

NextGen: HN unit specification

Landscape Design: Skills and Practice (SCQF level 8)

Unit code: JS4P 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.

Published: October 2026 (version 1.0)

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Unit purpose

This unit provides learners with the knowledge and skills they need to enter the landscape-design industry. Learners can gain authentic, practical and professional skills to help them to design and present a detailed landscape design to clients and tradespeople.

The unit is flexible to ensure learner-centred teaching and learning that focuses on key, contemporary topics of interest to learners starting out on their careers. It uses active-learning techniques to challenge learners' current understanding, and build their confidence to explore 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 garden design, on which this unit expands, ideally having completed Designing Gardens and Greenspace at SCQF level 7.

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

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

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1. develop a design portfolio for a landscape project
2. design a range of hard landscape features
3. prepare documents for clients and building contractors

Evidence requirements

Outcome 1

Learners must develop a design portfolio for a landscape project, demonstrating that they can:

- conduct and analyse a site survey
- engage with clients to develop a design brief for the site
- design a hand-drawn layout plan for the site
- present the design portfolio

Outcome 2

Learners must design a range of hard landscape features, demonstrating that they can:

- produce detailed construction drawings for three different features using computer-aided design (CAD) software
- specify, source and cost materials for the selected features

Outcome 3

Learners must prepare documents for clients and building contractors, demonstrating that they can:

- create a tender document for the construction of a landscape feature
- prepare a schedule of works, including timeline and allocation of tasks, to suitable professional roles
- prepare an example contract including terms and conditions for the build of a landscape design
- describe statutory requirements for the build of a landscape design

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 1 Learners should understand: - the practical application of surveying techniques for a site - site analysis techniques that are appropriate for the site, such as: - soil - climate - aspect - the importance of the client brief and how to prepare one - how to create a layout plan by hand - formats for presenting design portfolio portfolios	Outcome 1 Learners can: - carry out a site survey to industry standards using appropriate techniques - conduct a site analysis to inform the design - create a brief by working with clients - create a layout plan by hand to industry standards - present a portfolio to clients that meets their requirements
Outcome 2 Learners should understand: - different construction materials - the process of creating construction drawings - how to specify, source and cost materials for selected features	Outcome 2 Learners can: - create construction drawings to industry standards using CAD software - specify, source and cost materials for selected features
Outcome 3 Learners should understand: - what a tender document is - how to prepare a schedule of works, including the importance of a timeline, and how to allocate tasks to suitable professional roles - the importance of contracts and how to prepare one - statutory requirements for a landscape design build	Outcome 3 Learners can: - create a tender document for the construction of a landscape feature - prepare a schedule of works, including a timeline and task allocation - prepare a contract for the build of a landscape design - describe the statutory requirements for the build of a landscape design

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:
 - concentrating during surveys and briefs to ensure plans reflect clients' wishes and contain appropriate plant choices for the chosen space
- integrity:
 - carrying out all tasks honestly and in all parties' best interests
- adapting:
 - changing approaches and design ideas to suit new information or circumstance
- initiative:
 - making confident decisions in designing landscaping features

Social intelligence

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

- communicating:
 - interacting with clients during surveys and with team members during construction in effective and appropriate ways

- feeling:
 - being sensitive to the consequences for other people of changes in plans or designs
- collaborating:
 - listening effectively to clients during surveys and briefing meetings, and working with team members to ensure the best project outcome
- leading:
 - exemplifying good practice and helping others from design presentation to garden or greenspace construction

Innovation

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

- curiosity:
 - asking questions, and researching and designing garden or greenspace plans
- creativity:
 - selecting appropriate and sometimes original or unusual materials and methods to construct a range of features
- sense-making:
 - applying learning from previous challenges
- critical thinking:
 - using methodical reasoning processes to work through the stages and challenges in a design project

Literacies

This unit provides opportunities to develop the following literacies.

Numeracy

Learners develop their numeracy skills by:

- calculating survey information and drawing to scale
- costing a range of hard and soft landscaping materials
- calculating required amounts of materials and plants

Communication

Learners enhance their communication skills by:

- gathering a client brief and presenting their completed design
- working as part of a team to construct garden or greenspace elements

Digital

Learners improve their digital skills and computer literacy by:

- using various software packages — such as spreadsheet, word-processing and presentation software — to present information in a variety of ways
- using CAD software

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 you deliver the unit according to your centre's facilities and resources. You should make use of industry contacts and, where possible, organise site visits to help learners to contextualise their understanding.

We recommend that you take a flexible approach to delivering this unit, using a mixture of classroom teaching and tutorials to develop the learners' knowledge and understanding.

The notional design length for the unit is 120 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

If practicable, you could deliver part or all of this unit in a design studio to allow learners to gain authentic skills that they can apply in practice.

Resources

Learners need access to CAD software and suitable physical sites to be able to meet the evidence requirements. 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.

Approaches to delivery

Learners need access to CAD software and suitable physical sites to be able to meet the evidence requirements.

Ideally, the unit should build on the knowledge and skills learners gained in the Designing Gardens and Greenspace unit in the HNC framework. The site on which learners focus should be more complex than those they have worked on before. It could, for example, include an urban public space or a heritage garden.

You could invite visiting speakers to illustrate the alternative viewpoints of those involved in design, implementing and managing garden design projects. You could

also encourage learners to explore presentation and construction techniques that can enhance the breadth of capabilities of the garden designer.

Approaches to assessment

You should start by teaching and assessing surveying skills before moving on to graphics and drawing, thereby following the design process in practice.

We recommend assessing initial skills and knowledge early on in the delivery of the unit to help identify any gaps before learners start the detailed work of producing the portfolio. You may need to adjust the delivery order of the unit to ensure learners have the opportunity to develop the skills they need before assessment begins.

You can integrate assessment with the Horticulture: Professional Practice unit, particularly the practical skills element.

You could assess the unit by asking learners to carry out a large project that combines all three outcomes, for which they would produce a detailed portfolio, in which they should :

- produce a design from survey through to completion of concept plan
- identify relevant landscape elements
- create detailed construction drawings and specifications

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

Landscape Design: Skills and 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 helps you to develop a greater understanding of the roles involved in designing gardens and realising garden designs, and the relationships between all parties. You learn how to manage clients and contractors, and develop an appreciation of the design and implementation process from their viewpoints.

Managing projects effectively can be as important as the design itself, and therefore it is crucial to recognise the significance of all stages of the process, from design to successful completion onsite.

The unit involves both practical and theory sessions to deepen your understanding of all the elements involved in designing landscape features, including contributions from other professionals. You should take advantage of opportunities to visit garden sites, which are as beneficial to your learning as practical sessions.

Prior knowledge and skills

Before starting the unit, you would benefit from a foundation knowledge of garden design, ideally having completed units from HNC Horticulture.

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

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

Assessment

To complete this unit, you must achieve a satisfactory level in all pieces of coursework. These are normally in the form of structured questions and a project in which you submit drawings.

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 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 focus during surveys and briefs to ensure plans reflect clients' wishes and appropriate plant choices for the chosen space; carry out all tasks honestly and in all parties' best interests; adapt to new information or changes in circumstances; and make confident design decisions.

Social intelligence

You develop your communication skills as you interact appropriately and effectively with clients and team members; think about the impact on others of changes to plans or designs; work well with clients and team members; and help others in all stages of a project.

Innovation

You develop your innovation skills as you ask questions and research landscape designs; make appropriate and sometimes original design choices; learn from previous challenges; and use methodical reasoning to work through problems.

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: SF

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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