SQA Advanced Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Office Administration

Unit code: HP69 47

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to develop the knowledge and skills required of an administrator to meet the requirements of the administrative function of an organisation. This Unit will be relevant to candidates who are interested in a career as an administrator or within an administrative environment.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

1 Describe core activities within the administrative environment and evaluate current working practices.
2 Evaluate the causes of, and coping strategies to deal with, work related stress.
3 Design and evaluate an office system and procedure to improve communication and service to customers.
4 Explain current legal responsibilities of employers and employees in relation to the working environment and apply to workplace practice.

Credit points and level: 1 SQA Credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

*SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from National 1 to Doctorates.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Entry to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre. However, it would be beneficial if candidates have some familiarity with administrative functions. This may be demonstrated by possession of the Unit *Administrative Services* (DM3P 11) or equivalent or by relevant experience.

Core Skills: There are opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Communication* at SCQF level 6 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

Context for delivery: If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

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(HP75 47). Integration opportunities also exist with *IT in Business – Word Processing and Presentation Applications* (HP6G 47).

Assessment: Evidence can be generated through assessment of a given case study or a real work place situation. A holistic approach may be taken to the assessment of Outcome 1 and Outcome 2. The assessment for Outcome 3 may also be integrated with Outcome 1 if the office system chosen refers to internal customers. Outcome 4 may be assessed on its own, however there is scope for some integration with Outcome 1 within the context of working practices.

An Assessment exemplar has been produced to indicate the national standard of achievement required at SCQF level 7.

Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Office Administration

Unit code: HP69 47

The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, Knowledge and/or Skills, and Evidence Requirements are mandatory.

Outcome 1

Describe core activities within the administrative environment and evaluate current working practices

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ♦ Core Activities within an administrative environment
- ♦ Role of Office Administrator
- ♦ Working Practices

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ♦ describe four core activities relating to the role of the Office Administrator within an administrative environment. Reference should be made to how the Office Administrator plans, organises and co-ordinates activities. One activity must relate to information management and one activity must relate to meetings.
- ♦ evaluate two working practices from — flexi time, job rotation, part-time working, job share, teleworking, and hot desking.

Assessment Guidelines

Assessment for this Outcome may be combined with Outcome 2. Candidates may be asked to produce evidence based on a simulated case study or an actual workplace situation.

Outcome 2

Evaluate the causes of, and coping strategies to deal with, work related stress

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ♦ Causes of work-related stress
- ♦ Coping strategies

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ♦ identify four causes of work related stress.

♦ select and evaluate coping strategies to deal with two of the following causes of stress — lack of control, heavy workload, poor time management, poor working practices, lack of feedback, low self-esteem.

The coping strategies selected should make reference to two from — assertiveness, time management, delegation, supervision, improved working practices or physical strategies.

Assessment Guidelines

Assessment for this Outcome may be combined with Outcome 1. Candidates may be asked to produce evidence based on a simulated case study or an actual workplace situation.

Outcome 3

Design and evaluate an office system and procedure to improve communication and service to customers.

Knowledge and/or Skills

♦ Organisational System and Procedures
♦ Business Communication
♦ Customer Service

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

♦ describe two methods used by an organisation to communicate with its customers
♦ explain the importance of effective customer care
♦ evaluate an existing office system and procedure
♦ design an improved office system and procedure

Assessment Guidelines

Assessment for this Outcome can be combined with Outcome 1 if the office system refers to internal customers.

Candidates may be required to produce evidence based on a simulated case study or an actual workplace situation.

Outcome 4

Explain current legal responsibilities of employers and employees in relation to the working environment and apply to workplace practice

Knowledge and/or Skills

♦ Health & Safety
♦ Employment Legislation
♦ Equality and Diversity in the Workplace

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

♦ explain three responsibilities of the employer and three responsibilities of the employee under current Health and Safety Legislation.
♦ advise on two aspects of employment legislation which will support current working practices. The response must be based on a simulated case study or real life work situation.
♦ evaluate the application of Equality and Diversity legislation on one internal and one external working relationship. Response must be based on a simulated case study or a real life work situation.

Assessment Guidelines

The candidates will be required to produce evidence based on a simulated case study or an actual workplace situation.

Administrative information

Unit code: HP69 47

Unit title: Office Administration

Superclass category: AY

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History of changes:

Version	Description of change	Date

Source: SQA

SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution that Scotland's colleges have made to the development of SQA Advanced Qualifications.

FURTHER INFORMATION: Call SQA's Customer Contact Centre on 44 (0) 141 500 5030 or 0345 279 1000. Alternatively, complete our Centre Feedback Form.

Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Office Administration

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

This Unit is designed to provide candidates with the knowledge and skills to enable candidates to undertake the role and responsibilities of an Office Administrator. This Unit is mandatory within SQA Advanced Diploma in *Administration and Information Technology* (GM68 48), however it may form part of other group awards and can also be taken as a stand-alone Unit.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

Evidence can be generated through the interpretation of a given case study or a real work place situation. Evidence may be presented in written and/or oral form. Outcomes 1 and Outcome 2 may be assessed holistically. Assessment for Outcome 1 may also be integrated with Outcome 3 if the office system identified refers to internal customers. There is scope to integrate part of the assessment of Outcome 4 with that for Outcome 1 within the context of working practices. There may be opportunities to integrate Outcome 1 with learning Outcome 3 of *Communication: Business Communication* (HP75 47). Integration opportunities also exist with the *IT in Business – Word Processing and Presentation Applications* Unit (HP6G 47).

Outcome 1

It is envisaged that candidates will respond to a case study detailing a scenario which allows them to make reference to how the Office Administrator plans, organises and co-ordinates activities. Alternatively candidates may wish to refer to a real work situation. Generic examples of core activities include:

SMART Target Setting
Action Planning
Diary Management
Website Management
Invoicing/Payroll
Retrieving/collating information for managerial purposes
Communication
Input/updating/maintaining databases
Organising and co-ordinate meetings/note minute taking

Candidates are also required to evaluate two working practices from: flexi time, job rotation, part-time working, job share, teleworking and hot desking. This evaluation may be based on a case study scenario which allows candidates to undertake evaluation of two of these working practices. Alternatively candidates may wish to evaluate similar working practices within a real work place situation.

Outcome 2

In Outcome 2 candidates are required to explore the issues which underpin work related stress. Work-related stress can arise when the demands of the job exceed the individual's capability to cope. If ignored, work related stress can have an extremely adverse impact on overall organisational productivity and may lead to serious illness, high levels of staff turn over and increased levels of employee absences.

When completing the assessment for Outcome 2 it is anticipated that candidates will respond to a case study detailing a scenario which allows them to identify the causes and associated coping strategies of work related stress. Alternatively, candidates may base their response on a real life situation. Candidates should identify four causes of work related stress and the following may be appropriate responses:

Poor leadership/management
Unreasonable workload
Boring/repetitive work
Role ambiguity
Role conflict
Lack of recognition from manager
Poor working relationships
Poor channels of communication
Lack of training
Lack of opportunities
Lack of control
Poor work-life balance
Poor time management
Poor working practices
Lack of feedback
Low self esteem
Blame culture
Bullying
Poor physical working environment

Candidates are also required to select and evaluate some of the coping strategies to deal with two of the following causes of stress — lack of control, heavy workload, poor time management, poor working practices, lack of feedback, low self-esteem. The coping strategies selected could make reference to two of the following:

Assertiveness

Candidates could research some of the tools and techniques which underpin assertiveness in the workplace to identify how assertiveness can reduce the impact of work related stress on the individual. Candidates may identify that assertiveness is an effective tool with which to combat work related stress as it enables the individual to stand up for their rights in a non-aggressive manner. Furthermore, assertive employees are able to express their views and feelings directly without infringing the rights and views of others. This means that individuals who adopt assertive behaviour are less likely to become over-loaded, over-worked and consequently stressed.

Time Management

Candidates could explore some of the tools and techniques which underpin effective time management and then identify how these can minimise the impact of work related stress. Candidates may consider some of the following tools and techniques within their response: prioritising, goal

setting, learning to say no, keep a time log to see where time goes, keep a to-do list and stick to it, prioritise tasks and activities.

Delegation

Delegation is another effective tool which can be used to minimise and cope with work related stress. Effective delegation enables the delegator to free up valuable time which means that they can concentrate on other important tasks. Candidates can explore the key concepts relating to effective delegation and identify how effective delegation can be used as a coping strategy to minimise work related stress.

Improved Working Practices

Poor and ineffective working practices can have an adverse impact on work life balance, organisational productivity and performance, leading to increased levels of work-related stress. Candidates may research different types of working practices and illustrate how these can help reduce levels of stress within the workplace. In doing so, candidates may consider some of the following methods: flexi time, job rotation, job share, part-time working, tele-working and hot desking.

Outcome 3

In Outcome 3 candidates are required to evaluate two methods used by an organisation to communicate with its customers and to explain the importance of effective customer care. The importance associated with the maintenance of effective relationships with internal and/or external customers may be explored within the context of the different communication methodologies available to a company, eg e-mail; face to face, telephone, written communication (electronic/paper).

It is also anticipated that candidates explain the key principles of effective customer care, eg: building effective relationships with customers, meeting the needs of the customer, promoting customer loyalty by providing a high quality of customer service and making the customers feeling appreciated.

Candidates are also required to demonstrate that they can evaluate an existing system and procedure and design a new system and procedure in order to improve communication and service to customers. Candidates may respond to a case study detailing a scenario which allows the evaluation of an existing system and procedure or alternatively candidates may wish to evaluate an existing system and procedure within a real work situation.

Centres can encourage candidates to consider the various steps within the context of new system design which may incorporate the following areas:

Importance of a system within an office context
Identifying the need for a system and associated procedures
Designing and developing a system
Undertaking cost benefit analysis
Consultation with appropriate personnel
Obtaining approval for the new system
Piloting the system
Implementing the system
Review and monitoring of new system and procedures

Candidates may choose to base the new system on one of the following areas: Customer Contact and Complaint Procedures, Telephone Procedures, Mail Procedures, Email Procedures.

Outcome 4

Candidates will need to explain three key responsibilities of the employer and three key responsibilities of the employee under current Health and Safety Legislation. It is envisaged that candidates will respond to a case study detailing a scenario which enables candidates to explain the key responsibilities from both an employer and employee perspective.

Candidates may draw upon some of the following examples within the context of employer responsibilities**:**

An employer with more than five employees is required to have a Health and Safety policy
Emergency procedures
Provide first aid facilities
Ensure that work equipment is used and maintained to the required standard
Provide protective equipment where applicable
Co-operate with Health and Safety officials as and when required

Within the context of employee responsibilities some of the following examples may be used:

Legal duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety:
Co-operate with the employer on matters relating to health and safety
Use protective clothing or/and equipment where applicable
Must not interfere or misuse equipment/machinery

Candidates will also be required to advise on two aspects of employment legislation which can support effective working practices. Up-to-date and relevant legislation should be drawn on and candidates may want to explore the following areas — statutory rights within the context of flexi time, statutory rights within the context of working hours, work life balance and parental leave.

Furthermore, candidates will be required to advise on current legislation pertaining to Equality and Diversity on one internal and one external working relationship. Candidates should be encouraged to research the concepts and practices which underpin equality and diversity in the workplace and may recognise that different groups and people have diverse identities and diverse needs. Again, it is envisaged that candidates will respond to a case study detailing a scenario which enables candidates to provide applicable advice on current legislation pertaining to equality and diversity. Alternatively, candidates may want to apply their findings within the context of a real work situation.

Candidates may refer to some or all of the under noted legislation when completing the assessment for learning Outcome 4. Candidate should be encouraged to undertake independent research and should be given guidance regarding good practice within the context of the application of appropriate referencing.

♦   The Health & Safety at Work Act
♦   The Health & Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations
♦   The Race Relations Act
♦   The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations
♦   Disability Discrimination Act
♦   The Sex Discrimination Act
♦   Equal Pay Act
♦   Employment Rights Act

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

This Unit offers opportunities to develop *Communication* Core Skill at SCQF level 6. For Outcome 1 and 2 are required to explain various aspects of the administrative function and are required to summarise their conclusions. Evidence Requirements for Outcome 3 and 4 require candidates to read and interpret information and communicate their findings. *Communication*, both oral and written, can be further developed during the teaching of this Unit through formative work which could involve an exploration through discussion, training videos and/or role play. During class discussions candidates may have the opportunity to develop a high level of oral communication skills in questioning and responding to others.

Open learning

All Outcomes are appropriate to Open and Flexible Learning approaches with tutor support. Delivering centres will be responsible for ensuring authenticity of candidates' work. If this Unit is delivered by open or distance learning methods, additional resources may be required for candidate support, assessment and quality assurance.

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.

General information for candidates

Unit title: Office Administration

This Unit has four Outcomes, all of which will help you to develop the knowledge and skills required to work within an administrative environment.

In Outcome 1, you will learn about the core activities in relation to the role of the Office Administrator and you will learn how to evaluate and improve current working practices.

Outcome 2 will equip you with the knowledge and skills required to deal effectively with work-related stress. You will learn how to identify the causes of stress and you will gain an understanding of how to cope and adopt strategies for dealing with work related stress.

In Outcome 3 you will learn about the importance of effective communication and customer care. This Outcome will also require you to evaluate a current system and a procedure, and design a new system and a procedure, in order to improve customer care within an organisation.

In Outcome 4 you will be introduced to the legislative requirements pertaining to the current office environment. You will be required to identify the key responsibilities from both an employee and employer's perspective under current Health and Safety Legislation. You will also gain an insight into current legislation within the context of employment and equality and diversity.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills in this Unit, however you may have the opportunity to develop the Core Skill of *Communication* at SCQF level 6.