



Writing National and Higher National Units

GUIDE FOR WRITERS

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Contents

Using this guide	1
1 Unit quality: Getting it right first time	2
2 Unit specification: Overview	12
3 Writing Higher National Units: Statement of standards and support notes	16
Example of a Higher National Unit	29
4 Writing National Units: Statement of standards and support notes	43
Example of a National Unit	56
5 Additional information	64

Using this guide

This document has been created to provide guidance to individuals involved in writing National and Higher National (HN) Units for SQA. It does not apply to National Courses in development to support Curriculum for Excellence.

This guide has four main sections:

1 Unit quality: Getting it right first time

This section of the guide provides the information you will need to understand how to write Units of the quality and standard required by SQA.

2 Unit specification: Overview

This section covers both HN and National qualifications, and provides an overview of the information different Unit specifications give. It also tells you how to complete the 'General information' section of the Unit specifications.

3 Writing Higher National Units: Statement of standards and support notes

4 Writing National Units: Statement of standards and support notes

These sections of the guide are specific to each qualification family. They outline how to write the statement of standards and support notes for each qualification area. They also provide links to the most up-to-date Unit specification shell, and examples of well written Units that have met our quality standards. It's important that you refer to the right section for the type of Unit you've been asked to write:

5 Additional information

This section of the guidance contains the additional information you will need to refer to when writing the Units. There is a link to the SQA Academy training site, which will complement the writing process. The information available online will include:

- ◆ Unit Quality Checklist
- ◆ SCQF level descriptors
- ◆ Core Skills Framework
- ◆ Essential Skills Toolkit
- ◆ Guidance on equality and inclusion
- ◆ Inclusion of information relating to National Occupational Standards

What qualifications does this guide cover?

This guide covers the current Unit specifications for both National and Higher National (HN) Units. Unit specifications will be changing in the future to support both the new National Courses, under Curriculum for Excellence, and further SQA developments. In time, this guidance document will be updated to support Unit writing across all development areas.

1 Unit quality: Getting it right first time

Introduction

The main aim of this guide is to provide important advice and guidance on the key aspects of writing a good Unit specification.

At the beginning of the writing process you will be provided with a writing brief for the Unit specification. This will hold all the essential information you will need to develop the Unit specification, including:

- ◆ the purpose of the Unit
- ◆ the progression information
- ◆ suggested content of the Unit
- ◆ information on related Units and related National Occupational Standards

The writing brief will provide you with a basis for the Unit specification; it won't hold all of the information, but it will form the starting point for your writing, and this guide will help you take things further. Having read this guide, you should be able to:

- ◆ understand what makes a good Unit specification and how to produce it from the writing brief given
- ◆ write Units in plain English
- ◆ write Units which meet the standards of the subject area to the required level
- ◆ understand your obligations in terms of equality, inclusion and disability legislation
- ◆ include Core Skills and other essential skills
- ◆ understand the various sections of the Unit specification and their individual functions
- ◆ produce material that complies with SQA's Copyright Policy

What is a Unit specification?

The Unit specification is an important document which defines the boundaries within which a learner is assessed, and the standards to which assessment must be made. The Unit specification is not primarily concerned with material for learning and teaching: it is a statement of national standards of assessment or achievement.

Unit specifications are made up of three sections:

General information: This section sets out the general and administrative information about the Unit. It should summarise what the Unit is about and include the key points, ie the credit value, recommended entry, a summary of the Unit and the Outcomes, etc.

Statement of standards: This is the mandatory part of the Unit specification. This section contains information which tells the reader the Outcomes that have to be achieved, the standard of achievement which must be reached and what evidence must be produced to successfully complete the Unit.

Support notes: Information provided in the support notes doesn't have any mandatory force — it's provided for guidance on delivering the Unit. The support notes section can be the most useful part of the Unit specification for users. It is an opportunity to expand on the information given in the statement of standards and give clear advice on all aspects of delivery.

Planning and writing from the brief

Why should you plan?

You should always plan before you write a Unit. You need to be clear about the overall purpose of the Unit, and must bear in mind that you will need to ensure that the Unit is as inclusive as possible.

You should not underestimate the time it takes to write Units to the required standard. Planning will help you think about the work you have to do, and will save you time later.

The writing brief

You will be given a writing brief. In most instances, the brief will be written by the Qualifications Development Team (QDT) who are responsible for overseeing the development of the Group Award or Units and are therefore best placed to advise on the content of the Units you have been asked to develop.

It is important to stick to the content of the brief when you're developing the Unit. This will avoid duplication with other Units, and ensure the Unit is the appropriate level and demand.

Remember, though, that the information in the writing brief serves only as the basis of the Unit. In any instances where you feel that there may be issues with the brief that could cause problems with the Unit specification, you should raise them with the contact named in the brief.

Getting started

Once you have received the writing brief there is a temptation to start immediately, but this is not always good practice. It could result in a lack of coherence in the Unit, with substantial revisions having to be made later.

You will need to think about the balance between:

- ◆ level
- ◆ content
- ◆ delivery
- ◆ assessment
- ◆ notional design length of the Unit

The plan you draw up might also provide a basis for writing the support notes for the Unit.

Think about the content of the Unit and what you want learners to be able to do as a result of having completed it, ie the outcomes of their learning. Even at this early stage, you may be able to begin to get a feel for whether the Unit could be assessed holistically, or whether it will need to be assessed sequentially. You will also need to think about what evidence learners will need to demonstrate their competence. Try to work out the sequence of Outcomes that is most logical for delivery and assessment.

You should also bear in mind that:

- ◆ Outcomes and Performance Criteria (for Units that have PCs) should be written in sequence, ie in the order the learner will have to tackle them. This will make the job of writing easier, and will enhance the coherence and logic of the Unit as a whole.
- ◆ You will need to check that the Evidence Requirements cover everything in the Outcome/Unit and that they explain clearly exactly what the candidate has to do and to what standard. They should also indicate how much evidence is required to demonstrate this, and the conditions in which assessment should be carried out.
- ◆ The assessment for the Unit should promote efficient and effective gathering of evidence.
- ◆ Unit assessment should be accessible for learners, and manageable for learners and centres.

- ◆ Unnecessary duplication of assessment should be avoided.
- ◆ Holistic assessment should be encouraged, where appropriate.
- ◆ Opportunities for e-assessment and ICT supported assessment should be encouraged, where appropriate.

By studying the brief and planning for the Unit, you will be clearer about its main objectives and scope, and writing individual parts of the Unit may become easier. It is also much easier to sift information, highlight the critical aspects of performance and keep the original intentions of the Unit in perspective at all times.

Reviewing your writing

During the writing process you should review what you have written constantly to enhance coherence. For example, check that the Evidence Requirements match what is needed and are unambiguous, that the content of the Unit links back to the brief, summary statement/Unit purpose and title of the Unit, and that no unnecessary barriers to access have been built in.

Re-write Outcomes where necessary. Sometimes, after writing other sections of the standards, an Outcome may not express what you originally intended it to. It is normally easier to re-write the Outcome than to re-write everything else.

It is a good idea to have a network of contacts from whom you can get feedback while writing the Unit. Feedback could come, for example, from the design team of the qualification. If you are writing the Unit as part of a sequence in which the remaining Units are written by other writers, you could ask them for comment — keeping in contact could help resolve any issues of overlap and progression. The network does not have to be large, but it is a good way of testing out the coherence and practicability of Units, particularly in relation to assessment and to the balance between content and the timescale for delivery.

The importance of quality

Quality is an extremely important consideration — remember that all SQA Unit specifications set out national standards.

There are two main aspects of Unit quality that should be uppermost in your mind: quality of the presentation and the quality of content.

Presentation

SQA has a number of different Unit specifications, which serve different qualification types. Use the correct template when writing your Unit, so that it is presented in the correct format for publishing. Templates change from time to time, so please refer to the correct part of Section 3 and 4 of this guide for the link to the most up to date Unit template for your qualification type.

Content

Clarity, coherence and accessibility are important. Above all, the content of the Unit must be capable of being understood by others and be interpreted in exactly the same way by all users. For this reason, you should always try to write as simply and clearly as possible.

Once the Unit has been written, it should be clear what the learner must be able to do and what evidence they need to provide to demonstrate their competence.

It is important to remember that:

- ◆ The statement of standards must contain clear and unambiguous statements which reflect national standards of achievement and must not impose unnecessary barriers to access or achievement.
- ◆ The aims and objectives of the Unit must be appropriate to the target audience and to the level at which the Unit is placed in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Further information on the SCQF is given later in this guide.

There is a link to a Unit checklist in Section 5 Additional Information. This will help you ensure that you have met the quality criteria. It is important that you review your final Unit alongside this checklist before submitting the Unit to SQA.

The overall quality of the Unit depends on these checks being made. Any ambiguity in the wording of a Unit undermines national consistency in approaches to assessment.

Quality assurance

Once a Unit has been written and submitted to us, we will put it through a series of quality assurance steps to ensure the final published Unit specification meets the standard required.

The quality assurance steps involve a series of checks to ensure that it has been checked for technical accuracy and that it has been approved by an independent subject specialist. It may be necessary for us to contact you to clarify any issues. Normally, though, submitted work should be in final draft.

Once the quality assurance steps have been completed, the Unit progresses through our validation process. At the same time, the Unit will be audited for any claims for embedded Core Skills.

Core and other essential skills

Core Skills are used as the basis for generic skills development in Higher National and National Qualifications.

About Core Skills

There are five Core Skills: Communication, Numeracy, Information and Communication Technology, Problem Solving and Working with Others. Each Core Skill is available at SCQF levels 2 to 6. The activities and qualities that make up each Core Skill are identified in the Core Skills Framework, which you can find at <http://www.sqa.org.uk/coreskills>.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills should be identified once the subject content of the Unit has been established. This will enable you to see which Core Skills areas develop naturally and consider ways to develop other Core Skills through teaching and learning strategies.

Core Skills can be either signposted or embedded in Units:

- ◆ Signposted — opportunities to develop Core Skills arise in learning and teaching but are not automatically certificated.
- ◆ Embedded — the assessment evidence for the Unit also includes full evidence for complete Core Skill or Core Skill components. In this case, a learner successfully completing the Unit will be automatically certificated for the Core Skill. (This depends on the Unit having been successfully audited and validated for Core Skills certification.)

Learners will naturally use and develop aspects of some of the Core Skills as they work through the assessment requirements for a Unit. Additional opportunities to develop Core Skills could be achieved through the chosen method of learning and teaching for the Unit. For example, group work, group discussions, and use of technology. Identifying and recording Core Skills development opportunities is referred to as 'signposting'.

Embedded or naturally occurring Core Skills?

After you have written the Unit you may decide that one or more Core Skills is naturally occurring and should therefore be embedded within the Unit. Provided that the Unit is successfully audited and validated for Core Skill certification, learners who successfully complete the Unit will be automatically certificated for the Core Skill or the Core Skill component.

If you are considering embedding a Core Skill in the Unit (which would lead to a claim for automatic certification of that Core Skill), the key questions are:

- ◆ Is the Core Skill likely to form a natural part of the Unit?

- ◆ Is it consistent with the other Outcomes?
- ◆ Can it reasonably be included without distorting the Unit, or creating unnecessary barriers to achieving the Unit?

Normally, you would aim to embed a Core Skill at the same level as the Unit. Sometimes, you may wish to embed a Core Skill which is one or two levels below the level of the Unit. This does not affect the level of the Unit.

About other essential skills

These are the skills which, although not formally assessed, add value to qualifications and enable learners to develop themselves in broader terms. There are many different essential skills, but the following areas should provide a focus:

- ◆ enterprise
- ◆ employability
- ◆ sustainable development
- ◆ citizenship

Where appropriate, these other skills areas should be considered when writing a Unit.

Incorporating other essential skills in Units is about looking for opportunities for learners to develop these skills. It's about considering where these skills can be incorporated or developed naturally in the learning, and highlighting these opportunities.

For further information, it is useful to refer to our document *Using the Curriculum Tools for Enterprise, Employability, Sustainable Development and Citizenship: A Guide for Unit Writers* (May 2009). Also see *Introducing essential skills: adding value to qualifications* (June 2010). Both these documents are available as links in Section 5: Additional Information.

Equality and inclusion

The Equality Act (2010) places clear duties on SQA not to discriminate against people who wish to be or who are learners for SQA's qualifications because of their disability, race, age, religion or belief, sex, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity or sexual orientation (known as the protected characteristics).

This means that none of SQA's qualifications can be unlawfully discriminatory, and that SQA must make reasonable adjustments for disabled learners consistent with maintaining the integrity of SQA's qualifications.

To ensure that SQA meets these legal duties in a robust and transparent way, a new process and supporting guidance have been developed. See the link in Section 5: Additional Information of this guide for details.

SQA credit values and SCQF levels

SQA Units are expressed in both SQA credit values and SCQF credit points and level. The writing brief will already have determined the SQA credit value and the SCQF credit points and level of the Unit you are writing.

It is important that you are aware of the notional hours of learning involved, so you can write Units that meet the required level of challenge.

About SQA credit values and SCQF credit points

The credit value allocated to a Unit gives an indication of the contribution the Unit makes to an SQA Group Award. An SQA credit value of 1 given to an SQA Unit represents approximately 40 hours of programmed learning, teaching and assessment.

SQA credit values are allocated as follows:

10 hours	0.25 credits
20 hours	0.5 credits
40 hours	1.0 credit
60 hours	1.5 credits
80 hours	2 credits
120 hours	3 credits

The norm for Units is one credit with a notional design length of 40 hours.

All SQA qualifications also carry SCQF credit points. The SCQF brings all Scottish qualifications into a single framework ranging from Access 1 to doctorates. It includes degrees, HNC/Ds, National Qualifications, and SVQs.

Within the SCQF, every 10 hours of learning equates to 1 SCQF credit point. Most National Units at SCQF levels 1 to 6 are made up of 6 SCQF credit points, or a notional 60 hours of learning. Of these 60 hours, 40 involve programmed learning, such as class contact and assessment. The other 20 hours includes the expected time that an individual learner will be expected to contribute to his/her learning through independent study, such as reading and revision for assessment. For National Units at these levels, it is expected that learners require an additional half of the time required for programmed learning in order to prepare them to undertake a successful learning experience.

National Units at SCQF level 7, however, are made up of 8 SCQF credit points, or a notional 80 hours of learning. This reflects the fact that SCQF level 7 is the start point for higher education in the framework, and this involves a higher and often deeper level of learning than that undertaken at the lower levels. As such, learning at SCQF level 7 and above places more demands on the learner, including the need for a higher proportion of independent study, which is reflected in the overall learning time.

HN learners are expected to put in an equivalent amount of their own study time, which gives a one credit HN Unit an allocation of eight SCQF points and a two credit HN Unit 16 SCQF credit points.

SCQF levels

Information about SCQF levels may be found in the *SCQF Handbook: User Guide* (published 2009). The following is an extract from the Handbook:

The SCQF Level Descriptors, which have five characteristics, provide a reference point for determining the level of a qualification, learning programme, module or unit of learning or for the recognition of prior learning. They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements of required learning for individual qualifications. The SCQF Level Descriptors allow broad comparisons to be made between qualifications and learning programmes achieved in different contexts. They apply to learning based on learning outcomes that is subject to reliable and valid methods of quality-assured assessment.

SCQF Level Descriptors are generic statements that describe the characteristics and expected performance at each level of the Framework and relate to learning outcomes. The five characteristics are:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Practice (applied knowledge and understanding)
- Generic cognitive skills, such as evaluation and critical analysis
- Communication, ICT and Numeracy Skills
- Autonomy, accountability and working with others.

As some characteristics may not be relevant for particular qualifications or learning programmes they should not be regarded as a required “checklist”. There is no expectation that learning outcomes in qualifications and learning programmes will cover all of the characteristics of an SCQF level as described in the Level Descriptors.

All Units should be written in language that is consistent with the language of the SCQF Level Descriptors for the level of the Unit. In addition, the level of demand of the Unit should comply with the implied level of demand of the appropriate level descriptors.

Throughout the writing of the Unit specification you need to be aware of the SCQF level you are writing for.

Generally, the writing brief will outline the SCQF level required. When you are proposing the allocation of SCQF levels to Units, you must refer to the SCQF level descriptors as reference.

2 Unit specification: Overview

This section follows the headings within the Unit specification. The guidance given under each heading explains what you should include in each section.

General information section of the Unit specification

This section sets out the general and administrative information about the Unit. It should summarise what the Unit is about including the key points, the credit value, recommended entry, a summary of the Unit and the Outcomes.

The Unit title

The writing brief will contain a Unit title. In most cases, this will be a working title. If this does not reflect the content of the Unit, you may suggest alternative titles.

The most important feature of a good Unit title is that it gives a clear indication of what the Unit is about. A good title should reflect what learners are doing or the skills or knowledge they will have demonstrated on achieving the Unit.

Remember that the title is often the first (and perhaps only) thing that some people will read before deciding whether to use the Unit. You should try to ensure that the title indicates clearly the area of skills and/or knowledge covered.

Some key tips:

- ◆ Don't use 'the' at the start of the title. This will help with alphabetical listings. For example, 'Using Accounting Information' would be better than 'The Use of Accounting Information'.
- ◆ Where the Unit is 'An introduction...' or 'Introduction to...' the main part of the title should be first. Then use a colon, followed by 'An Introduction'. For example, you could title a Unit 'Working in a Business Enterprise: An Introduction'.
- ◆ Where a Unit is part of a Course and the title relates clearly to the subject area, there is no need for the Course stem to be part of the title. For example, 'Geography: Geographical Study (Advanced Higher)' would be better as 'Geographical Study (Advanced Higher)'.
- ◆ Where the title of a Unit could relate to a number of different subjects and it is not clear from the Unit title which subject area the Unit belongs to, the Course title should be inserted as a stem (followed by a colon). For example French: Language (Higher).
- ◆ Where Unit titles have sub-divisions of the title within them, the subdivision should be introduced by a colon. For example, Manufacturing Systems: Characteristics.
- ◆ Don't use brackets in Unit titles — this is because the level will appear in brackets at the end of each title.
- ◆ You should not use numbers in a title to indicate progression through different levels. Progression will be shown by the level of the Unit.

Unit code

The Unit code is allocated by SQA.

Writing the Unit purpose

This part of the Unit specification should be written to give the reader a clear idea of the content and objectives of the Unit. It will be based on the writing brief for the Unit.

The text that appears here may be used for different purposes, so it should be able to be separated from the remainder of the Unit specification — eg for school or college handbooks/prospectuses, guidance databases, providing summary information for admissions to higher education and further education courses, or information for employers.

The Unit purpose should be as comprehensive as possible, but must avoid claims that go beyond what is covered in the Unit. It should give an overview of the content, indicate the level/depth/complexity of knowledge and skills to be achieved and the learner target group for the Unit. (The information about the knowledge and skills could be shown by cross-referencing to other standards, eg what the Unit might prepare the learner for in future.) The summary should also place the Unit clearly in its context. Examples are given in the relevant areas of Section 3 and 4 of this guide.

Credit points and level

You should specify the SQA credit value and SCQF credit points and level in this section: For example:

Credit value: 1 HN Credit at SCQF level 7 (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

Recommended entry to the Unit

Under this heading you will give guidance on the level of knowledge, skills, experience or the qualifications that learners should have achieved before they start the Unit, if they are to be able to achieve the Unit within the time allotted.

Entry is always at the discretion of the centre, and you should only recommend prior knowledge and experience if it is appropriate because some learners may not have the same access to prior learning as other learners and may then be denied access to a qualification. It is helpful to give examples of the type and level of qualification that might demonstrate prior knowledge and skills, and examples of other kinds of experience that might also indicate this.

For example, you might write a statement like this:

‘While entry is at the discretion of the centre, learners would normally be expected to have attained one of the following, or equivalent:

- ◆ Standard Grade History at Credit level

- ◆ Intermediate 2 History'

Or like this:

'While entry is at the discretion of the centres, learners would normally be expected to have attained one of the following, or equivalent:

- ◆ Music and Image — Graphics (SCQF level 7)
- ◆ Music and Image: Video (SCQF level 7)'

Where no prior knowledge or experience is required, you should insert this statement:

'Entry is at the discretion of the centre.'

You can supplement this with additional information about any useful skills which might be helpful:

'Entry is at the discretion of the centre. Learners doing this Unit do not need prior knowledge or experience of Sociology. However, good skills in research and analysis would be an advantage.'

Any examples of qualifications required will normally be at no more than one SCQF level below the Unit you have written. Where the Unit is a direct progression from another Unit, the precursor Unit should always be indicated.

The recommended entry is not a mandatory requirement for the learner. However it does reflect your intentions about the starting point for delivery of the Unit and the estimated time needed for achievement by the learner. It should be taken in to account by the people delivering the Unit.

Core Skills

Under this heading in the General information section, you should indicate clearly which Core Skills are signposted or embedded (automatically certificated). If you feel that there should be automatic certification of Core Skills, inform the Qualification Manager. He or she will arrange to have this information inserted after Core Skills validation.

Where no Core Skill or Core Skill component is embedded in a Unit, you should use the default statement:

'There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill component in this Unit.'

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the support notes of this Unit specification.

You should write the detail of how Core Skills can be developed into the support notes. Any assessment evidence required for embedded Core Skills should be stated in the Evidence Requirements.

Context for delivery

This standard statement will be used in all HN Units:

‘If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed in the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.’

Equality and Inclusion

This Unit Specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website

www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Statement of standards and support notes sections of the Unit specification

Our guidance on writing the statement of standards and support notes sections for each qualification family is in Section 3 and 4. Please refer to these areas during the writing process.

3 Writing Higher National Units: Statement of standards and support notes

This section outlines:

- ◆ Writing the statement of standards section of the HN Unit specification
- ◆ Writing the support notes section of the HN Unit specification
- ◆ Higher National Unit specification shell
- ◆ Higher National Unit exemplar

Writing the statement of standards section of the HN Unit specification

The statement of standards section is the mandatory part of the Higher National Unit specification. It tells the reader the Outcomes that have to be achieved, the standard of achievement which is expected, and what evidence must be produced. Learners must produce sufficient evidence to demonstrate their achievement, or for the assessor to be able to infer their achievement, of everything in the standards.

In SQA Higher National Units, the statement of standards comprises:

- ◆ Outcomes
- ◆ Knowledge and/or skills
- ◆ Evidence Requirements

Outcomes tell the reader precisely what a learner will be able to do as a result of learning. The main feature of an Outcome is that it is written in terms of final output or achievement of skills or knowledge. It should always be possible to preface the wording with the phrase, 'The learner will be able to ...'. For example:

- ◆ evaluate a customer care strategy for an organisation
- ◆ provide translations of complex texts
- ◆ author an interactive application to the agreed specification

As a guide, each Unit specification should have between three and five Outcomes. This is not a hard and fast rule, but a recommendation drawn from experience. Writing a large number of Outcomes leads to fragmentation and militates against holistic assessment, (holistic assessment is encouraged, not least because it provides the best experience for learners).

The number of Outcomes is less important than whether the Outcomes are necessary and whether or not they state the competence or achievement they set out to express.

There is no direct link between the number of Outcomes and the credit value of the Unit. The credit value should reflect the level of demand made by the content of the Outcomes.

As with all aspects of writing, clarity and coherence are important. Outcomes should clearly state the skills or knowledge that must be demonstrated by learners. There should be a clear link between different Outcomes in the same Unit specification, and there should be a clear link between the Outcomes and the title, purpose and objectives of the Unit.

When writing Outcomes it is useful to ask 'What is to be done, and for what purpose?' This will help you to ensure that each Outcome is clear and precise.

Outcomes must be capable of being assessed. For this reason, your selection of a suitable verb is important. Some verbs can be ambiguous in meaning and it is better to avoid their use. For example:

assess	This has connotations of formal assessment.
know	But how do learners show that they know something, and what kind of knowledge is required? Do you mean explain? Would it be clearer to say 'use knowledge to evaluate'? State exactly what you mean so that there can be no doubt.
understand	The same questions arise. It's better to use a verb that tells learners exactly what they should be able to do to demonstrate their understanding.
demonstrate	Whether this verb works depends on what is being demonstrated. For example, if learners are required to demonstrate their knowledge, they can do so by answering questions on specific topics or giving a practical demonstration. If, however, a learner is asked to demonstrate understanding, what would you be asking them to do? If you're asking them to analyse, evaluate, etc, it would be better to say this.
illustrate	This word should only be used where graphical illustration is required, eg in the context of art and design Units.

An Outcome should not specify reference to a particular means of communication, eg written or oral unless it is essential to demonstrating the competence.

Knowledge and/or skills

You should include a knowledge and/or skills statement for each Outcome or, where the Unit is assessed holistically, for a combination of Outcomes or the Unit as a whole.

This section should cover only the knowledge and skills that are essential for achieving the Outcome and for which the learner would have to produce evidence. It should not be used to detail a teaching syllabus — you can include any useful additional information in the support notes section.

Knowledge and skills statements are lists of the essential ingredients that support the Outcome. For example, in the Outcome, 'Author an interactive application to the agreed specification', the knowledge and skills would be listed as:

- ◆ authoring software
- ◆ incorporation of media elements
- ◆ navigation
- ◆ interaction
- ◆ ongoing testing

These points should be expanded in the support notes, and the level of knowledge and/or skill to be assessed should be clear from the Evidence Requirements.

How to write Evidence Requirements

Evidence Requirements should be written for the whole Unit, for a combination of Outcomes in a Unit, or for individual Outcomes. There is no standard format for writing Evidence Requirements — as long as they are clear and unambiguous, and will be easily understood by all users of the Unit.

You could write them as paragraphs of text, or as a series of bullet points following a simple stem, if this is the simplest way of stating what is required. The latter format, though, would not be appropriate in all circumstances. In process-oriented Units, you might decide that the easiest way of presenting the Evidence Requirements would be to list them by letter or number.

Choosing words

Evidence Requirements must clearly and unambiguously:

- ◆ give information about the types of evidence that learners must provide and to what standard
- ◆ detail the quantity of evidence/quality of evidence — where the quantity of evidence is not crucial to meeting the standard required for the Outcome, you can include this as a guideline in the assessment guidelines
- ◆ detail the number of assessment occasions (ie is assessment appropriate at different points throughout in the Unit or on one assessment occasion?)
- ◆ any restrictions on the way in which evidence can be generated to ensure that a valid and reliable assessment of a learner's achievement can be made — for example, some evidence may be required to be generated (in a real or simulated work environment) through workplace practice
- ◆ detail the conditions of assessment — the mode of assessment should not be prescriptive and should be left as open and flexible as possible, for example,

the Evidence Requirements should be written in such a way as to allow for e-assessment and electronic evidence, where appropriate

It is important to remember in your planning that Unit assessments must be manageable for learners and centres.

The conditions of assessment may include one or more of the following:

- ◆ Closed-book. This means no materials are allowed in the assessment.
- ◆ Open-book. This means learners are allowed access to materials. Details of prescribed materials could be given if appropriate. This includes the type (eg books, notes), the amount (eg one A4 side, two text books), any named text (eg a French/English dictionary), or any other sources of information (eg a cached internet site).
- ◆ Unseen. This normally means the learner will not have seen the assessment in advance. There might be instances where part of the assessment is seen and part unseen. For example, learners might be asked to look at a case study in advance and then answer unseen questions on it at a later date. Unseen or partially unseen assessments are required when sampling is used to assess knowledge.
- ◆ Supervised/invigilated. This should be stipulated when authentication of the learners' work is necessary. Supervised conditions may be required for open or closed-book assessment. When sampling is used, the assessment must be under supervised conditions.
- ◆ Timed. This means that learners must complete the assessment in a given time. If using this condition, you (and validation panel members) must be satisfied that it is necessary to meeting the standard required. For example, in a travel Unit, learners might have to find information on a travel package quickly, as this would be a requirement in the workplace; or in a Word Processing Unit learners might have to demonstrate their ability to word process documents at a particular speed. However, if a learner had to save a file and send it electronically, demonstrating competence in this task might be more important than completing it in a set time. If a timed assessment is not necessary to meeting the standard required, you can give guidance on timing in the assessment guidelines.

You should not specify the instrument of assessment (eg report, extended response questions) in the Evidence Requirement unless this is essential to meeting the standard required. Evidence can often be generated using different instruments of assessment, and recommendations on which ones to use should be made in the assessment guidelines.

This is very important because, while you must ensure that standards are clear, Evidence Requirements should be written to allow centres to construct assessments relevant to the needs of their learners. So, for example, the Evidence Requirements should not be restrictive in referring to particular cultural contexts (unless this is necessary to the standard, such as the Scottish Legal system). Likewise, you should write the Evidence Requirements to allow the possibility of constructing instruments of assessment that are conducive to e-assessment.

Specifying standards of achievement

The way you write the Evidence Requirements is also important. They must contain meaningful information about the standard of achievement or performance the evidence must meet. Evaluative statements such as 'correctly' or 'accurately' should only be used where it is meaningful in conveying the standard required. Using these terms where there is no one right or wrong answer or method of carrying out an action will be meaningless to an assessor who isn't being given a clear idea of what they should be looking for when they are assessing the Unit.

You need to be sure that you are telling learners very clearly exactly what level of performance will be expected from them. The same words must also tell assessors and verifiers what standard of performance to look for in coming to a valid and reliable judgement about whether an Outcome/Unit has been achieved.

Always be as specific as possible, and make certain that everything in the Evidence Requirements is critical to the achievement of the Outcome/Unit, ie is an essential part of what it is to be competent in that Outcome/Unit.

You must also make sure that your Evidence Requirements cover the full breadth of achievement of skill, knowledge, or understanding required by the Outcome/Unit. Anyone reading the Unit specification should have no doubt about what the national standard of performance is for each Outcome and for the Unit as a whole.

Accessibility and barriers to achievement

Evidence Requirements should not place any restrictions on centres and learners that are not justified by the Outcomes. For example, the phrase 'written and/or oral evidence' is commonly used in Evidence Requirements. This indicates that learners can provide oral evidence either as an alternative to written evidence or to supplement written evidence.

You should not normally insist on written evidence only, because this is a potential barrier to achievement. Remember that oral evidence can be recorded in a variety of ways, for example, through audio or video recordings, or by use of question and answer checklists.

Evidence Requirements should not state or imply that a particular assessment approach is mandatory unless the approach is already implicit in the Outcomes.

Instruments of assessment should not be suggested in the Evidence Requirements, eg this could be assessed using an assignment/questions. This type of advice is best given in the support notes.

Holistic assessment

Although a holistic approach to assessment is encouraged, sometimes more than one piece of evidence may be needed for a particular Unit, ie it should not be

assumed that a single piece of evidence will always be sufficient. For example, if a Unit is about building a wall, we would expect Evidence Requirements to specify evidence of actual performance (ie the correct procedures and processes to be used when building the wall) and product evidence in the form of a completed wall.

It is important that Evidence Requirements do what they say — specify requirements for the submission of evidence which will ensure that the learner has given enough evidence, and that the evidence is of sufficient quality to make sure that an assessor or verifier can confirm that the learner has achieved the Unit.

Sampling

Sampling can be used as an assessment approach which can help to reduce the assessment load. It is particularly appropriate for knowledge-based Units, where assessing all the knowledge and/or skills items would require learners to produce an unacceptably large volume of evidence. In this type of Unit, an assessor can infer that a learner who has demonstrated competence in a sample of knowledge items would also be competent in all items in the Unit.

Sampling can also allow the use of a holistic instrument of assessment, which might not otherwise be feasible if learners had to produce evidence to cover all items in the Unit specification.

Sampling must be carried out in supervised conditions. Normally, the sample should be unseen to ensure that learners fully prepare the range of knowledge and skills and not just the chosen sample. However, in some instances, you may be able to combine unseen sampling with part of an assessment that is seen in advance. For example, an assessment could comprise a case study given to learners in advance, and unseen questions that sample knowledge by asking the learner to focus on a particular theory or type of practice.

There should be a quality statement covering all the knowledge items from which the sample will be selected so that, whatever the sample chosen, learners, assessors, and verifiers will be aware of the national standard of performance expected. If certain items of knowledge must be assessed on each assessment occasion, this should be stated in the Evidence Requirements.

Evidence Requirements: Summary

The Evidence Requirements should state:

- ◆ The proportion of knowledge and/or skills that can be sampled. There is no specified minimum below which sampling will not be valid, but the evidence produced in the sample must be sufficient for an assessor to infer that learners are competent in all the Outcomes of the Unit. This may not be possible if the sample chosen is too small.
- ◆ The standard required for each knowledge item — in some cases you may be able to write this as a quality statement that covers the whole body of knowledge and/or skills items specified for an Outcome or Unit.
- ◆ Whether any items must be assessed on each assessment occasion, eg if it is crucial to successful achievement of the Outcomes or to achieving an embedded Core Skill.
- ◆ The fact that a different sample should be chosen for each assessment (apart from any items which must be assessed on each occasion, if this is appropriate) to prevent learners being able to predict what they will be asked.
- ◆ The conditions of assessment — where any special conditions of assessment are specified (eg supervised, closed-book), these should be applied on every assessment occasion, including full and partial re-assessment.

Writing the support notes section of the HN Unit specification

The Support Notes section is often the most useful part of the Unit specification for users. It is an opportunity for you to expand on the information given in the statement of standards and give clear advice on all aspects of delivery. This benefits all users and helps to share best practice in the area being covered.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

You might want to use this section to contextualise and expand on the statement of standards. You might want to say more about the purpose of the Unit, and to give more detail for each of the Outcomes, and any other information that would be useful for someone using the Unit for the first time. For example, this section could contain further details of what should be covered in the delivery of the Unit. While the knowledge and/or skills section covers the essential knowledge on which learners will be assessed, there may well be other areas of content they should be aware of, or which it would be helpful to cover if they are to gain full benefit from undertaking the Unit.

This section should also provide details of any recognition given by professional bodies or other organisations, the relationship of specific Outcomes to National Occupational Standards, and progression pathways. For example, if part of the rationale for the Unit is to provide underpinning knowledge for an SVQ, you could expand on this here.

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

This is where you can provide advice on how the Unit could be integrated with other Units. This is particularly relevant if the Unit has been developed as part of a Group Award. Additionally, this section should offer guidance on how best the Unit would fit into the sequence of delivery, if part of an HNC and/or HND, or how it could be delivered as a free-standing Unit.

Guidance on approaches to assessment of this Unit

This section should state (very briefly) how the Unit might be assessed and give any conditions of assessment. You should ensure that, where appropriate, assessment allows for a variety of types of response including alternative assessment methods.

This section should also give guidance on how best to carry out the assessment, eg recommending the use of a particular assessment instrument. It should provide a clear template for assessors to flesh out an assessment instrument. It should also, where applicable, provide guidance on how to integrate assessment in an Outcome, or how to link assessment with other Outcomes in the Unit. It might, for example, give guidance on how the whole Unit could be assessed through a single instrument of assessment.

If the assessment involves sampling knowledge, this section should give guidance on how this might be carried out — eg by means of an unseen test carried out in closed-book, supervised conditions.

When writing guidance on approaches to assessment you should take care to be as inclusive as possible, making sure that you are not inadvertently creating any barriers to achievement, eg for learners who require additional support or who are undertaking the Unit by open or distance learning. For example, if your guidelines suggest sampling knowledge by means of a supervised, closed-book test, you will need to think about the guidance you will give under the open learning heading on how learner evidence can be authenticated.

Although the authentication of a learner's work is the responsibility of each centre, you might want to give advice on how evidence could be authenticated as being the work of a particular learner. For example, if learners were required to carry out a joint assignment and individually write up the results in a report, you could suggest that writing up the report be carried out in supervised conditions.

Here is an example of Guidance on approaches to assessment:

Guidance on approaches to assessment of this Unit

The assessment of this Outcome can be combined with Outcomes 1 and 2 as part of a single assessment for the Unit. This could be conducted at a single assessment event lasting two and a half hours and carried out in supervised conditions. It would be possible, if desired, to break this assessment down into three separate assessment events that assess each Outcome individually.

In the assessment, learners could produce a report or reports based on a case study or an actual workplace situation. Reports can be supplemented by additional questions to ensure all aspects of the Evidence Requirements are covered. The report may be presented in any suitable way. Reports may be written, oral, or signed. Where the Evidence Requirements specify the use of a sample, the sample will vary from assessment to assessment.

Where a case study is used as part of the assessment, it should relate to a team within a particular organisation, and should centre on a significant task that the team has to achieve. It should include background information on the organisation, the task, and the team. It would be helpful if the organisation were relevant to the Group Award the learner is taking.

Learners who have access to a suitable workplace can base their assessment work on a suitable situation drawn from their place of work. This could relate to a team or section of which they are part, as a team member or as team leader, or to the experience of a team or section with which they are familiar but not directly involved. If you adopt this approach, you should make clear to learners from the outset that this will be the case.

Where a workplace situation is used, you should take care to ensure that it would provide learners with sufficient opportunity to meet the Evidence Requirements of the Unit. It may be appropriate for the lecturer or trainer concerned to ensure beforehand that a particular workplace will allow learners to generate sufficient and suitable evidence. It should meet the following criteria:

- ◆ There should be a clearly identifiable team, even if it is not described as a team, with an identifiable team leader or supervisor.
- ◆ The team should have been involved in a significant task, eg organising a particular event, introducing new systems of working, undertaking a pilot project. The task should be one about which the organisation or the team made a specific decision, and it should require planning. It is likely to be easier for learners if the task has been completed or is close to completion.
- ◆ The learner should be able to find out the information required by the Unit, eg the composition of the team in terms of roles, planning and control methods used, objectives set, and the ways performance is reviewed. The workplace situation should allow for all items listed under knowledge and skills for each Outcome to be covered.

These criteria can be met in a large or small organisation. In the latter case, it is possible that the team would comprise all those involved in the organisation. For larger organisations, learners may focus on a particular part of the organisation, in which case explanations of the organisational context, eg culture, should relate to that part of the organisation involved.

You can include opportunities to develop Core Skills in the assessment guidelines if a particular instrument of assessment or an assessment strategy lends itself to learners developing a particular skill or generating evidence

towards a Core Skill. For example, a report might contribute towards the development of written communication.

Opportunities for e-assessment

This section should direct centres to the most up to date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment.

All Units will fall into one of the following three categories:

- ◆ Units that are ideally suited to e-assessment:
In this situation you should provide encouragement and examples of ways to do this, eg:

- The evidence for Outcomes 1 and 2 could be held in an e-portfolio (or portfolio) and sent to the assessor.
- The oral presentation required for Outcome 3 could be recorded on video and sent to the assessor, or made using video conferencing facilities and observed by the assessor.

- ◆ Units for which e-assessment would technically be possible, but complicated to arrange.

In these cases you should advise centres accordingly. For example:

Although this Unit could be delivered by e-assessment, it would require a considerable degree of planning by the centre to ensure the sufficiency and authenticity of learner evidence. Arrangements would have to be made to ensure that:

- the practical activity in Outcome 1 is supervised by a responsible person and clearly recorded (using an assessment checklist, or on video) for the assessor
- the assessor is, at some point, able to question the learner on that performance (face-to-face, by telephone, online)
- the closed-book test for Outcomes 2 and 3 is delivered in a supervised environment

- ◆ Units which may not be feasible to use e-assessment.
Where this is the case, please say so and explain why. For example:

'This Unit is not suited to delivery by e-assessment because it requires learners to be observed and questioned by a qualified practitioner to meet:

- health and safety requirements
and/or
- statutory/professional body requirements'

Opportunities to develop Core and other essential skills

This section should also be used to signpost any opportunities to develop Core Skills or Core Skill components. It should give details of the Core Skills that might be developed, their SCQF levels, the Outcomes they relate to, and details of the ways in which they might be developed, eg through particular teaching or learning strategies, learner self-study, formative assessment. You could give this information in text form and/or in a grid. Further information can be found using the following link:

http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/CA2801_Guidance_on_Core_Skills_using_design_principles_for_HNCs.pdf

In addition, broader skills development in the areas of enterprise, employability, sustainable development and citizenship should be recorded here.

Example of signposting in the support notes of a subject Unit

From a Psychology Unit

The Core Skill of Working with Others at SCQF 6 could be developed in this Unit in the work for Outcome 3. Working with Others involves the ability to work with others to plan, agree, and take responsibility for tasks; to support co-operative working in appropriate ways; and to review the effectiveness of one's own contribution. This would fit with a group task to carry out research suitable for Outcome 3. The general skill at SCQF 6 is 'Work with others in a group to analyse, plan, and complete a complex activity'. A group could carry out the task for Outcome 3, as it is a complex activity, although the report should then be written up individually for summative assessment of Outcome 3 of this Unit.

Learners can be encouraged to analyse the task and negotiate goals, roles, and responsibilities, anticipating and responding to needs of others, supporting co-operative working, and evaluating and drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of one's own contribution. This Core Skill could be developed without formal certification.

The Component 'Using Number' of the Core Skill of Numeracy at SCQF 5 could be developed in the teaching and learning contributing to Outcome 3. The specific skills required for the component at SCQF 5 include: working confidently with a numerical concept; deciding on the numerical operations to be carried out; and carrying out complex calculations or a number of sustained calculations. This is likely to fit in to the treatment and presentation of findings required in the production of the research report, in particular in the use of descriptive statistics. It is also likely that the component 'Using Graphical Information' from Numeracy at SCQF 5 could also be developed in this context. The specific skills of: interpreting information from tables, graphs, charts, or diagrams; selecting an appropriate form of tables, graphs, charts, or diagrams; and communicating information in that form would also be found in the research report.

General information for learners

This section should always start on a new page so that it can be copied and given out to learners at the start of Unit delivery. It should be written in simple, plain English, and should include information for learners on:

- ◆ what the Unit is about
- ◆ what they have to know
- ◆ how they will be assessed

It should also give details of the opportunities — embedded and signposted — to develop Core Skills in the Unit. This should make clear the kind of activities that will develop Core Skills and identify the Core Skills, their levels and the depth to which they will be developed.

Higher National Unit shell specification

For the most up to date Higher National Unit shell please visit the materials section within:

<http://www.sqaacademy.org.uk/course/view.php?id=296>

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Example of a Higher National Unit specification

Higher National Unit specification

Unit title: Management: An Introduction to Team Leadership

Unit code: Exemplar Unit

Superclass category: n/a

Publication date: June 2001

Source: SQA

Version: 1

Higher National Unit Specification: General information for centres

Unit title: Management: An Introduction to Team Leadership

Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to enable learners to recognise the main issues affecting the role of a team leader or first-line manager. It prepares them for this role by giving them the underpinning knowledge they will need. It is primarily intended for learners who expect to take up supervisory or team leader posts. It would also be relevant to those with work experience as a team leader or team member, and to those who have limited experience in work situations. On completion of the Unit learners should be able to:

- ◆ explain the organisational context of management and team leadership
- ◆ develop an approach to leading an effective team
- ◆ propose the management activities required to complete a particular team task

Credit points and level

8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7

The SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) brings Scottish qualifications into a single framework of 12 levels ranging from SQA Access 1 to

doctorates. The SCQF includes degrees; HNC/Ds; SQA National Qualifications; and SVQs. Each SQA Unit is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at a specific level. 1 SCQF point = 10 hours of learning. HN learners are normally expected to input a further number of hours, matched to the credit value of the Unit, of non-contact time or learner-led effort to consolidate and reinforce learning.

Recommended entry to the Unit

Learners should have good communication skills. These could be demonstrated by the achievement of the Core Skill Communication at SCQF level 6, or by possession of Higher English and Communication or a suitable HN Communication Unit. It would be beneficial if learners had some work experience, but it is not essential. They should, though, have some appreciation of the role of a first-line manager. It is not necessary for learners to have had previous experience as a first-line manager or team-leader, although, where this is the case, the Unit may provide an opportunity to reflect on this experience

Core Skills

This Unit gives automatic certification of the following Core Skill component:

- ◆ Problem Solving: Critical Thinking at SCQF 6.

Context for delivery

This Unit is included in the framework of a number of HNC and HND Group Awards. It is recommended that it should be taught and assessed in the context of the Group Award to which it contributes.

Equality and Inclusion

This Unit Specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Management: An Introduction to Team Leadership

Outcome 1

Explain the organisational context of management and team leadership.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ types of formal organisational structure
- ◆ the role of teams in the organisation
- ◆ communication networks in organisations
- ◆ accountability, authority, responsibility of managers and team leaders
- ◆ sources of power for managers and team leaders
- ◆ organisational culture

Outcome 2

Develop an approach to leading an effective team.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ stages of group development — forming, storming, norming, and performing
- ◆ team roles
- ◆ approaches to leadership
- ◆ models of motivation
- ◆ Adair's action-centred leadership
- ◆ performance review
- ◆ structured decision-making

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Outcome 3

Propose the management activities required to complete a particular team task.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ setting objectives that are SMART, ie specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound
- ◆ stages of the planning process
- ◆ planning techniques
- ◆ control process
- ◆ methods of control

Evidence Requirements for this Unit

Outcome 1

Evidence for the knowledge and/or skills in this Outcome will be generated through sampling. This evidence can be presented as part of a report, or in response to a specific question or questions. Each learner will need evidence to show that she/he can, with reference to a particular situation involving a team, provide an accurate and clear explanation of the organisational context of management and team leadership based on a sample of the six knowledge items above. The sample should be derived from a case study or workplace situation that covers all six items being sampled.

To ensure that learners will not be able to foresee which items they will be questioned about, a different sample of three of the six knowledge and/or skills items is required each time the Outcome is assessed. Learners must provide a satisfactory response to all three items.

Where an item is sampled, a learner's response can be judged satisfactory where the evidence shows that the learner can:

- ◆ identify the type of formal structure that applies to the organisation in the case study or workplace, and explain this categorisation using three characteristics of formal organisational structure
- ◆ explain how teams influence the work of the organisation, and how the role of the team leader is influenced by the organisational context
- ◆ explain how the role of the team leader is influenced by the formal and informal communication networks within the organisation
- ◆ explain the authority and responsibility of the team leader, and show who the team leader is accountable to, demonstrating an understanding of what the terms mean
- ◆ explain the sources of power for team leaders, making reference to three different sources of power
- ◆ make use of an accepted classification to identify and explain the culture of the organisation, giving reasons for the choice made

Evidence should be generated through assessment in supervised conditions. Where a case study is used, learners may be given a copy of it 7–10 days before the assessment. Learners may bring a copy of the case study to the assessment, along with any notes that they have made. They may not bring textbooks, handouts or other material not prepared by themselves. Their notes should be handed in at the end of the assessment.

Outcome 2

Learners will need evidence to show they can, with reference to a particular situation involving a team, develop an approach to leading the team that identifies the key factors involved. The approach must assess the relevance of the key factors, and should result in improved team performance. The context of the situation may be familiar or unfamiliar, and will be presented in a case study or be derived from a workplace situation. It will involve complex variables and will include relationships that need to be clarified. The evidence should be consistent, and should accurately:

- ◆ Identify the stage of development a team has reached, and provide a justification for this. The justification should recognise the complexity of the variables involved in group development, and clarify the relationships between them and the stages of group development.
- ◆ Explain how a team leader can draw conclusions from the stages of group development to develop an approach to leading an effective team. The explanation should take account of the complex variables involved and clarify relationships between the stages of team development and the work of a team leader.
- ◆ Make use of data on the roles of team members to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the team, and apply a team role approach to suggest a course of action intended to bring about the development of an effective team.
- ◆ Suggest and justify a leadership approach that would enable the team to function effectively. The justification should take account of the factors involved in leading a team and the available evidence, and may include a comparison with other possible approaches.
- ◆ Propose two ways the team leader could enhance the motivation of the team. This can be justified in terms of accepted motivational models. It should contribute to the development of an effective approach to team leadership.

These items refer to the first four bullet points listed under knowledge and/or skills, and must be assessed on each assessment occasion. Learners must provide a satisfactory response to all four of these items in the form of a report or in response to a specific question or questions.

Evidence for the remaining knowledge and/or skills items in this Outcome will be provided through sampling. To ensure that learners will not be able to foresee what they will be questioned about, a different sample of one of the last three knowledge and/or skills items is required each time the Outcome is assessed. This evidence can be presented as part of a report or in response to a specific question or questions. Evidence should be derived from a case study or workplace situation that covers all three items being sampled.

Where an item is sampled, a learner's response can be judged satisfactory where the evidence provided shows that the learner can:

- ◆ use Adair's action-centred approach to leadership to suggest ways the effectiveness of a team can be improved

- ◆ explain how a team leader can use performance review to enhance team effectiveness
- ◆ evaluate the effectiveness for a team leader of the structured decision-making model

Outcome 3

Learners will need evidence to demonstrate all aspects of their knowledge and/or skills in this Outcome by showing that they can, with reference to a particular task that a team has to achieve:

- ◆ propose an objective for the task that meets the SMART criteria
- ◆ propose an objective for the team leader that meets the SMART criteria
- ◆ propose an objective for the team that meets the SMART criteria
- ◆ identify the steps in the planning process involved in the task
- ◆ propose one planning technique that could be used and justify the choice
- ◆ explain how the control process will operate in the situation
- ◆ propose one control method that could be used and justify its suitability in the situation

These items refer to the bullet points listed under knowledge and/or skills and must be assessed on each assessment occasion. Learners must provide a satisfactory response to all seven items in the form of a report or in response to a specific question or questions.

Evidence should be generated through assessment under controlled conditions. Where a case study is used, learners may be given a copy of it 7–10 days before the assessment takes place. Learners may bring a copy of any case study to the assessment event, along with any notes that they have made personally. They may not bring textbooks, handouts, or other material not prepared by themselves. The notes should be handed in at the end of the assessment

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Management: An Introduction to Team Leadership

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

The Unit is primarily intended to prepare learners for the type of team leader or supervisory role they may take up or progress to by giving them the essential underpinning knowledge and skills. As a result, learners are likely to work predominantly with case studies or simulated material, using this to consider the work of team leaders and to evaluate their effectiveness. Nevertheless, it is also applicable to those who have relevant work experience. If this experience has been as a team leader, the Unit could be helpful as a means of reflecting on how they carried out this role and suggesting ways in which their contribution to the team could be improved. Learners who do have experience of being managed should be encouraged to use this when examining the work of a manager.

Although the Unit is expressed in generic terms, it should be related to a context that is familiar to learners. If necessary, the terminology used in the Unit can be adapted to suit the workplace, eg team leader can be replaced with supervisor; a team may become a section or a work group.

The Unit can be approached from the standpoint of a particular team, beginning with its position in the organisation as a whole. In some small firms, the team and the organisation may be the same thing. The remainder of the Unit centres on the work of the team in completing a particular task, including the ways in which the team leader or supervisor can influence the behaviour of team members.

Outcome 1 looks at the organisational context of the managerial activity, setting the scene for the team leader. Learners should become familiar with the terminology used, and should use it in describing situations that they know. One approach would be to encourage learners to consider the reasons why a particular structure has been chosen and why other forms of structure are less appropriate or unsuitable. Formal organisational structure could cover hierarchical/flat, centralised/decentralised, divisional/functional, product/service, hybrid, or matrix. Suitable models or organisational culture may be Deal and Kennedy's risk/feedback model or Handy's power, role, task, and person cultures.

In Outcome 2, learners look at the role of the team leader in influencing the behaviour and level of performance of the team. They should be encouraged to think about the following:

- ◆ The extent to which the team's stage of development affects the way the team can be led, and the motivation of team members.
- ◆ Belbin's team role theory is an appropriate way of exploring team roles — task roles, group maintenance, and individual roles could also be used.
- ◆ Traits, style, and contingency models of leadership — Blake and Mouton's managerial grid could exemplify democratic and autocratic leadership styles, while suitable contingency models of leadership include Handy's 'best-fit' model and Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership. These could be combined with Adair's model of task, team, and individual.
- ◆ Models of motivation such as financial rewards, satisfiers and dissatisfiers, expectancy theory, meeting individual needs, empowerment.
- ◆ A suitable structured (or rational) decision-making model (eg sense the problem, gather information, define the problem clearly, specify relevant criteria for the solution, generate possible answers, evaluate the answers, choose the best option).

Outcome 3 considers how a team might complete a particular task, as well as the decision-making process that led to the conclusion that the particular task was required. Learners should be made aware of:

- ◆ the steps in the planning process (define objectives, generate and evaluate options, identify activities, sequence the activities, identify resources, review the plan, prepare schedules, monitor and control)
- ◆ planning techniques such as milestones, Gantt charts, network analysis
- ◆ the steps in the control process (set standards, measure actual performance, compare performance to standards, take corrective action/do nothing/change standards)
- ◆ control methods such as bureaucratic control through rules and procedures; quality systems; budgetary control; control through organisation values

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

This Unit is likely to form part of a Group Award designed to provide learners with technical or professional knowledge and skills for a specific occupational area. Those who successfully complete the award are likely to progress to first line management or team leader posts.

In these circumstances, the Unit is likely to be delivered towards the end of the Group Award, by which time learners should have a good appreciation of the main types of workplace environment with which they will be involved. This should allow the Unit to be delivered in a way that enables learners to appreciate its relevance to the occupational area concerned. Wherever possible, links should be drawn with situations that learners will understand, eg the planning process can be related to specific occupational issues.

Guidance on approaches to assessment of this Unit

The Unit could be assessed by a single instrument of assessment that requires learners to produce a report (or reports) and answer questions based on a case study or on their workplace experience (depending on the current situation of the learners and their prior experience). It would also be possible to break this

assessment down into three separate assessment events that assess each Outcome separately.

Assessment could be carried out in supervised conditions and, if taking place as a single event, this should last no more than two and a half hours. Since the Core Skill component of Problem Solving: Critical Thinking is embedded in this Unit, we strongly recommend that you follow the assessment guidance given. If you wish to use a different assessment model, you should seek prior moderation of the assessment instrument(s) you intend to use to ensure that the Core Skill component is still covered.

Please note that learners must achieve all the minimum evidence specified for each Outcome, combination of Outcomes, or for the Unit as a whole to pass the Unit and achieve the Core Skill component.

Outcome 1

The assessment of this Outcome can be combined with Outcomes 2 and 3 as part of a single assessment for the Unit, details of which are given under Outcome 3 below.

Outcome 2

The assessment of this Outcome can be combined with Outcomes 1 and 3 as part of a single assessment for the Unit, details of which are given under Outcome 3 below.

Outcome 3

The assessment of this Outcome can be combined with Outcomes 1 and 2 as part of a single assessment for the Unit. This could be conducted at a single assessment event lasting no more than two and a half hours and carried out in supervised conditions. It would be possible, if desired, to break this assessment down into three separate assessment events that assess each Outcome holistically.

In the assessment, learners could produce a report or reports based on a case study or an actual workplace situation. Reports can be supplemented by additional questions to ensure all aspects of the Evidence Requirements are covered. The report may be presented in any suitable way. Reports may be written, oral, or signed. Where the Evidence Requirements specify the use of a sample, the sample will vary from assessment to assessment.

Where a case study is used as part of the assessment, it should relate to a team within a particular organisation, and should centre on a significant task that the team has to achieve. It should include background information on the organisation, the task, and the team. It would be helpful if the organisation were relevant to the Group Award the learner is taking.

Learners who have access to a suitable workplace can base their assessment work on a suitable situation drawn from their place of work. This could relate to a team or section of which they are part, as a team member or as team leader, or to the experience of a team or section with which they are familiar but not directly

involved. If you adopt this approach, you should make clear to learners from the outset that this will be the case.

Where a workplace situation is used, you should take care to ensure that it would provide learners with sufficient opportunity to meet the Evidence Requirements of the Unit. It may be appropriate for the lecturer or trainer concerned to ensure beforehand that a particular workplace will allow learners to generate sufficient and suitable evidence. It should meet the following criteria:

- ◆ There should be a clearly identifiable team, even if it is not described as a team, with an identifiable team leader or supervisor.
- ◆ The team should have been involved in a significant task, eg organising a particular event, introducing new systems of working, undertaking a pilot project. The task should be one about which the organisation or the team made a specific decision, and it should require planning. It is likely to be easier for learners if the task has been completed or is close to completion.
- ◆ The learner should be able to find out the information required by the Unit, eg the composition of the team in terms of team roles, planning and control methods used, objectives set, and ways performance is reviewed.

The workplace situation should allow for all items listed under knowledge and skills for each Outcome to be covered.

These criteria can be met in a large or small organisation. In the latter case, it is possible that the team would comprise all those involved in the organisation. For larger organisations, learners may focus on a particular part of the organisation, in which case explanations of the organisational context, eg culture, should relate to that part of the organisation involved.

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An exemplar instrument of assessment and marking guidelines have been produced to indicate the national standard of achievement required at SCQF level 7.

The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, knowledge and/or skills, and evidence required are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed by sampling, the whole of the content listed in the knowledge and/or skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Learners should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed, and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

The Core Skill of Working with Others at SCQF 6 could be developed in this Unit in the work for Outcome 2. Working with Others involves the ability to work with others to plan, agree, and take responsibility for tasks; to support co-operative working in appropriate ways; and to review the effectiveness of one's own contribution. This would fit with a group task of leading an effective team for Outcome 2. The general skill at SCQF 6 is 'In complex interactions, work with others co-operatively on an activity and/or activities.' A group could carry out the task for Outcome 2, as it is a complex activity, although the report should then be written up individually for summative assessment of Outcome 2 of this Unit.

Learners can be encouraged to analyse the task and negotiate goals, roles, and responsibilities, anticipating and responding to needs of others, supporting co-operative working, and evaluating and drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of one's own contribution. This Core Skill could be developed without formal certification.

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General information for learners

Unit title: Management: An Introduction to Team Leadership

This Unit is designed to enable you to recognise the main issues that affect the role of a team leader or first-line manager. It is primarily intended to prepare you for a supervisory or team leader post later in your career, but it can also help you if you already hold such a position. If you have work experience of being managed or of being a manager, you should be able to make use of it during your study of this Unit.

The Unit has three main areas, each the subject of a separate Outcome. To begin with, you will look at the overall organisational context in which team leaders or first line managers have to work. You will then examine teams themselves and look at how the team leader can lead and motivate the members of the team. Finally, you will look at a team task and how it can be planned and controlled.

Overall, you will be expected to use the knowledge and skills from the Unit to enable you to assess how a team leader can enable a team to be as effective as possible. This could help you in the future if you become a team leader, or could enable you to enhance you, and your team's, current performance if you already hold such a post.

To complete this Unit successfully, you will have to achieve a satisfactory level of performance on one piece of assessed work. Towards the end of the Unit, you will undertake an assessment in controlled conditions. It will last for no more than two and a half hours, and you may be required to produce a report or reports and to answer questions on the three areas above. (If the lecturer or trainer delivering this Unit decides to break down the assessment into three separate events, this paragraph would need to be amended.)

If you do not have relevant workplace experience, your report will be based on a case study of a team in an organisation. It will cover a task the team has to do, and will include information on team members and the organisation of which the team is a part. You will be given a copy a few days before the assessment event. However, if you do have relevant work experience, your report will be based on this experience, and you will be given full details of how to make use of this in your assessment.

You will be allowed to bring a copy of any case study to the assessment event. You may also bring notes that you have made personally for your own use. You will not be permitted to bring textbooks, handouts, or other materials that you have not prepared yourself.

4 Writing National Units: Statement of standards and support notes

This section outlines:

- ◆ Writing the statement of standards section of the National Unit specification
- ◆ Writing support notes section of the National Unit specification
- ◆ National Unit specification shell
- ◆ National Unit exemplar

Writing the statement of standards section of the National Unit specification

The statement of standards section is the mandatory part of a National Unit specification. It tells the reader the Outcomes that have to be achieved, the standard of achievement that is expected, and what evidence must be produced. Learners must produce sufficient evidence to demonstrate achievement of everything in the standards.

In SQA National Units, the statement of standards comprises:

- ◆ Outcomes
- ◆ Performance Criteria
- ◆ Evidence Requirements

The Outcomes in a Unit specification tell the reader precisely what a learner will be able to do. The main feature of an Outcome is that it is written in terms of final output or achievement. It should always be possible to preface the wording with the phrase 'The learner will be able to ...' For example:

- ◆ Identify a strategy for solving a non-routine problem.
- ◆ Provide oral translations of complex texts.
- ◆ Portray ideas and emotions through movement.
- ◆ Investigate ways in which equal opportunities are promoted in society.

As a guide, a Unit will probably have between two and five Outcomes. This is not a hard-and-fast rule, but a recommendation drawn from experience. A large number of Outcomes leads to fragmentation and may reduce opportunities for holistic assessment. (Holistic assessment is encouraged, not least because it provides the best experience for learners.)

The number of Outcomes is less important than whether the Outcomes are necessary and whether or not they state the competence or achievement they set out to express.

Generally, it is better to have fewer Outcomes — this makes it easier to deliver the Unit and helps keep assessment and workload within reasonable boundaries.

Outcomes should clearly state the skills or knowledge that must be demonstrated by learners; there should be a clear link between different Outcomes in the Unit specification; and there should be a clear link between the Outcomes and the summary and title.

When writing Outcomes it is useful to ask yourself:

- ◆ What has to be done, and why is it necessary?
- ◆ What evidence will need to be presented?
- ◆ How will it be produced?

This will help you to ensure that the Outcome is clear and precise.

Outcomes must be capable of being assessed. This is why it's important to select a suitable verb. Some verbs whose meaning is ambiguous should be avoided, for example:

Assess	This has connotations of formal assessment.
Know	But how do learners show that they know something, and what kind of knowledge is required? Do you mean explain? Would it be clearer to say 'use knowledge to evaluate'? State exactly what you mean so that there can be no doubt.
Understand	The same questions arise. It's better to use a verb that tells learners exactly what they should be able to do to demonstrate their understanding.
Demonstrate	Whether this verb works depends on what is being demonstrated. For example, if learners are required to demonstrate their knowledge, they can do so by answering questions on specific topics or giving a practical demonstration. If, however, a learner is asked to demonstrate understanding, what would you be asking them to do? If you're asking them to analyse, evaluate, etc, it would be better to say this.
Illustrate	This word should only be used where graphical illustration is required, eg in the context of art and design Units.

An Outcome should not specify reference to a particular means of communication, eg written or oral, unless it is essential to demonstrating the competence.

Performance Criteria (PC)

The Performance Criteria set the standard of achievement expected and give more information about what a learner must do to achieve the Outcome.

There is no rule for how many PC an Outcome should have, though there are often three to six. If there are only one or two, then you could question the validity of the Outcome. If the number rises to, say, eight or nine, have you tried to squash into one Outcome content that should really be divided into two?

The number of PC will depend on the nature of the Outcome and the kinds of demands being made of learners. The PC should all be essential and should 'add up' to the Outcome. They should not contain anything more than is suggested by the Outcome, or include content that goes beyond it.

Performance Criteria should:

- ◆ Always derive directly from the Outcome, and relate only to what is essential to demonstrate competence.
- ◆ Contribute to the holistic assessment of the Outcome or Unit and not be written in a way that requires a separate assessment instrument for each Performance Criterion.
- ◆ Set out the aspects of a learner's performance that are required to demonstrate achievement and meet the Outcome (critical aspects). Any information that is critical to achieving competence in the Outcome should be written into the PC.
- ◆ Describe either the way the learner carries out the activity described in the Outcome (process), or whatever is produced as a result of that activity (product).
- ◆ Give a clear indication of the standard or quality of performance that is expected. For this reason, each PC may have an evaluative word or phrase, making clear that a certain standard of achievement must be demonstrated. Where a single word is used to indicate the standard (eg correct, where an answer can only be right or wrong) the meaning must be clear to others and not open to subjective interpretation.

Examples of Performance Criteria

- ◆ Describe the main theoretical perspectives in Sociology clearly and accurately.
- ◆ The main stylistic features of the selected music are identified correctly.
- ◆ Explain how customer relationships are established and maintained.
- ◆ Identify action points for future development of own skills.

Performance Criteria can be written in a number of ways but, above all, they must be clear and unambiguous — it is more important to give clear and unambiguous

information than to worry about the number of words. You should, though, be consistent in the way you express Performance Criteria throughout the Unit.

Both of the following examples are acceptable:

- ◆ The main features to be included in the operational plan are identified.
- ◆ Identify the main features to be included in the operational plan

When you are writing Performance Criteria, you should consider:

- ◆ What are the critical aspects of the activity defined in the Outcome?
- ◆ How can you measure whether an acceptable standard of performance has been achieved?

Remember the limitations placed on the time that can be spent on Unit assessment. Too many PC could mean a heavier workload for both learners and staff. If your PC greatly increase the time needed for assessment, this may result in the Unit not being validated. Each PC must therefore be critical to the Outcome (ie it must be an essential part of the definition of what it is to be competent in that Outcome).

Evidence Requirements for this Unit

This section must state clearly and unambiguously exactly what learners have to do, and to what standard, to demonstrate that they have achieved the Unit or Outcome, and how much evidence is required.

Evidence Requirements should:

- ◆ Give information about the types and standard of evidence that learners must provide.
- ◆ Detail the amount of evidence/quality of evidence.
- ◆ Detail the number of assessment occasions (ie is assessment appropriate at different points throughout in the Unit or on one assessment occasion?)
- ◆ Detail the conditions of assessment — the mode of assessment should not be prescriptive and should be left as open and flexible as possible. For example, the Evidence Requirements should be written in such a way as to allow for e-assessment and electronic evidence, where appropriate.
- ◆ Specify any restrictions on how evidence can be generated to ensure that a valid and reliable assessment of a learner's achievement can be made. For example, some evidence may have to be generated in a real or simulated work environment.

It is important to remember in your planning that Unit assessments must be manageable for learners and centres.

Sampling of content in Unit assessment

The production of evidence, direct or inferred, for all Outcomes and PC is required for Unit assessment. Outcomes and PC cannot be sampled: all Outcomes and PC must be covered on each assessment occasion. However, sampling of content can be considered when designing Unit assessments. Particularly in knowledge-based Units, you may be using some kind of sampling of content in order to be able to infer that a candidate would be competent in those parts of the Unit content not assessed on that particular occasion.

Where sampling is used it is normally carried out in supervised conditions and a different sample chosen on each assessment occasion so that learners are not able to predict what they will be asked. If though, there are certain knowledge and skills which must not be sampled then this should be stated in the Evidence Requirements. In relation to sampling, the Evidence Requirements should specify clearly:

- ◆ whether any items should be included on each assessment occasion and which they are — this will apply if the Unit contains items which are considered crucial to the achievement of the competence for the Unit or if the Unit has an embedded Core Skill
- ◆ that a different sample of questions — where the same areas are covered in each assessment — should be chosen on each assessment occasion (apart from those items which must be assessed on every occasion)

The conditions of assessment

The conditions of assessment may include one or more of the following:

- ◆ Closed-book. This means no materials are allowed in the assessment.
- ◆ Open-book. This means learners are allowed access to materials. Details of prescribed materials could be given if appropriate. This includes the type (eg books, notes), the amount (eg one A4 side, two text books), any named text (eg a French dictionary), or any other sources of information (eg a cached internet site).
- ◆ Unseen. This normally means the learner will not have seen the assessment in advance. There might be instances where part of the assessment is seen and part unseen. For example, learners might be asked to look at a case study in advance and then answer unseen questions on it later. Unseen or partially unseen assessments are required when sampling is used to assess knowledge.
- ◆ Supervised/invigorated. This should be stipulated when authentication of the learners' work is necessary. Supervised conditions may be required for open or closed-book assessment. When sampling is used, the assessment must be under supervised conditions.
- ◆ Timed. This means that learners must complete the assessment in a given time. If using this condition, you (and validation panel members) must be satisfied that it is necessary to meeting the standard required. For example, in a travel Unit, learners might have to find information on a travel package quickly, as this would be a requirement in the workplace; or in a Word Processing Unit learners might have to demonstrate their ability to word-

process documents at a particular speed. However, if a learner had to save a file and send it electronically, demonstrating competence in this task might be more important than completing it in a set time. If a timed assessment is not necessary to meeting the standard required, you can give guidance on timing in the assessment guidelines.

Types of evidence

The Evidence Requirements should be of the following types (as appropriate) and may sometimes require more than one type of evidence:

Written and/or oral evidence

Use if:

Evidence has to show that the learner has appropriate knowledge and understanding of something. This type of evidence could be electronic, eg word-processed documents, audio or video recordings, or scanned documents, if appropriate.

Product evidence

Use if:

The learner has to make or produce something. If so, what is it? Give a clear indication of any specific product that must be presented, and of the numbers or amount of these (eg one completed operational plan; two sculptures; three repaired musical instruments, etc.) If the product is an artefact, but electronic evidence of it (eg digital photographs, slide shows, video recordings) is acceptable for practical reasons, you should specify this.

Performance evidence

Use if:

The learner is expected to carry out a task, follow specific procedures, or behave in a particular manner. You should also use performance evidence if the learner's ability to carry out a process is the critical aspect of performance. Performance evidence may in some cases be supplemented by the learner's answers to questions. This allows the teacher/lecturer to verify that the learner can also apply his or her competence to other parts of a Unit. This is known as additional evidence. If it is acceptable to submit electronic evidence eg slide shows, videos, digital photographs as evidence, or in support of performance evidence, this should be specified along with the conditions of assessment.

Additional evidence

Use if:

Evidence is required to ensure that performance could be repeated in different situations/with different equipment to allow an assessor to infer competence without observing actual performance. For example:

- ◆ Outcome: Drive a car in different weather conditions

Additional evidence might be used in this example for the requirement to demonstrate knowledge of how to drive a car in foggy conditions. It could also be used where evidence is needed of underpinning knowledge that is not demonstrated in performance.

Additional evidence may be written and/or oral.

You should not specify the instrument of assessment (eg report, extended response questions) in the Evidence Requirements unless this is essential to meeting the standard required. Evidence can often be generated using different instruments of assessment, and recommendations on which ones to use should be made in the assessment guidelines.

This is very important because, while you must ensure that standards are clear, Evidence Requirements should be written to allow centres to construct assessments that are relevant to particular cultural contexts and/or types of assessment. So, for example, the Evidence Requirements should not be restrictive in referring to particular cultural contexts (unless this is necessary to the standard, eg the Scottish Legal system). Likewise, you should write the Evidence Requirements to allow the possibility of constructing instruments of assessment conducive to e-assessment.

Specifying standards of achievement

The way you write the Evidence Requirements is also important. They must contain meaningful information about the standard of achievement or performance that the evidence must meet. Evaluative statements such as 'correctly' or 'accurately' should only be used where it is meaningful in conveying the standard required. Using terms like this in cases where there is no one right or wrong answer, or method of carrying out an action, is meaningless to an assessor who isn't being given a clear idea of what they should be looking for when they are assessing the Unit.

You need to be sure that you are telling learners very clearly exactly what level of performance will be expected from them. The same words must also tell assessors and verifiers what standard of performance to look for in coming to a valid and reliable judgement about whether an Outcome/Unit has been achieved.

Always be as specific as possible, and make certain that everything in the Evidence Requirements is critical to the achievement of the Outcome/Unit, ie is an essential part of what it is to be competent in that Outcome or Unit.

You must also make sure that your Evidence Requirements cover the full breadth of achievement of skill, knowledge, or understanding required by the Outcome or Unit. Anyone reading the Unit specification should have no doubt about what the national standard of performance is for each Outcome and for the Unit as a whole.

To encourage holistic assessment, Evidence Requirements should normally be written for the Unit as a whole. They should follow the last Outcome in the Unit and appear under the heading Evidence Requirements for the Unit.

Accessibility and barriers to achievement

Evidence Requirements should not place any restrictions on centres or learners that are not justified by the Outcomes and Performance Criteria. For example, the phrase 'written and/or oral evidence' is commonly used in Evidence Requirements. This indicates that learners may provide oral evidence either as an alternative to written evidence or to supplement written evidence.

You should not normally insist on written evidence only — this is a potential barrier to achievement. Oral evidence can be recorded in a variety of ways, for example, through audio or video recordings, or by use of question and answer checklists.

Evidence Requirements should not state or imply that a particular assessment approach is mandatory unless the approach is already implicit in the Outcome(s) or Performance Criteria.

Instruments of assessment should not be suggested in the Evidence Requirements (eg 'This might/could be assessed using an assignment/questions'). This type of advice is best suited to being included in the support notes section under the heading 'Guidance on approaches to assessment' for this Unit.

NABs and ASPs

Where a Unit is supported by a National Assessment Bank (NAB) item or Assessment Support Pack (ASP) this should be noted at the end of the section headed Evidence Requirements for the Unit.

Units that contribute to National Courses are currently supported by NABs which include assessment instruments, marking schemes and, where appropriate, suggested cut-off scores. The use of these NABs is not compulsory — centres not wishing to use the NABs should be able to create appropriate instruments of assessment. You should refer to this in the Evidence Requirements, eg:

'The standard to be applied and the breadth of coverage are illustrated in the National Assessment Bank items available for this Unit. If a centre wishes to design its own assessments for this Unit they should be of a comparable standard.'

Similarly, in National Certificates and National Progression Awards, if assessment exemplars or Assessment Support Packs have been produced for the Unit, you should refer to these in Evidence Requirements, eg:

‘The Assessment Support Pack for this Unit provides sample assessment material. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the Assessment Support Pack to ensure a comparable standard.’

Holistic assessment

Although a holistic approach to assessment is encouraged, sometimes more than one piece of evidence may be needed for a particular Unit, ie it should not be assumed that a single piece of evidence will always be sufficient. For example, if a Unit is about building a wall, we would expect Evidence Requirements to specify evidence of actual performance (ie the correct procedures and processes to be used when building the wall) and product evidence in the form of a completed wall.

Sometimes very specific information must be given to make the precise standard clear. In the wall example, for instance, we might need to indicate the specification for the final product: eg size of wall; accuracy of height, width, breadth; permissible wastage of materials; straightness. You can write this information into the Outcomes, Performance Criteria, or Evidence Requirements. Wherever it appears, it should be included in the mandatory part of the Unit specification. If it only appears in the support notes, it is guidance and not mandatory.

Evidence Requirements: Summary

Evidence Requirements should:

- ◆ link clearly to the Unit Outcomes and Performance Criteria
- ◆ meet the standards set out in the Outcomes and Performance Criteria
- ◆ state the requirements for all learners
- ◆ not go beyond the requirements of the Outcomes and Performance Criteria
- ◆ state the conditions of assessment



Writing the support notes section of the National Unit specification

The support notes section is often the most useful part of the Unit specification for users. It is an opportunity to expand on the information given in the statement of standards and give clear advice on all aspects of delivery. This benefits all users and helps to share best practice in the area being covered.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This section can be used to give information that helps to contextualise and expand the statement of standards. This might include the purpose of the Unit, the nature of practical activities, more detail relating to each of the Outcomes, and other information that would be useful to someone using the Unit for the first time. It may have information on content that could be included but is not necessarily assessed.

Under this heading, you can include information about the prior knowledge and/or skills a learner should have and any other general information.

It can also include guidance on:

- ◆ the practical skills, knowledge and understanding which will be delivered through the Outcomes
- ◆ possible topics to be covered
- ◆ alternative approaches that might be used by some learners with disabilities
- ◆ the relationship of this Unit to any relevant National Occupational Standards
- ◆ health and safety issues
- ◆ legislation
- ◆ definitions or explanations of terms
- ◆ contexts in which learning may take place, for example real or simulated work settings

Although it may contain information which is general to the Unit as a whole, it is important to ensure that this section also relates clearly to the Outcomes and Performance Criteria. It may include information in relation to specific Outcomes or groups of Outcomes.

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

This section should give the reader a good understanding of how teaching or delivery might be organised — for example, there might be a preferred order of teaching (and assessing) certain topics.

You should include any information that you feel is helpful to someone using the Unit for the first time. You can include ideas about classroom activities, field trips, visits and group work. In suggesting delivery methods, the aim should be to encourage the use of learning and teaching approaches that are varied and

appropriate to the aims of the Unit — so your advice might be to encourage a learner-centred, participative and practical approach.

In this section, you could also encourage the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) to support delivery where appropriate — eg using e-learning to suit the individual learning styles and pace of the learners; using software to facilitate group work and collaborative working between learners.

Remember, though, that you are writing a summary here, and not a complete teaching package.

Guidance on approaches to assessment of this Unit

This section should tell readers about how the Outcomes could be assessed, expanding on the Evidence Requirements. Suggestions on approaches to assessment might cover the whole Unit, be integrated across Outcomes, or, more rarely, relate to an individual Outcome.

You can suggest specific instruments of assessment and, if appropriate, provide outline exemplars. When you're suggesting suitable assessment procedures, consider these questions:

- ◆ Are the Outcomes based on practical or cognitive competences?
- ◆ Can evidence be generated through the ongoing work in delivering the Unit, or is a specially designed assessment/test necessary?
- ◆ If the Outcome or Unit is about knowledge and understanding, is advice given on how learners might provide oral evidence and how this might be recorded?
- ◆ Can evidence for the Unit be provided by means of a written and/or oral test, or does it require practical performance or a product?
- ◆ If practical performance is required, should assessment be based on judging processes or on processes and products?
- ◆ If evidence has to be gathered using questions, what form should they take? (Short answer? Extended response? Completion?)

Where possible, you should suggest holistic assessment, or make suggestions for integration of assessment — this will help keep assessment manageable. For example, in knowledge-based Units, it may be legitimate to sample the content and set a cut-off score that allows a reasonable inference to be drawn that all Performance Criteria for a Unit have been met. In these cases, the instruments of assessment must be designed and the cut-off score set in such a way that inference of competence is reasonable. You should not, however, specify a cut-off score in the Unit specification. In this case, you should make a reference to the exemplars in the Assessment Support Pack.

NB It is not acceptable to sample PCs.

Bear in mind that you are not being asked to provide a complete assessment package. If Assessment Support Packages or assessment exemplars are available for the Unit, these should be referred to in this section.

Opportunities for e-assessment

This section should direct centres to the most up to date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment.

All Units will fall into one of the following three categories:

- ◆ Units that are ideally suited to e-assessment:
In this situation you should provide encouragement and examples of ways to do this, eg:
 - The evidence for Outcomes 1 and 2 could be held in an e-portfolio (or portfolio) and sent to the assessor.
 - The oral presentation required for Outcome 3 could be recorded on video and sent to the assessor, or made using video conferencing facilities and observed by the assessor.
- ◆ Units for which e-assessment would technically be possible, but complicated to arrange.

In these cases you should advise centres accordingly. For example:

Although this Unit could be delivered by e-assessment, it would require a considerable degree of planning by the centre to ensure the sufficiency and authenticity of learner evidence. Arrangements would have to be made to ensure that:

- the practical activity in Outcome 1 is supervised by a responsible person and clearly recorded (using an assessment checklist, or on video) for the assessor
 - the assessor is, at some point, able to question the learner on that performance (face-to-face, by telephone, online)
 - the closed-book test for Outcomes 2 and 3 is delivered in a supervised environment
- ◆ Units which may not be feasible to use e-assessment.
Where this is the case, please say so and explain why. For example:

'This Unit is not suited to delivery by e-assessment because it requires learners to be observed and questioned by a qualified practitioner to meet:
 - health and safety requirements
and/or
 - statutory/professional body requirements'

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

You will also use this section to signpost any opportunities to develop Core Skills or Core Skill components. You should give details of the Core Skills that might be developed, their SCQF levels, the Outcomes they relate to, and details of the

ways in which they might be developed (eg through particular teaching or learning strategies, learner self-study, or formative assessment). You could give this information in text form and/or in a grid.

Example of signposting in the support notes of a subject Unit from a Psychology Unit

The Core Skill of Working with Others at SCQF 6 could be developed in this Unit in the work for Outcome 3. Working with Others involves the ability to work with others to plan, agree, and take responsibility for tasks; to support co-operative working in appropriate ways; and to review the effectiveness of one's own contribution. This would fit with a group task to carry out research suitable for Outcome 3. The general skill at SCQF 6 is 'Work with others in a group to analyse, plan, and complete a complex activity'. A group could carry out the task for Outcome 3, as it is a complex activity, although the report should then be written up individually for summative assessment of Outcome 3 of this Unit.

Learners can be encouraged to analyse the task and negotiate goals, roles, and responsibilities, anticipating and responding to needs of others, supporting co-operative working, and evaluating and drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of one's own contribution. This Core Skill could be developed without formal certification.

The Component 'Using Number' of the Core Skill of Numeracy at SCQF 5 could be developed in the teaching and learning contributing to Outcome 3. The specific skills required for the component at SCQF 5 include: working confidently with a numerical concept; deciding on the numerical operations to be carried out; and carrying out complex calculations or a number of sustained calculations. This is likely to fit in to the treatment and presentation of findings required in the production of the research report, in particular in the use of descriptive statistics. It is also likely that the component 'Using Graphical Information' from Numeracy at SCQF 5 could also be developed in this context. The specific skills of: interpreting information from tables, graphs, charts, or diagrams; selecting an appropriate form of tables, graphs, charts, or diagrams; and communicating information in that form would also be found in the research report. This Core Skill could be developed here without formal certification.

National Unit specification: Shell

For the most up to date National Unit shell, please visit the materials section within: <http://www.sqaacademy.com>

Examples from National Unit specifications

Examples of Unit Purpose statements

The following are examples of Unit summary statements which give the user a reasonable amount of information about a Unit.

Example 1

Unit Purpose: Financial Accounting (Intermediate 1)

The Unit is a mandatory Unit in the Intermediate 1 Accounting Course, but is also available for learners wishing to study the Unit on its own.

The Unit is designed to enable learners to develop the skills and techniques which will allow them to record financial information in ledger accounts and petty cash statements; check records using trial balances and bank reconciliation statements; prepare (with adjustments) and analyse simple accounting statements for a sole trader, a partnership and a public limited company (plc) and use information technology. It will also develop a knowledge and understanding of the theory relating to financial accounting.

This Unit is suitable for learners who:

- ◆ are undertaking the study of this subject for the first time
- ◆ wish to obtain a basic knowledge of accounting as an interest subject
- ◆ are considering starting their own business and wish to develop a basic understanding of accounting principles and procedures

Example 2

Unit Purpose: Developing Design Proposals (Intermediate 2)

This Unit is a mandatory Unit in the Intermediate 2 Product Design Course but it is also suitable as an introduction for learners studying product design for the first time.

In this Unit learners will generate and develop ideas to satisfy a specification and work toward a solution through design activity. Learners will apply design knowledge to develop ideas and will communicate decisions taken in reaching a potential solution. Learners will use written, graphical and modelling techniques to convey their ideas and produce a potential solution. The Unit is suitable for learners with previous experience in related subjects (such as Craft and Design, Graphic Communication or Art and Design).

Examples of Outcomes, Performance Criteria, and Evidence Requirements

The following are examples of Outcomes, Performance Criteria and Evidence Requirements which are in keeping with the guidance for writing National Units.

Example 1

This example shows Outcomes which are the same at Higher (SCQF level 6) and Intermediate 1 (SCQF level 4), but the PC and Evidence Requirements establish the difference in standard.

Unit Acting (Higher)

Outcome 1

Develop an acting role from a specified text.

Performance Criteria

- a) Participates in group discussions on the interpretation of the text, contributing ideas and demonstrating engagement with the text.
- b) Makes a full contribution to group discussions on the interpretation of the specified role.
- c) Prepares for rehearsals by learning lines by the specified date.
- d) Follows director's instructions at rehearsals on movement, voice, pace and overall interpretation of role.
- e) Co-operates positively with others in the development of the performance.

Outcome 2

Perform an acting role from a specified text.

Performance Criteria

- a) Interpretation of the character is true to the author's intention, showing use of textual clues.
- b) Movement and body language are consistent with the interpretation of the character and the director's guidance.
- c) Speeches are communicated clearly, conveying character's feelings and ideas effectively.
- d) Role is sustained confidently, communicating the text accurately.
- e) Interaction with other characters is convincing and establishes the intended relationships.

Evidence Requirements for the Unit

Performance evidence is required which demonstrates that the learner has developed and performed an acting role to the standard described in the Outcomes and Performance Criteria. The role must be from a specified text which has a cast of a minimum of three characters. The performance should be presented to an audience, which may comprise other learners in the teaching group. The learner should sustain the role for a minimum of ten minutes.

The National Assessment Bank (NAB) item for this Unit illustrates the standard, lists texts of an appropriate level of demand for this Unit and includes an assessor record/checklist. Centres wishing to select their own texts and devise their own instruments of assessment should refer to the NAB to ensure that standards are comparable.

Unit Acting (Intermediate 1)

Outcome 1

Develop an acting role from a specified text.

- a) Participates in group discussions about the text, showing some understanding of meaning.
- b) Contributes to group discussions on the interpretation of the specified role.
- c) Prepares for rehearsals by learning lines by the specified date.
- d) Follows director's instructions at rehearsals on movement, voice, pace and overall interpretation of role.
- e) Co-operates positively with others in the development of the performance.

Outcome 2

Perform an acting role from a prescribed text.

- a) Interpretation of the character is broadly in line with the author's intention.
- b) Movement and body language help to convey the character.
- c) Speeches are communicated clearly and convey the character's main feelings and ideas.
- d) Role is sustained with occasional prompts.
- e) Interaction with others characters communicates the intended relationships.

Evidence Requirements for the Unit

Evidence is required to demonstrate that learners have achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

Performance evidence is required which demonstrates that the learner has developed and performed an acting role to the standard described in the Outcomes and Performance Criteria. The role must be from a specified text which has a cast of a minimum of three characters. The performance should be presented to an audience, which may comprise other learners in the teaching group. The learner should sustain the role for a minimum of five minutes.

The National Assessment Bank (NAB) item for this Unit illustrates the standard, lists texts of an appropriate level of demand for this Unit and includes an assessor record/checklist. Centres wishing to select their own texts and devise their own instruments of assessment should refer to the NAB to ensure that standards are comparable.

Example 2

This is an example where knowledge and understanding of the process involved in a group production is assessed holistically

Unit Media Production (Higher)

Outcome 1

Contribute to planning a media production from a brief.

Performance Criteria

- a) Contributes effectively to an analysis of the brief, expressing useful ideas and allocating roles and tasks through negotiation.
- b) Carries out relevant research effectively.
- c) Contributes effectively to devising the production schedule.
- d) Uses technical terms accurately.

Outcome 2

Contribute to implementing a group production from a brief.

Performance Criteria

- a) Contributes effectively to the organisation of the production, including negotiating working methods and rules for managing the group production.
- b) Communicates ideas and information effectively.
- c) Contributes effectively in terms of technical and non-technical skills in accordance with the brief, allocated role and production schedule.
- d) Uses technical terms accurately.

Outcome 3

Review and evaluate a group production.

Performance Criteria

- a) Analyses the strengths and weaknesses of production in relation to the brief.
- b) Analyses the strengths and weaknesses of his/her own performance.
- c) Recommends and justifies appropriate improved or alternative strategies.
- d) Uses technical terms accurately.

Evidence Requirements for the Unit

Evidence is required to demonstrate that learners have achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

Written and/or recorded oral evidence and performance evidence is required to demonstrate that the learner has participated in and evaluated a media group production to the standard specified in the Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

Written/recorded oral evidence should be produced to demonstrate that the learner has evaluated the process. The evaluation should be completed by each learner under supervised, controlled conditions within one hour. This assessment will be open-book with learners having access to production notes.

The National Assessment Bank (NAB) item for this Unit illustrates the standard and provides exemplification of the type of brief suitable for this level. An assessor observation checklist is also included in the NAB. Centres wishing to design their own instruments of assessment should refer to the NAB to ensure a comparable standard.

Example 3

This is an example where knowledge and understanding and practical skills are assessed.

Unit Multi-media Applications (Intermediate 1)

Outcome 1

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of multimedia applications software.

Performance Criteria

- a) Explains clearly the main uses of multi-media authoring software, presentation software and desktop publishing software.
- b) Describes accurately and clearly the main features of presentation software.
- c) Describes accurately and clearly the main features of desk top publishing software.
- d) Uses correct terminology where appropriate in describing features and uses of multi-media applications software.

Outcome 2

Produce documents using multi-media hardware and software.

- a) Captures short text, graphics, sound and video extracts using multi-media hardware.
- b) Produces short documents which combine text, graphics, sound and video in accordance with a given brief.
- c) Uses multi-media hardware and software independently to produce simple multi- media documents.

Evidence Requirements for the Unit

Evidence is required to demonstrate that learners have achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

Written and/or oral evidence is required which demonstrates that the learner has achieved Outcome 1 to the standard specified in the Outcome and Performance Criteria. The evidence for this Outcome should be obtained under controlled, supervised conditions. The assessment will be closed-book and should last no more that 45 minutes.

Product evidence is required which demonstrates that the learner has achieved Outcome 2 to the standard specified in the Outcome and Performance Criteria. Each learner will produce two documents for this assessment. The assessment

will be carried out under supervised conditions and will last no more than 45 minutes. Learners will have access to notes and reference books and online help for this assessment.

Assessments for this Unit may be conducted on one assessment occasion lasting 1 hour 30 minutes or on two separate occasions lasting 45 minutes each. The national assessment for this Unit illustrates the standard for assessments in this Unit. If a centre wishes to design its own assessments for this Unit, they should be of a comparable standard.

Further examples of Evidence Requirements

Example 1

Unit Creative Photography (Intermediate 2)

Evidence Requirements for the Unit

Evidence is required to demonstrate that learners have achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

Written and/or recorded oral evidence and product evidence should be produced to demonstrate that the learner has achieved all of the Outcomes and Performance Criteria. The evidence should be produced under supervised conditions to a given brief. Learners should produce a folio of work which will include:

- ◆ an outline plan in response to the given brief, which sets out a theme, objectives expressed in terms of end result, and details of camera equipment and settings which will be used
- ◆ three completed digital prints to the standard specified in the Performance Criteria
- ◆ an evaluation of the prints submitted

The evidence may be produced on one assessment occasion or on more than one occasion. The final write-up/presentation of the project outline, the practical task and the final evaluation should take place under supervised conditions and should take no more than 1 hour and 30 minutes to complete. Learners may have access to notes and books.

Centres must be satisfied that the evidence submitted is the work of individual learners. Assessors should maintain a record of discussions with each learner of the draft plan prior to the submission of final folio.

The standard to be applied is exemplified in the National Assessment Bank item available for the Unit. If a centre wishes to design its own assessments for this Unit, they should be of a comparable standard.

Example 2

Unit: Consumer Law: An Introduction (Intermediate 1)

Evidence Requirements for the Unit

Evidence is required to demonstrate that learners have achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

To demonstrate satisfactory attainment of all Outcomes of the Unit, learners must produce written/and or recorded oral responses to items that cover all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

The assessment will be conducted under closed-book, supervised conditions within a time limit of one hour.

The standard to be applied and the breadth of coverage are illustrated in the National Assessment Bank items available for this Unit. If a centre wishes to design its own assessments for this Unit, they should be of a comparable standard. Appendix 1 details the content and context for this Unit.

5 Additional information

This section of the guidance is the additional information you will need to refer to when writing the Units. All of this additional information is available on the SQA Academy Guide to Unit Writing site:

- ◆ Unit Quality Checklists
- ◆ HN and NQ
- ◆ SCQF level descriptors
- ◆ Equality and Inclusion guidance
- ◆ Core Skills Framework
- ◆ Essential Skills Toolkit
- ◆ Use of an qualifications appendix

Select this link to view the SQA Academy course:

<http://www.sqaacademy.org.uk/course/view.php?id=296>

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date
2	Changes made to the headings within the Support Notes section, to align with SQA's interim Product Architecture.	August 2012

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