

NextGen: HN unit specification

Understanding Personal and Professional Development (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: JL25 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 introduces learners to reflective practice and its role in promoting personal and professional development. Learners also identify and describe how to meet personal and professional development needs and goals through exploring learning styles and action plans. They cover appropriate academic writing and referencing styles and become proficient at carrying out literature searches and evaluating credible sources of information to support evidence-based practice.

Learners explore concepts of wellbeing and investigate causes of personal stress and effective coping strategies. They learn about developing resilience.

This unit is suitable for learners who are working, or on placement, in a health or care setting and wish to develop their practice or achieve the Higher National Certificate (HNC) Healthcare Practice.

Learners should have good communication skills, both written and oral. 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:

- Higher English or a qualification equivalent to SCQF level 6
- the completion of a pre-course interview, part of which could take the form of a written assignment
- an employer's reference, or in the process of application and interview
- work experience, paid or voluntary, in a health care setting

This is a mandatory unit in HNC Healthcare Practice: nursing care and HNC Healthcare Practice: perinatal care. Learners can also complete it as a stand-alone unit for continuous professional development (CPD).

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1. discuss the importance of reflection on personal and professional development, and reflect on individual learning needs and goals
2. demonstrate the ability to research, evaluate credible sources, and compose evidence-based submissions that follow academic writing and citation standards
3. investigate wellbeing for personal and professional effectiveness

Evidence requirements

Learners must provide knowledge and product evidence for the unit. You can assess learners in a variety of ways, including:

- reports
- essays
- blogs
- eLearning portfolios
- demonstrations of learning from digital platforms
- reflective accounts
- action plans

Outcome 1

Learners must:

- describe the principles of reflection and apply them to two reflective activities
- reflect on individual learning styles and needs, and the achievement of personal and professional goals through action planning
- explain the importance of reflection for CPD and quality practice
- reflect on academic achievements and practice improvements throughout the course

Outcome 2

Learners must:

- apply knowledge of academic writing conventions to compose a structured paper that follows a specified formatting and citation style, effectively integrating sources to support a coherent argument
- demonstrate proficiency in the use of referencing tools to accurately cite all sources, ensuring academic integrity and avoiding plagiarism
- use academic databases and library resources to conduct comprehensive and focused literature searches
- critically evaluate the quality, credibility and relevance of academic sources, integrating information to construct well-informed and evidence-based conclusions

Outcome 3

Learners must:

- investigate personal causes of stress in care and academic settings
- evaluate two strategies that reduce stress and promote wellbeing
- explain the concept of psychological safety as it supports mental wellbeing
- explain three personal approaches and coping strategies that support the development of resilience and promote wellbeing

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 1 Learners should understand: • the principles of reflection, and apply them to a reflective activity • individual learning styles and needs, and the achievement of personal and professional goals through action planning • the importance of reflection for CPD and quality practice	Outcome 1 Learners can: • apply the principles of reflection • use their knowledge of learning styles and action plans to achieve their goals • identify resources and support required to achieve identified needs and goals • explain the importance of reflection for continuous professional development and quality practice • reflect on academic achievements and practice improvements throughout the course

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 2 Learners should understand: • academic writing conventions, to compose a structured paper that follows a specified formatting and citation style, effectively integrating sources to support a coherent argument • the use of referencing tools to accurately cite all sources, ensuring academic integrity and avoiding plagiarism • use of academic databases and library resources to conduct comprehensive and focused literature searches • how to critically evaluate the quality, credibility and relevance of academic sources, integrating information to construct well-informed and evidence-based conclusions and combine the information to inform their own research	Outcome 2 Learners can: • compose well-structured academic papers, integrating sources to effectively support their arguments • use referencing tools to ensure proper citation and avoid plagiarism • conduct literature searches and identify credible sources • evaluate and integrate information from a variety of sources
Outcome 3 Learners should understand: • definitions of stress and models of stress • causes of stress in personal, professional and academic settings • strategies that promote and support wellbeing • the concept of psychological safety in supporting mental wellbeing • personal approaches and coping strategies that support the development of resilience and promote wellbeing	Outcome 3 Learners can: • explain definitions of stress and models of stress • identify causes of stress in personal, professional and academic settings • apply appropriate stress management techniques • explain psychological safety in terms of supporting mental wellbeing • develop personal approaches and coping strategies that support the development of resilience and promote wellbeing

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:
 - researching
 - evaluating understanding on an ongoing basis
- integrity:
 - discussing and evaluating own values and personal development
 - demonstrating knowledge and skills through portfolio evidence
- adapting:
 - accommodating new ideas through research and practical experience
- initiative:
 - independently researching
 - collaborating with other professionals to share enthusiasm and knowledge

Social intelligence

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

- communicating:
 - sharing ideas and perspectives

- performing practical tasks in practice
- showing evaluation through project evidence
- feeling:
 - showing empathy
- collaborating:
 - teamworking
 - completing practical tasks in practice
 - collaborating with individuals and colleagues when working on group tasks

Innovation

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

- curiosity:
 - researching and making observations, to understand the link between theory and practice
- sense-making:
 - researching
 - evaluating understanding
- critical thinking:
 - analysing research
 - making informed decisions

Literacies

This unit provides opportunities to develop the following literacies.

- academic writing and referencing
- the use of domain-specific language
- understanding evidence-based literature

Numeracy

Learners develop numeracy skills by:

- analysing statistics with the relevant data

Communication

Learners develop communication skills by:

- discussing their understanding of theory and their own personal reflections with other learners in group activities
- collaborating with individuals and colleagues when integrating aspects of a service in a practice environment
- crediting sources of information, and the impact this has on practice

Digital

Learners develop digital skills by:

- using digital platforms to access information to support learning and understanding
- using a PC or digital devices to develop coherent portfolio and project work

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 deliver this single-credit unit as a stand-alone unit for the purposes of CPD. When you deliver the unit as part of a qualification, you can integrate teaching, learning and assessment across the units.

The notional design length of the unit is 40 hours, including 10 hours of self-directed study. We suggest the following distribution of teaching time, including assessment:

Outcome 1 — Discuss the importance of reflection on personal and professional development, and reflect on individual learning needs and goals (9 hours)

Outcome 2 — Demonstrate the ability to research, evaluate credible sources, and compose evidence-based submissions that follow academic writing and citation standards (15 hours)

Outcome 3 — Investigate wellbeing for personal and professional effectiveness (6 hours)

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

Discuss the importance of reflection on personal and professional development, and reflect on individual learning needs and goals (outcome 1)

Learners explore the concept of reflection and its importance in personal and professional development. They understand that reflection is essential for effective learning and practice. They learn the principles of reflection: awareness, interpretation, evaluation, and analysis. Learners then explore different models of reflection and use at least one to reflect on their academic and professional goals.

Learners must understand that reflection is a purposeful process where individuals learn from their experiences, identify knowledge gaps, and assess their skills, knowledge, competence, and performance. Writing about experiences can help clarify thoughts.

In the care context, learners should understand that reflective practice is vital for:

- delivering high-quality care
- linking theory to practice
- meeting professional requirements
- ensuring care governance
- supporting inter-professional collaboration
- achieving professional requirements for ongoing development, as mandated by bodies like the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

Demonstrate the ability to research, evaluate credible sources, and compose evidence-based submissions that follow academic writing and citation standards (outcome 2)

Learners explore learning styles to better understand how they learn. This involves looking at learning styles and theories put forward by, for example, Honey and Mumford, Gardner, and Kolb. They look at learner characteristics such as self-reliance, awareness of strengths and weaknesses, and motivation. Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) can enhance this, along with the Vark questionnaire and personality profiling. This exercise helps learners to formulate appropriate, individual strategies to meet their learning needs and goals. Learners should understand the use of actions plans and how they can help them achieve personal and professional goals. The use of reflection helps learners to identify both their personal and professional learning needs.

Learners must produce work that is appropriate for SCQF level 7. It may therefore be necessary to consider covering:

- academic writing processes, including grammar and language
- how to answer questions
- the difference between 'describe', 'explain' and 'evaluate'
- essay and report writing
- referencing, including referencing styles such as Harvard

Learners should apply this standard to the whole qualification. They carry out database searches using relevant academic search engines, such as CINAHL, MEDLINE and OpenAthens.

You should explain the purpose of literature searches and the credibility of sources in supporting evidence-based research, and learners should develop appropriate skills in critically evaluating sources and research findings

Investigate wellbeing for personal and professional effectiveness (outcome 3)

This outcome focuses on learners' wellbeing. It explores stress, causes of stress, coping strategies and resilience, to raise awareness and improve wellbeing. You should start by exploring stress and looking at definitions and if a level of stress is considered a normal part of daily life or if all stress is indicative of poor mental health. Learners can explore models of stress to highlight the impact that long-term stress has on health and wellbeing. You should explore and discuss common causes of stress, such as relationships, finance, living environments and trauma, as well as their physical and emotional effects. Learners should then focus on exploring their own stress in terms of academic, personal and placement stress, and identify specifically what is causing difficulties. You should discuss anxieties associated with both academic and placement issues, for example:

- academic concerns:
 - fitting into the class
 - getting to know classmates
 - academic writing standards
 - assessments
 - presentations
 - drug calculations
- placement concerns:
 - interacting with patients
 - fitting in with ward staff
 - understanding roles and responsibilities
 - caring for vulnerable, seriously or terminally ill patients
 - speaking to family members
 - carrying out clinical tasks effectively
 - using clinical equipment safely

You should introduce coping strategies, looking at good and bad approaches. Learners should explore strategies that they currently use and others that may help them in coping with their identified anxieties.

You should introduce the concept of psychological safety as a foundation for wellbeing, emphasising the importance of environments where individuals feel safe to express concerns, ask questions, and make mistakes. This includes acknowledging and learning from human error and adverse events without fear of judgement or reprisal. This approach recognises the role of the human factor in errors and encourages open discussion to facilitate learning and improvement, enabling individuals and teams to reflect on and address mistakes in a constructive manner.

Strategies to foster psychological safety include:

- establishing clear expectations and respectful communication
- encouraging peer support and collaborative learning
- normalising help-seeking behaviours
- promoting reflective practice and self-awareness
- modelling empathy and non-judgemental responses

Learners evaluate both helpful and unhelpful coping strategies, reflect on their current approaches, and identify new techniques to support their wellbeing and resilience in both academic and clinical contexts.

You should discuss resilience, exploring definitions and the idea that it is not something that an individual is born with, but instead something that can be developed or learned as a response to stressful situations. Resilience is the ability to cope with and adapt to stressful situations. Situations that are stressful and how individuals cope with them are part of life experience. Resilience develops from learning from each experience. Being able to act or behave in a way that is in our own best interest means that we can cheer ourselves up when we are sad or manage our anxiety when we feel stressed. This self-regulation is what makes us resilient. It does not mean that we should never be exposed to difficulty or stress. To be resilient we need to experience difficulty and change and learn how to work through it and navigate it. Resilient people acknowledge that we must feel the full

range of emotions to be healthy and happy, and accept that it is appropriate to feel sad, angry, frustrated or stressed at certain times in our life. As we adopt more effective coping strategies and prove to ourselves that we can successfully cope with stressful situations, then resilience develops as we become more confident in our own abilities.

Resources

There is a variety of media resources that you can use to support your delivery of the unit. In addition, the learning and application in the unit can be enhanced by learners' experiences both in the academic content of the course and from their practice placement. Much of the unit is based on reflective activities by learners, so there is a significant element of self-directed work and the allocated teaching times reflect this.

Approaches to delivery

We recommend that you deliver the unit through:

- lectures
- group work
- practical classroom activities
- individual reflective activities

Approaches to assessment

Where possible, you should integrate knowledge, skills and application across units, to evidence a holistic understanding of the course topics and reduce the assessment burden for learners.

You can use a range of assessment methods, such as:

- assignments
- learning styles analyses
- video diaries
- critical incidents analyses

- reflective accounts
- professional discussions
- folios

We recommend that you integrate assessment of the meta-skills with the reflective accounts in this unit. The meta-skills assessment is made up of reflections on learners' own meta-skills progress, using examples from practice placement, academic learning and personal development, relevant to their own professional healthcare pathway.

We recommend that you assess outcome 2 across the whole qualification, as success with this outcome is not based on one assessment, but rather on the academic competence and improvements evidenced across all assessments. You should consider an ongoing assessment that enables learners to evidence their learning and reflections across their course and practice placement. They can reflect on their learning, application, and practice, as well as their mental wellbeing, throughout the unit. This assessment could be folio based with reflective accounts, blogs or video diaries and professional discussions.

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

Understanding Personal and Professional Development (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 enables you to reflect on your individual personal and professional development needs. You work through three outcomes. For outcome 1, you learn about reflection and models of reflection. You cover the importance of reflection not only in the provision of quality care, but also regarding continuing professional standards and registration.

You recognise that to be a successful learner you need to take responsibility for your own learning. For outcome 2, you investigate your own learning style by carrying out a learner style profile and personality profile. This helps you find the most effective way for you to study and identify areas that require improvement. When you have identified your personal and professional learning needs, you devise and carry out activities to achieve the goals you have identified. One of these activities is action planning, which you may use across other units in the qualification. This includes looking at reflection as a learning tool and a way of identifying areas that need developing.

You create a professional portfolio that contains all the evidence of learning and achievement that you have generated. Throughout the unit, you reflect on your progress at regular intervals and make changes to take account of circumstances. You evaluate the improvements you've made to your personal and professional

practice, and consider what you have learned and what implications there are for your future personal and professional practice and development.

Outcome 3 focuses on your own health and wellbeing and explores elements of the unit, both on placement and in academic work, that have caused you anxiety. You look at what coping strategies you use and if they are effective. Finally, you research resilience and how to develop resilience.

Your centre provides you with assessments. These can include:

- assignments
- folios
- essays
- individual or group presentations
- video diaries
- critical incident analysis
- reflective accounts
- any other appropriate methods

You must complete the assessments, submit them by the required dates, and retain evidence in a portfolio with a checklist of evidence and statements from you that confirm that it is all your own work. Your centre may also use an anti-plagiarism software package to confirm authenticity.

HNC Healthcare Practice is a recognised qualification for healthcare support workers at band 3 and it enables progression to a variety of degree programmes, including:

- nursing
- midwifery
- physiotherapy
- speech and language therapy
- paramedicine

You may gain advanced standing and progress to year 2 of your chosen degree programme. Your centre can give you more information about how this can be achieved. You should also investigate your chosen university's entry criteria.

This unit contributes to your overall final grade.

Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, you develop meta-skills that are useful for the healthcare practice 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:
 - researching
 - evaluating understanding on an ongoing basis
- integrity:
 - discussing and evaluating own values and personal development
 - demonstrating knowledge and skills through portfolio evidence
- adapting:
 - accommodating new ideas through research and practical experience
- initiative:
 - independently researching
 - collaborating with other professionals to share enthusiasm and knowledge

Social intelligence

This meta-skill includes:

- communicating:
 - sharing ideas and perspectives
 - performing practical tasks in practice
 - showing evaluation through project evidence
- feeling:
 - showing empathy
- collaborating:
 - teamworking
 - completing practical tasks in practice
 - collaborating with individuals and colleagues when working on groups tasks

Innovation

This meta-skill includes:

- curiosity:
 - researching and making observations, to understand the link between theory and practice
- sense-making:
 - researching
 - evaluating understanding
- critical thinking:
 - analysing research
 - making informed decisions

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

Administrative information

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Superclass: PA

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
1.1	Updated outcome 3 information in 'Evidence requirements', 'Knowledge and skills' and 'Additional guidance' sections — learners must explain the concept of psychological safety as it supports mental wellbeing. What you need to do differently Please update your teaching notes and assessments.	August 2026

Please check [our website](#) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this unit.

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