

NextGen: HN unit specification

Social and Community Horticulture (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: JT9P 47

SCQF level: 7 (16 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 is suitable for learners studying HNC Horticulture, but can also be studied on a stand-alone basis by learners who are interested in the social and community aspects of horticulture.

It introduces learners to current practice and future developments in horticulture, the role of horticulture in society, career opportunities, and raises awareness of the benefits of therapeutic horticulture. Learners can apply the knowledge and understanding they gain in roles in the horticulture industry, with the qualification equally providing a platform for those who engage in community horticulture.

Entry requirements and progression routes

Entry to this unit is at your centre's discretion. While learners would benefit from previous horticultural knowledge or experience, they do not need it to study the unit.

Before they start, however, we recommend that learners have completed one or more of the following:

- NC in Horticulture at SCQF Level 5, ideally to include some level 6 units
- SVQ Horticulture at SCQF Level 6, or equivalent
- a relevant City & Guilds qualification at level 6
- a minimum of one Scottish Higher at grade C or above, or one A-level at grade D or above
- other equivalent qualifications
- relevant industry experience

If learners are studying the unit as part of HNC Horticulture, they may be able to progress to HND Horticulture, or go directly into employment in the horticulture industry.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1. describe the role of horticulture in society and communities
2. investigate the structure and career opportunities of the horticulture industry
3. describe the role of therapeutic horticulture

Evidence requirements

Outcome 1

Learners must:

- define the role of horticulture in society, referring to aims, impacts and outcomes
- describe community initiatives in horticulture including:
 - community allotments, gardens and greenspace projects
 - local food production and biosecurity
 - the importance of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), charities and establishments of charitable status
 - environmental, greenspace and biodiversity initiatives
 - competitions, individual shows and communities such as Britain in Bloom
- describe the steps for setting up a community garden project:
 - community consultation
 - government support
 - location
 - health and safety, and safeguarding
 - sources of funding and the bidding process
- identify a range of legislation related to community involvement
- evaluate a horticultural business plan and identify sources of information required to create a business plan

Learners can generate their assessment evidence as part of a community initiative project.

Outcome 2

Learners must:

- identify a range of horticulture careers, including:
 - commercial
 - council and local government
 - scientific research and its application in horticulture
 - education and horticulture
- explain a range of horticulture industries
- explain the structure of a branch of the horticulture industry
- describe some of the latest advances in horticulture

Learners can generate evidence in a case study related to an area or branch of horticulture, a log of industry engagements, or a self-reflective assessment of their experience in a sector.

Outcome 3

Learners must:

- describe the principles and benefits of therapeutic horticulture for health and well-being
- describe the history of therapeutic horticulture
- investigate organisations in therapeutic horticulture
- investigate careers in therapeutic horticulture

Learners can generate their assessment evidence in a presentation or assignment related to therapeutic horticulture.

There may also be opportunities to combine assessment across all three outcomes.

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 1 Learners should understand: - the role of horticulture in the community - steps in setting up a horticultural community project - the importance of structure and governance of allotment and community growing	Outcome 1 Learners can: explain the role of horticulture in the community describe the steps involved in setting up a horticultural enterprise
Outcome 2 Learners should understand: - the structure of the horticultural industry - a range of career opportunities in horticulture - the importance of charities and NGOs in the horticultural industry - the importance of sustainable practice in horticulture - the importance of science in the advancement of horticultural practice - the changing role of government in sustainability	Outcome 2 Learners can: - explain the structure of the horticultural industry - explain the horticultural procurement supply chain - describe the contribution of charities and NGOs in environmental and community horticulture - apply the principles of sustainability in horticultural practice - explain the importance of science's contribution to horticulture - explain the importance of government in aspects of sustainability

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 3 Learners should understand: • the effects of horticulture on health and well-being • the importance of therapeutic horticulture in society • a range of careers in therapeutic horticulture	Outcome 3 Learners can: • explain the importance of therapeutic horticulture for health and well-being • describe the types of organisations involved in therapeutic horticulture • describe the range of careers and opportunities for employment in therapeutic horticulture

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:

- integrity
 - being honest in all tasks and interactions; taking an ethical approach to the legal and practical aspects of community garden projects
- adapting
 - coping with changes in circumstances, such as weather conditions and soil quality; accommodating different needs and personalities within the garden-using community
- initiative
 - identifying opportunities and acting on them

Social intelligence

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

- communicating:
 - building and maintaining effective relationships and dialogue with the many stakeholders in a community garden project

- feeling:
 - empathising with other points of view; developing awareness of a social conscience; nurturing social perceptiveness to ensure outcomes that work for as many people as possible
- collaborating:
 - working effectively alongside individuals and other groups and organisations; developing and motivating other people
- leading:
 - acting as a change catalyst

Innovation

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

- curiosity:
 - asking questions
- creativity:
 - coming up with new ways of doing things
- sense-making:
 - recognising patterns, and whether to break or maintain them; learning from mistakes
- critical thinking:
 - recognising opportunities and sourcing information

Literacies

This unit provides opportunities to develop the following literacies.

Numeracy

Learners develop their numeracy skills by:

- making financial calculations; for example, when costing projects and applying for funding

Communication

Learners enhance their communication skills by:

- carrying out industry research
- engaging with industry; for example, on a work placement

Digital

Learners improve their digital skills and computer literacy by:

- carrying out industry research
- producing an e-portfolio

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

This a mandatory unit in HNC Horticulture.

You can deliver this unit alongside other units in the HNC, and link in with units such as Ecology and Environment for Horticulture.

You can deliver it in the latter part of the HNC, by which time learners have acquired the underpinning horticultural skills, and are subsequently more informed to learn more about the career opportunities that the industry can offer.

You can integrate industry engagement throughout the HNC to contextualise horticultural practice in real settings.

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

Describe the role of horticulture in society and communities (outcome 1)

Learners would benefit from visits to a range of horticultural organisations in the community such as allotment schemes, community gardens or greenspaces, community-led food production enterprises, or horticultural education organisations. They develop an understanding of the breadth and variety of community projects, and the value of greenspaces and partnership working. You should encourage them to investigate the start-up methods and funding opportunities available to community projects through interviews or other appropriate research methods.

They should explore the role and place of community initiatives and campaigns delivered by, for example, Social Farms & Gardens, RHS, Keep Britain Tidy and Keep Scotland Beautiful.

Investigate the structure and career opportunities of the horticulture industry (outcome 2)

Learners benefit from visits and talks from a range of industry types, such as commercial, charitable and NGO producers of ornamental, cut-flower and edible crops.

They can gather industry-related information through interviews or other appropriate research methods. Encourage learners to find a work placement at an organisation where they can improve their employability skills and employment opportunities.

Learners should investigate the current sustainable practices in horticulture that reduce, reuse or recycle resources. They should explore industry and customer

attitudes to sustainability through bodies such as The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA), and learn about government initiatives and policies around the environment and climate change, and more specific aspects such as GrowSave horticulture or equivalent.

Describe the role of therapeutic horticulture (outcome 3)

Learners benefit from engagement with therapeutic horticulture organisations such as Trellis Scotland and Thrive.

They may find it useful to work with client groups, such as those using therapeutic horticulture:

- in care home settings, working with elderly people or people with dementia
- in medical settings, working with physically disabled people
- alongside organisations working in mental health, such as the Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH)
- with children and young people

Learners should examine the role of the NHS in therapeutic horticulture, and consider initiatives such as forest bathing and GP-prescribed nature.

They should also explore the work of community groups, such as Grow and Learn in Nature.

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.

Approaches to assessment

You can assess learners on outcomes 1 to 3 through a project on community initiatives, a diary or log for industry engagements, a case study or assignment on the methods or work planning of therapeutic horticulture, or a self-reflective assessment of their learning experience in a sector.

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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

Social and Community Horticulture (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

In this unit, you consider the social and community context for horticulture.

It is designed for learners studying HNC Horticulture, but may also be of interest to you if you want to be more involved in the social and community aspects of horticulture.

The unit introduces you to current practice and future developments in horticulture, the role of horticulture in society, career opportunities, and raises your awareness of the benefits of therapeutic horticulture.

When you complete this unit you can:

- describe the role of horticulture in society
- investigate the structure and career opportunities of the horticulture industry
- describe the role of therapeutic horticulture

Prior knowledge and skills

You do not need any specific prior learning to study this unit, but previous experience in horticulture practice at SCQF level 6 would be helpful.

Before you start the unit, however, we recommend that you have completed one or more of the following:

- NC in Horticulture at SCQF Level 5, ideally to include some level 6 units
- SVQ Horticulture at SCQF Level 6, or equivalent
- a relevant City & Guilds qualification at level 6
- a minimum of one Scottish Higher at grade C or above, or one A-level at grade D or above
- other equivalent qualifications
- relevant industry experience

Future progression and employment

If you study the unit as part of HNC Horticulture, you may be able to progress to HND Horticulture, or directly into employment in the horticulture industry or in community horticulture.

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 self-awareness and an ethical approach to your work as part of self-management meta-skills.

Social intelligence

You develop empathy, a social conscience, social perceptiveness and nurture effective relationships as part of social intelligence meta-skills. You also build skills in developing others and motivating others, and learn to act as a change catalyst.

Innovation

You develop skills in recognising patterns and opportunities, and sourcing information as part of innovation meta-skills.

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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History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

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