

NextGen: HN unit specification

Horticulture: Sustainability and Innovation (SCQF level 8)

Unit code: JPKW 48

SCQF level: 8 (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.

Published: October 2026 (version 1.0)

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Unit purpose

This unit helps learners understand and work towards sustainability in a horticultural context. Learners explore and debate topical issues facing the horticulture industry today and in the future, and propose innovative solutions. The unit is flexible to ensure student-centred learning and teaching, focusing on key topics that are of concern to the current intake of learners. It uses active-learning techniques to challenge learners' current understanding, and build their confidence in exploring new ways of thinking and communicating information.

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. develop sustainability knowledge and understanding, and skills in a horticultural context
2. communicate information about sustainability in horticulture in a number of formats

Evidence requirements

Learners must provide the following evidence:

Outcome 1

Learners gather evidence that demonstrates they can:

- identify and describe sustainability in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and horticulture
- explain how one product or process relevant to their qualification could be made more sustainable and help meet the aims of at least two selected UN SDGs

Outcome 2

Learners gather evidence that demonstrates they can:

- investigate horticultural issues relating to sustainability
- create infographic materials using digital software
- use appropriate methods of communication for a particular audience (a minimum of two formats)

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 1 Learners should understand: • sustainability and the UN SDGs • horticulture sustainability issues, how these relate to the UN SDGs, and potential improvements	Outcome 1 Learners can: • review UN SDGs and assess own knowledge and understanding • review unit content against the UN SDGs to identify a sustainability-related issue • apply knowledge and understanding of sustainability and the UN SDGs to propose improvement
Outcome 2 Learners should understand: • different means of communication and how these apply to an audience • how to effectively communicate information	Outcome 2 Learners can: • differentiate and apply the most appropriate method of communication for a particular audience • communicate information on a range of contextualised topics

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:
 - reviewing the UN SDGs and assessing own knowledge and understanding
- integrity:
 - showing a strong sense of self and personal values
- adapting:
 - focusing on current issues
- initiative:
 - applying knowledge and understanding of sustainability and the UN SDGs to propose improvement

Social intelligence

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

- communicating:
 - preparing and presenting information on a range of topics; participating in debate

- feeling:
 - considering the audience when communicating
- collaborating:
 - working in groups; debating topical issues facing the horticulture industry today and in the future

Innovation

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

- curiosity:
 - investigating horticultural issues; researching and developing supporting materials
- creativity:
 - creating infographic materials using digital software
- critical thinking:
 - identifying a sustainability-related issue

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 notional design length for the unit is 40 hours. The amount of time you allocate to each outcome is at your discretion.

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

This unit is flexible to ensure student-centred learning and teaching. It focuses on key topics that are of concern to the current intake of learners. We recommend that you use active-learning techniques to challenge learners' current understanding and build their confidence in exploring new ways of thinking and communicating information.

Topics that you could cover include, but are not limited to:

- the use of plastics
- the sustainability of growing medias
- energy use and green technologies
- vertical farming
- the social impacts of robotics
- health and wellbeing in community growing
- the sustainability of globalised supply chains
- urban horticulture
- integrated pest management

Approaches to assessment

You can assess learners on their investigation of at least two sustainability issues facing the horticulture industry, asking them to apply problem-solving skills to a situation. They can do this in groups or individually. They can prepare and present their findings in a number of formats for each issue. Examples include, but are not limited to, a:

- group debate with supplementary infographics
- presentation with a supporting slideshow and/or poster
- podcast with supporting blog and/or web page

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: Sustainability and Innovation (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 allows you to develop and demonstrate your understanding of sustainability in a horticultural context. You have the opportunity to explore and debate topical issues facing the horticulture industry today and in the future, and to propose innovative solutions to situations.

You develop your understanding of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and how these can relate to horticulture, and identify ways you can apply these principles to your work.

You also develop the skills required to communicate these issues and potential solutions to a range of people.

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 investigating and communicating your findings on horticultural sustainability issues.

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 to progress to direct 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 focus on assessing your own knowledge of the UN SDGs, examine your own personal values, and propose actions to improve situations.

Social intelligence

You develop your social intelligence skills as you communicate and debate a range of topics, considering your audience as you do so, and collaborating with your peers on group tasks.

Innovation

You develop your innovation skills as you investigate horticultural issues — specifically identifying a sustainability-related issue, and research helpful materials, and create digital infographics.

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

Published: October 2026 (version 1.0)

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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