 4.0 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.

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 1 Learners should understand: • how different practical activities are carried out in horticulture • when to use different practical applications in horticulture	Outcome 1 Learners can: • demonstrate a range of practical activities relevant to horticulture
Outcome 2 Learners should understand: • how to implement organisational objectives on the ground, and according to priorities • how to relate to higher management	Outcome 2 Learners can: • carry out organisational management activities, such as prioritising and discussing objectives
Outcome 3 Learners should understand: • how to plan a work schedule and organise other people on a task • the importance of reflection in good management and supervision	Outcome 3 Learners can: • take part in and reflect on a minimum of two work placements at a supervisory or lower-management level

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 4 Learners should understand: - the meta-skills 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 or academic context - how to develop meta-skills, including these approaches: - self-awareness: analysing preferences, strengths and development needs, meta-skills self-assessment - goal setting and action planning - reflective practice: principles, tools and approaches for effective reflective practice	Outcome 4 Learners can: - create a plan to develop their meta-skills - carry out, review and adapt their meta-skills development plan - assess their meta-skills development

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:
 - recognising specific areas to work on and develop
- adapting:
 - prioritising and discussing objectives; reflecting on and adapting managerial and supervisory approaches

Social intelligence

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

- communicating:
 - organising other people on a task, and communicating their role and responsibilities effectively; relating to higher management
- leading:
 - creating work plans for the supervision and management of others

Innovation

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

- creativity:
 - understanding how different practical activities can be used in horticulture
- critical thinking:
 - understanding when to use different practical applications in horticulture

Literacies

This unit provides opportunities to develop the following literacies.

Communication

Learners enhance their communication skills as they take on a managerial role or supervise others. Clear communication skills are an essential part of professional practice and behaviours.

Digital

Learners improve their digital skills and computer literacy as they produce an e-portfolio or blog.

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

You can teach and assess this unit alongside other units. In particular, you can integrate the management activities in outcomes 2 and 3 with the development of a management plan for outcomes 3 and 4 of Botanic and Historic Garden Horticulture at SCQF level 8.

The notional design length for the unit is 120 hours. However, the amount of time you allocate to each outcome is at your centre's discretion.

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

This is a work-based unit. Supporting materials and guidance on management and professional behaviours are available online, in tutorials, and through discussion. You may need to support learners in the use of digital technologies, for example to create their blog or e-portfolio.

We recognise that a wide range of learners with varying levels of work experience may do this course. You can help learners by discussing what specific areas of professional practice they want to develop. Learners can set their own goals, and reflect on how well they have met them and what areas they could focus on developing in the future. This placement could be simulated or work-based, and could be in a wide range of sectors, such as:

- amenity horticulture
- community growing initiatives
- botanic gardens
- historic gardens
- production horticulture
- research
- retail

Resources

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

Horticulture: Professional Practice (SCQF level 8)

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 provides you with the knowledge and skills you need to enter the horticulture industry at an appropriate level, with a view to working at a supervisory or lower-management level.

You gain authentic, practical and professional skills, in collaboration with industry partners.

You have the opportunity to carry out and reflect on two learning placements throughout the year, in areas of industry that are of interest to you. These placements allow you to demonstrate a range of the horticultural skills you have developed. You also develop other professional skills, such as carrying out risk assessments, work planning and stock management.

The unit also contains a meta-skills outcome that allows you to demonstrate and record the range of meta-skills you have developed across this unit and other units within the HND. The meta-skills cover self-management, social intelligence and innovation.

Prior knowledge and skills

Before starting the unit, you would benefit from having a foundation knowledge of horticulture, on which this unit expands. We also recommend that you have completed one or more of the following:

- HNC Horticulture
- a horticultural qualification at SCQF level 7
- appropriate work experience in horticulture

Assessment

You can be assessed in a variety of ways, which is likely to involve a portfolio of work covering all outcomes.

Future progression and employment

On completion of the unit, and on achievement of the HND, you may be able to progress to the BSc in Horticulture. Alternatively, you may be able go directly into employment in the horticulture industry or related work placements.

Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, you develop meta-skills that are useful for the horticulture 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 identify and focus on specific areas for development, prioritise and discuss objectives, and adapt your management style to changing circumstances.

Social intelligence

You develop your social intelligence skills as you organise and communicate with other people on a group task, and create management work plans.

Innovation

You develop your innovation skills as you approach different practical activities creatively, and understand when to use specific practical applications in horticulture.

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 horticulture 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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