

## **NextGen: HN unit specification**

### **Professional Practice and Skills in Agriculture (SCQF level 7)**

**Unit code:** JK6L 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.

Published: October 2026 (version 1.0)

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# Unit purpose

This unit provides learners with professional practice skills required to work on a farm or in a rural business, and gives them experience of using these skills in a working environment.

At SCQF level 7, the unit provides learners with suitable knowledge and skills to help them progress to further study or employment in a wide range of agricultural industries.

If they complete the unit as part of HNC Agriculture, learners may be able to progress to an HND or degree-level course in agriculture or a related subject. Or they can go directly into employment at an operational level on a farm as, for example, a stockperson, general farm worker or tractor operations worker.

## 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. carry out a range of practical activities relevant to farm and rural businesses
2. develop academic and digital skills essential for ongoing learning and work
3. describe health and safety legislation roles and responsibilities within a land-based business
4. take part in a work placement
5. develop meta-skills in a vocational or academic context

## Evidence requirements

You should assess the unit through a project or 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 in written work. They can generate this evidence under unsupervised, open-book conditions.

## Outcome 1

Learners must demonstrate a minimum of five practical skills from each of sections A, B and C; and a minimum of two practical skills from each of sections D, E and F (totalling a minimum of 30). In the bullets below, each individual point in a bullet counts as one skill.

### A. Mechanisation and farm maintenance

- Driving:
  - tractors
  - trailers
  - all-terrain vehicles (ATVs)
  - telehandlers

- Crop establishment:
  - ploughing
  - rotavating
  - rolling
- Crop harvesting:
  - forage harvester
  - combine
- Livestock:
  - feed wagons
  - milking parlours
- GPS and other technology in tractors and machines
- Farm maintenance:
  - fencing, concreting
  - basic plumbing (water troughs)
  - chainsaw operation
  - basic electrical wiring (for example, a trailer board plug)

## **B. Arable crops and grassland**

- Crop protection:
  - weeds (arable and grassland)
  - growth stages
  - nutrient deficiencies
  - disease recognition
- Assessing crop quality:
  - thousand grain weight (TGW, or mean values for seed size)
  - screenings
  - germination capacity

- Identification:
  - main grasses
  - clovers
  - forages
- Measuring grassland:
  - plate meters
  - sward stick

### **C. Livestock**

- General handling:
  - feeding
  - bedding
  - watering
  - weighing
  - body condition scoring (BCS)
  - health checks and MOTs
  - gathering
  - transporting (on farm)
- Cattle:
  - milking
  - clipping backs
  - foot trimming
  - disbudding
  - tagging
  - assisting with calving
  - castrating
  - vaccinating
  - dosing

- Pigs:
  - teething
  - tailing
  - slap marking
  - assisting with farrowing
  - vaccinating
  - dosing
- Sheep:
  - shearing
  - tailing and castrating
  - assisting with lambing
  - fostering lambs
  - vaccinating
  - dosing

#### **D. Soils**

- Collecting a representative soil sample
- Assessing soil structure:
  - soil pits and visual evaluation of soil structure (VESS)
  - field sampling for analysis
  - pH testing
  - assessing texture
  - worm count and identification

## **E. Environment**

- Assessing farm activities and crop and livestock systems for potential environmental damage:
  - erosion prevention
  - effluents
  - pesticide application
- Identifying habitat or environmental maintenance and improvement measures:
  - tree-planting
  - hedgerow maintenance
  - ditch maintenance
  - buffer strips
  - wildlife crops
  - cover crops
  - ponds

## **F. Record keeping and business awareness**

- Keeping regulatory farm records:
  - medicines
  - tagging
  - movements
- Understanding gross margins:
  - variables
  - fixed costs

You must assess these practical skills according to national standards of competency, if appropriate, and in line with health and safety requirements.

The lists A through F are not intended to be exhaustive and other skills can be included as relevant to the unit.

## **Outcome 2**

Learners focus on developing academic and digital skills.

- Academic skills: written communications, including researching for information, writing styles, referencing and avoiding plagiarism
- Digital skills: IT skills, digital communication platforms and other professional digital technologies

Learners select relevant topics or areas that incorporate both academic and digital skills for assessment. This can be the final written project for the work placement evaluation or any project from the mandatory units. Learners must use relevant software to present information in a professional manner, and incorporate photos and links to digital information. They can also choose to record a video and upload it to suitable social media platforms.

## **Outcome 3**

Learners identify and examine health and safety regulations, relevant guidance for the agriculture sector, and the specific roles and responsibilities of both employers and employees in complying with these regulations, including:

- preparing risk assessments
- working with machines, livestock, and hazardous substances

They should provide evidence of their knowledge in a portfolio they prepare for their work placement, including a single risk assessment that covers the activities they are expected to carry out during their work placement. Please see outcome 4 for more information.

Learners should complete the risk assessment for outcome 3 as part of the assessment of outcome 4. The risk assessment should be for the learner's specific placement (on a farm or other relevant location), and they should complete it before they carry out any of the practical activities the placement involves.

## Outcome 4

Learners produce a workplace learning plan, which must include all of the following:

- organisational and business structure of the placement organisation
- explanation of the placement role and how this fits within the organisation and potential career pathways
- risk assessment of the activities to be carried out, and a description of the health and safety regulations to be aware of and complied with during the placement (as detailed in outcome 3).
- completed self-evaluation report on the work placement, which must include:
  - technical analysis of one area of the business
  - justification of the findings and recommendations made
  - a self-evaluation on the learners' development of meta-skills (as detailed in outcome 5)
- details of their participation in a personal development and/or career review meeting

For the purposes of this unit, the term 'work placement' is used in its widest sense and can include any activity that offers an experience of work. Evidence from the following sources are allowed to contribute to the work placement:

- paid part-time employment during the learner's own time
- a placement, which is normally organised directly by the learner
- 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 in the business and be involved with a range of activities over time. Centres must ensure that the placement provides sufficient opportunities for the learner to meet the evidence requirements.

## Outcome 5

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](#).

### Meta-skills

Skills 4.0: a skills model to drive Scotland's future, in collaboration with the Centre for Work-based Learning in Scotland, outlines the three categories of self-management, social intelligence and innovation, each with four meta-skills and a number of sub-skills. We do not expect learners to develop or reference all of these and none is, in itself, mandatory.

There are many interrelationships and dependencies between these skills and at SCQF level 7, the focus should be on holistic development within a vocational context.

Learners should reflect in depth on the meta-skills they are developing and the relationships between them, and include references to course projects, outputs and experiences that contribute to that development. It is the depth of reflection that is important, not the number of meta-skills referenced. You can find more information in the educator guide.

# Knowledge and skills

| Knowledge                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Skills                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Outcome 1</b><br>Learners should understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the range of practical skills required at an operational level on farm</li> </ul>                                                            | <b>Outcome 1</b><br>Learners can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>carry out a number of practical skills within crop husbandry, livestock husbandry and mechanical operations to appropriate standards of competency</li> </ul>                                                                                |
| <b>Outcome 2</b><br>Learners should understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>academic skills to support learning</li> <li>digital skills for the workplace</li> </ul>                                                     | <b>Outcome 2</b><br>Learners can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop study skills to enhance learning</li> <li>competently use appropriate software packages and digital technologies</li> </ul>                                                                                                          |
| <b>Outcome 3</b><br>Learners should understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>health and safety legislation and responsibilities appropriate to an agricultural workplace</li> </ul>                                       | <b>Outcome 3</b><br>Learners can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify and conform to health and safety legislation within a farm business</li> <li>identify employers' and employees' responsibilities to health and safety</li> </ul>                                                                    |
| <b>Outcome 4</b><br>Learners should understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>how to apply professional and personal skills in a working environment</li> <li>how to apply of theory in a commercial enterprise</li> </ul> | <b>Outcome 4</b><br>Learners can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>apply practical skills within a land-based industry</li> <li>apply meta-skills in a working environment</li> <li>evaluate an enterprise on a technical basis</li> <li>evaluate their personal development during a work placement</li> </ul> |

| Knowledge                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Skills                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Outcome 5</b></p> <p>Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the meta-skills categories of self-management, social intelligence and innovation, and associated meta-skills, as described in <a href="#">Skills 4.0</a></li> <li>the importance of developing meta-skills, including employability, adaptability and effectiveness</li> <li>what meta-skills are most relevant to their vocational or academic context</li> <li>how to develop meta-skills, including these approaches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>self-awareness: analysing preferences, strengths and development needs, meta-skills self-assessment</li> <li>goal setting and action planning</li> <li>reflective practice: principles, tools and approaches for effective reflective practice</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <p><b>Outcome 5</b></p> <p>Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>create a plan to develop their meta-skills</li> <li>carry out, review and adapt their meta-skills development plan</li> <li>assess their meta-skills development</li> </ul> |

## 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:
  - ensuring skills and knowledge are appropriate to the work placement
- adapting:
  - learning to be more flexible through teamwork, critical reflection and self-learning during the work placement
- initiative:
  - demonstrating decision making, self-motivation and responsibility during learning, and in preparation for and during the work placement

## **Social intelligence**

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

- communicating:
  - developing skills in giving and receiving information during practical activities
- collaborating:
  - building relationships while working together
- leading:
  - taking the lead in team sessions, influencing and inspiring team members

## **Innovation**

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

- curiosity:
  - observing and taking part in practical activities, recognising and explaining problems, working to generate ideas and solutions
- critical thinking and sense-making:
  - developing holistic and logical thinking to understand and recognise problems, and analyse potential solutions in a working environment

# Literacies

This unit provides opportunities to develop the following literacies.

## Numeracy

Learners develop their numeracy skills as they:

- use data from the farm to evaluate a technical aspect of the business; explore and manipulate the data in a report

## Communication

Learners enhance their communication skills as they:

- seek constructive criticism on their written communication during study skills components and assessments
- discuss aspects of the unit with other learners; talk with team members during the practical skills activities and while on placement, where relationship building is particularly important

## Digital

Learners improve their digital skills as they:

- build on IT skills and master other digital technologies in the unit

# 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**

The unit is normally delivered alongside the Principles of Livestock Production and Principles of Crop Production units, and academic skills are incorporated in all of them. This allows learners to apply practical skills as they learn the theory, ideally as close to the seasonality of production cycles as possible.

The amount of time you allocate to this unit is at your discretion. The notional delivery time is 120 hours.

# **Additional guidance**

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

## **Content and context for this unit**

The unit is designed to be delivered in parallel with the other mandatory units to allow learners to integrate practical and academic skills with the theory-based teaching.

The practical skills should be suitable for each learner and, where possible, tailored to their aspirations for future employment and/or career.

Work placement opportunities should be appropriate to the learner and the centre, and may take place on a block- or day-release basis, depending on what is more suitable. Learners should be fully integrated in the business, and be involved in a range of activities over time.

The work placement should be a new experience: it should not be on the learner's family farm or business, or one at which the learner is regularly employed. It may be possible to organise a student exchange to ensure all learners gain valuable experience at a new farm, while ensuring that family farms are supported with labour.

While learners are required to arrange their own placement, centres can provide some guidance on suitable placements. In particular, centres must ensure that the placement provides sufficient opportunities for the learner to meet the evidence requirements.

# **Approaches to assessment**

## **Outcome 1**

You should assess this outcome with a practical assessment, in which the assessor could record evidence on a checklist or spreadsheet.

## **Outcome 2**

Outcome 2 can be incorporated within any written report in the mandatory units (including outcome 4 of this unit, in which they show academic skills relevant to successful learning).

Your assessment of learners' evidence should include evaluating their:

- quality of research
- writing style
- referencing
- avoidance of plagiarism
- digital skills, including:
  - IT skills
  - use of digital communication platforms
  - other professional digital technologies

## **Outcomes 3, 4 and 5**

You can assess outcomes 3, 4 and 5 through a written portfolio of approximately 1,500 words.

## **Resources**

Centres must ensure that learners have sufficient access to farms or rural businesses.

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

## Professional Practice and Skills in Agriculture (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 gives you the knowledge and skills to allow you to:

- carry out some practical tasks on a farm to a safe and suitable level
- understand relevant health and safety legislation and how to apply it
- experience working on a farm or rural business
- develop skills to help you study and learn, be successful in the written assessments and progress to higher-level courses
- develop meta-skills

You study the unit in a practical setting, allowing you to become competent in a range of farm-related skills in livestock husbandry, crop husbandry and mechanical operations.

You also find and carry out a work placement, allowing you to gain and improve practical and personal skills, and better understand the professional requirements of working in agriculture.

## **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

If you already have lots of practical experience, the unit offers opportunities for you to improve your skills and learn new ones.

## **Assessment**

You are assessed using a variety of methods, including:

- being observed and checked against standards during practical activities
- providing a written reflection of a period of work on a farm from a personal development point of view
- producing a written evaluation of a technical part of that farm business
- presenting a risk assessment detailing your knowledge of the relevant health and safety legislation and workplace regulations in relation to your work placement

## **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.

The unit offers considerable opportunities to develop a breadth of meta-skills, particularly in preparation for and during your work placement. You reflect on your personal and professional progress in these, and understand how this translates to your future employability.

### **Self-management**

You develop your self-management skills on your work placement as you focus on building appropriate skills and knowledge; learn to adapt, individually or in a team, to changing circumstances; and show self-motivation, responsibility and flexibility.

### **Social intelligence**

You develop your social intelligence skills as you communicate with your peers during practical activities, and build relationships and lead teams.

### **Innovation**

You develop your innovation skills as you take an active interest in practical activities and problems, and develop your critical thinking to recognise problems and identify potential solutions.

## 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

**Published:** October 2026 (version 1.0)

**Superclass:** SK

## History of changes

| Version | Description of change | Date |
|---------|-----------------------|------|
|         |                       |      |
|         |                       |      |
|         |                       |      |

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