

Next Generation Higher National Unit Specification

Supporting People: Autism (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: J6EJ 47
SCQF level: 7 (16 SCQF credit points)
Valid from: session 2022–23

Prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 1.0) August 2022

This unit specification provides detailed information about the unit to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year.

This unit specification is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information required to deliver and assess the unit.

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Unit purpose

This unit enables learners to develop and apply their knowledge and skills to a practice situation, reflecting on relevant theory and contemporary ideas about autism. The unit is suitable for those who support autistic individuals.

Entry is at your centre's discretion; however, recommended entry may include qualifications at SCQF level 6 or experience of working in the care or education sector, supporting autistic individuals.

Learners who complete the unit as part of the Higher National Certificate (HNC) Social Services or HNC Childhood Practice group awards may have the opportunity to progress to further study, including Higher National Diploma (HND) or degree level courses.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

- 1 analyse historical and contemporary theories and research about autism
- 2 evaluate the impact that autism has on an individual they support
- 3 develop an approach or strategy to support an autistic individual
- 4 evaluate an approach or strategy to support an autistic individual

Evidence requirements

Learners must provide both knowledge and product evidence for the unit. They must reflect on their knowledge and skills across all outcomes while working with an individual, and provide evidence that they have used their knowledge in practice through at least one project supporting an autistic individual.

Learners must provide knowledge evidence for all outcomes. This could be oral or written (or a combination of both) and captured in a range of media. In addition to their knowledge evidence, they must provide product evidence for outcomes 3 and 4. They should collate this in a portfolio.

Learners' product evidence must include:

- ◆ a plan (of an approach or strategy)
- ◆ an approach or strategy developed to support an autistic individual

Learners must develop an approach or strategy to support an autistic individual, drawing upon relevant knowledge. They should collaboratively plan, implement and evaluate an approach or strategy to address the individual's needs, wishes and aspirations. It should promote the individual's rights, needs and choices, including what matters most to them. Learners should collaborate with individuals, their families and those who support them.

Evidence can be produced over a period of time in lightly controlled conditions, and it requires authentication.

To successfully achieve the outcomes, learners must provide evidence that they can complete the following tasks:

- ◆ Identify characteristics of autism, particularly differences in communication, patterns of behaviour and sensory experiences, using historical and contemporary views.
- ◆ Analyse historical and contemporary theories, research and policy frameworks relating to autism.
- ◆ Discuss how ideas have changed, with an emphasis on promoting diversity and inclusion.
- ◆ Identify the communication, behavioural and sensory differences that an autistic individual whom they support may experience, and evaluate the impact this can have on their wellbeing and outcomes.

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August 2022

- ◆ Describe how some differences are strengths, and how specific strengths are helpful in the development of skills that can lead to occupations and activities that are meaningful to individuals.
- ◆ Describe how they support an autistic individual, following legislative and regulatory frameworks.
- ◆ Develop an approach or strategy to support an autistic individual, drawing upon their needs, wishes and aspirations in collaboration with the individual and others.
- ◆ Discuss methods of ensuring collaboration with the individual in the co-design of an approach or strategy.
- ◆ Evaluate an approach or strategy, taking account of the views of the individual and others. Discuss how to extend and advance the approach as the individual develops new skills.

Knowledge and skills

The following table shows the knowledge and skills covered by the unit outcomes:

| Knowledge | Skills |
|--|--|
| <p>Outcome 1 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ historical theories and research about autism ◆ contemporary views and research about autism ◆ how ideas about autism have changed in regard to promoting diversity and inclusion | <p>Outcome 1 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ use their initiative to research relevant theories and information |
| <p>Outcome 2 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the current criteria for diagnosis of autism ◆ the sensory differences that an autistic individual may experience ◆ restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests and activities in autism ◆ the communication differences that an autistic individual may experience ◆ how differences can be beneficial to the individual ◆ the relevant legislation, standards, codes of practice and frameworks and how these apply to the learner's role | <p>Outcome 2 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ apply their knowledge to evaluate the impact that autism has on an individual they support ◆ recognise strengths in differences ◆ apply their knowledge of relevant legislation, standards, codes of practice and frameworks |

| Knowledge | Skills |
|---|---|
| <p>Outcome 3 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the approaches, strategies, systems and programmes available to support autistic individuals ◆ methods of inclusive communication that maximise an individual’s capacity and ability to be involved in choices and decisions | <p>Outcome 3 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ plan or design an approach or strategy in collaboration with an autistic individual, their family and those who support them ◆ implement an approach or strategy to support an individual ◆ collaborate with the individual, key people, and others |
| <p>Outcome 4 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ methods of monitoring, improving and developing approaches ◆ methods of evaluating approaches and strategies | <p>Outcome 4 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ justify why they have used an approach or strategy ◆ reflect on their work with an individual ◆ collaboratively evaluate an approach or strategy |

Meta-skills

Throughout the unit, learners develop meta-skills to enhance their employability in the social services or childhood practice sector.

Self-management

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ focusing: self-directed research, assessing the needs of an individual and reflecting on own knowledge and skills
- ◆ initiative: self-directed research, implementing an approach or strategy for an autistic individual

Social intelligence

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ communicating: receiving and processing information from various sources, sharing information through collaboration
- ◆ feeling: taking an empathetic approach to supporting individuals, reflecting through the autism lens
- ◆ collaborating: working with others to develop and implement a strategy to support an autistic individual, collaborating with others in a multi-disciplinary team, ascertaining the individual's views

Innovation

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ curiosity: self-directed research; researching different theories, frameworks and strategies to support autistic individuals effectively
- ◆ creativity: designing and implementing an approach or strategy to support an autistic individual
- ◆ critical thinking: evaluating and reviewing the approaches taken

Literacies

Learners develop core skills in the following literacies:

Numeracy

Learners develop numeracy skills by analysing research and statistics about autism.

Communication

Learners develop communication skills by collaborating with others and gathering an understanding of how an individual communicates and responds to communication.

Digital

Learners develop digital skills and computer literacy by completing their assessments and using digital communication approaches with their assessors and in their work or placement role.

Delivery of unit

You can deliver this unit as a stand-alone unit or as an optional unit within the HNC Social Services or HNC Childhood Practice.

If you deliver the unit as part of the group award, you can integrate delivery with the core units. You can integrate most, if not all, evidence requirements with the HNC Social Services core unit Approaches to Assessment in Social Services at SCQF level 7 or HNC Childhood Practice core unit Pedagogy in Practice at SCQF level 7.

You can integrate some evidence requirements with Developing Reflective Practice at SCQF level 7 or Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights at SCQF level 7.

You can integrate and assess the unit alongside either of the following Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) units:

- ◆ Support Individuals with Specific Communication Needs at SCQF level 7
- ◆ Work with Children and Young People with Additional Requirements to Address their Developmental Needs at SCQF level 7

The notional design length of the unit is 80 hours, however, the amount of time you allocate to each outcome is at your discretion. We suggest the following distribution of time, including assessment:

Outcome 1 — Analyse historical and contemporary theories and research about autism.
(24 hours)

Outcome 2 — Evaluate the impact that autism has on an individual they support.
(15 hours)

Outcome 3 — Develop an approach or strategy to support an autistic individual.
(24 hours)

Outcome 4 — Evaluate an approach or strategy to support an autistic individual.
(17 hours)

Professional recognition

This unit forms part of the HNC Social Services and HNC Childhood Practice group awards. The HNC Social Services and HNC Childhood Practice meet registration requirements for the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

In writing this unit, we have given consideration to terminology to ensure that autistic people are treated with respect and their views acknowledged. Although a 'person-first' description is often seen as best practice, many autistic individuals prefer to be described as an 'autistic person'. Surveys around the topic substantiate this view, including recent research (March 2022) which states that over 75 per cent of autistic individuals prefer this term. Therefore, we have used the term 'autistic individual' in the unit, as best practice at the time of writing.

The unit emphasises learners researching areas of their own interest.

Historical views should include theories or research by:

- ◆ Leo Kanner
- ◆ Hans Asperger
- ◆ Lorna Wing
- ◆ Judith Gould

Contemporary views and research could include:

- ◆ diagnostic criteria
- ◆ neuroscience
- ◆ neurodiversity
- ◆ inclusion
- ◆ the social model of disability
- ◆ issues of identity and labelling
- ◆ supporting employment
- ◆ testimony from autistic individuals

Learners can discuss how well contemporary research has informed our practice and understanding, while evaluating some of the barriers to research, such as gender bias in diagnosis and support, and a focus on higher levels of functioning.

Learners can evaluate how changes in our understanding over time have — both positively and negatively — had an impact on autistic individuals. They can discuss the implementation of these changes at policy level, and their impact on practice and on the individual.

Learners can discuss the impact of trying to fit into a social world and how some individuals displaying mild characteristics of autism can be more competent at masking internal struggles.

Communication differences can include differences in receptive communication, expressive communication, and echolalia. Behavioural differences can include restricted activities, interests, and a need for routine. Sensory differences can include hypo- or hypersensitivity to

touch, smell, taste, sounds or visual stimulation. There may also be differences in proprioception, interoception and vestibular senses.

Learners should give examples of how these differences have had an impact on the individual's current and future outcomes.

Learners should consider current legislation, standards, codes of practice and frameworks relating to their role in supporting an autistic individual.

Learners can select an approach or strategy to benefit the individual, considering their communication needs, sensory needs, or both. They can collaborate with others in their work setting or placement to gather information on the individual's needs and preferences, and consider previous methods of support.

Approaches and strategies can include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- ◆ augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)
- ◆ electronic aids to communication
- ◆ schedules
- ◆ work systems
- ◆ strategies to reduce any impact from sensory differences

Learners can use a range of different measures to support an individual with communication difficulties to communicate their views, such as talking mats, gestures, and pictorial symbols.

Learners can evaluate their approach or strategy, considering factors such as:

- ◆ collaboration
- ◆ consistency
- ◆ how well the individual's needs, wishes and aspirations were met
- ◆ the individual's involvement
- ◆ suitability to the individual

If you deliver the unit as a stand-alone unit, we recommend that you assess the outcomes holistically. If you deliver it as part of the group award, we recommend that you integrate it with the core units. See the 'Delivery of unit' section above for more information.

Approaches to assessment

We recommend that you assess this unit through a project. In their project, learners implement an approach or strategy to support an autistic individual, drawing upon relevant knowledge. Learners should collaboratively plan, implement and evaluate an approach or strategy to address the individual's needs.

You can fully integrate assessment of the project with the HNC Social Services core unit Approaches to Assessment in Social Services at SCQF level 7 or the HNC Childhood

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Practice unit Pedagogy in Practice at SCQF level 7. You can integrate some evidence requirements with the core units Developing Reflective Practice at SCQF level 7 or Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights at SCQF level 7.

We recommend that learners compile a portfolio of product evidence, and a reflective account of the project of approximately 2,500 words. They can further substantiate this with a witness testimony or expert witness statement by a mentor or supervisor to authenticate collaborative practice with the individual and others. If you deliver the unit as part of the group award and integrate it with the core units, you can adjust the word count accordingly.

Equality and inclusion

This unit is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

You should take into account the needs of individual learners when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs is available on the assessment arrangements web page:

www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Information for learners

Supporting People: Autism (SCQF level 7)

This section explains:

- ◆ what the unit is about
- ◆ what you should know or be able to do before you start
- ◆ what you need to do during the unit
- ◆ opportunities for further learning and employment

Unit information

This unit enables you to develop and apply your knowledge and skills to a practice situation. You use research methods to learn relevant theory and contemporary ideas about autism. The unit is suitable for those who support autistic individuals.

When you complete the unit, you can:

- 1 analyse historical and contemporary theories and research about autism
- 2 evaluate the impact that autism has on an individual you support
- 3 develop an approach or strategy to support an autistic individual
- 4 evaluate an approach or strategy to support an autistic individual

Entry to the unit is your centre's discretion; however, recommended entry may include qualifications at SCQF level 6 or experience of working in the social services or childhood practice sector supporting autistic individuals. You must reflect on your work with an individual in a work placement or work practice situation.

To achieve the unit, you must provide evidence of your knowledge and skills, while collaboratively planning, implementing, and evaluating an approach or strategy designed to support an autistic individual. You evidence your knowledge and skills through a portfolio of evidence and a reflective account of your project.

While completing the unit, you identify and review your development of meta-skills. You can develop meta-skills in the following areas:

Self-management

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ focusing: self-directed research, assessing the needs of an individual and reflecting on own knowledge and skills
- ◆ initiative: self-directed research, implementing an approach or strategy for an autistic individual

Social intelligence

This meta-skill includes:

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Innovation

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- ◆ curiosity: self-directed research; researching different theories, frameworks and strategies to support autistic individuals effectively
- ◆ creativity: designing and implementing an approach or strategy to support an autistic individual
- ◆ critical thinking: evaluating and reviewing the approaches taken

When you complete this unit as part of the Higher National Certificate (HNC) Social Services or HNC Childhood Practice group awards, you may have the opportunity to progress to further study, including Higher National Diploma (HND) or degree level courses. The HNC Social Services and HNC Childhood Practice meet registration requirements for the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

Administrative information

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Superclass: HC

History of changes

| Version | Description of change | Date |
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