Higher National Unit Specification

Geography A: Examining Inequality (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: J72N 47

SCQF level: 7 (8 SCQF credit points)

Valid from: session 2024–25

Prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 2.0) August 2024

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.

This edition: August 2024 (version 2.0)

Unit purpose

This unit introduces learners to human geography by examining a specific aspect that is particularly relevant to the social sciences — social inequalities — with a focus on geographical and spatial aspects.

The unit develops the idea of geographical patterns, introducing learners to geographical methods and techniques (GMTs), and analytical skills, through examining and explaining these patterns. Learners develop evaluative skills by considering strategies for reducing inequality.

The unit is aimed at learners who have a general interest in geography, as well as those who want to use it as the basis for further study.

Entry to the unit is at your centre's discretion. However, we recommend that learners have one or more of the following:

♦ good communication skills
♦ previous study of geography, for example, National Qualifications at SCQF levels 5 or 6, or other similar qualifications
♦ other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the unit

This unit works well alongside Geography B: Urban Change and Its Impact.

Learners normally study the unit as part of HNC Social Sciences. They can also study it on a stand-alone basis.

If learners study the unit as part of HNC Social Sciences, they may be able to progress to HND Social Sciences or a degree programme in a related subject.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1 describe patterns of geographical social inequality
2 explain inequality from a geographical perspective
3 evaluate strategies for reducing geographical inequality

Evidence requirements

Learners should provide written or oral evidence covering all unit outcomes, produced under open-book conditions. You should give the task at an appropriate point in the unit. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.

Written responses must be approximately 1,250 words, and oral responses must be 9 to 11 minutes in duration.

Learners' responses must include:

♦ a description of how and to what extent spatial patterns of social inequalities can vary both within and between places
♦ an explanation of how physical and human factors impact patterns of social opportunities and inequalities for people and places
♦ a description of the role governments and other institutions play in reducing, reinforcing and creating patterns of social inequality in geographies
♦ evaluation of at least two strategies to reduce inequalities in a chosen areal context (either two strategies in depth or several in less depth)

You can choose to use a mix of assessment methods across a group, depending on what is most suitable for each learner; for example, some could give a written response and others could give an oral response.

Learners must fully reference their assessment, using reliable sources appropriate for SCQF level 7. They must list all sources in a bibliography or reference list, in a recognised standard format such as Harvard or APA.

The SCQF level of the unit provides additional context relating to the quality of evidence. Learners should:

♦ contribute information that is complex, accurate and relevant to its purpose and audience
♦ present ideas clearly and coherently
♦ use a structure that is appropriate to the purpose
♦ provide supporting evidence or references

Knowledge and skills

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

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 1 Learners should understand: ♦ key features and patterns of social inequalities that can occur in a geographical context	**Outcome 1** Learners can: ♦ describe inequalities in a geographical context ♦ describe the social inequalities that can occur between places and spaces, such as income, health, crime rates and the digital divide
Outcome 2 Learners should understand: ♦ how inequalities develop and vary at a geographical and spatial scale	**Outcome 2** Learners can: ♦ describe the influence of global connections and globalisation in driving structural economic change, such as de-industrialisation, in places ♦ explain how structural economic change impacts patterns of social opportunities and inequalities in places and for people ♦ explain the range of factors that influence social inequalities such as income, gender, age, health, personal mobility, ethnicity and education ♦ apply GMTs to account for physical and human factors that contribute to geographical and spatial inequalities

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 3 Learners should understand: ♦ strengths and weaknesses of strategies for reducing inequalities geographically and spatially	**Outcome 3** Learners can: ♦ describe the role of organisations in driving economic change; for example, local and national government, multinational corporations and international institutions ♦ describe the role of organisations in reducing, reinforcing and creating geographical inequalities; for example, through spending, social protection and government policies ♦ evaluate strategies for reducing geographical inequalities

Knowledge	Skills

Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, learners develop meta-skills to enhance their employability in the social sciences sector.

The unit helps learners develop the meta-skills of self-management, social intelligence and innovation. Learners should develop meta-skills naturally throughout the unit. You should encourage learners to develop a minimum of one area in each of the three categories, but they do not need to cover all suggested subsections. The following suggestions may help shape delivery and assessment, and vary depending on the chosen topics and assessment method.

Self-management

This meta-skill includes:

♦ focusing: completing the assessment and project work to clear deadlines; being proactive in planning and developing assessment responses

♦ integrity: acting in an ethical way to complete assessments and carry out work for projects, for example, by not cheating; developing good working relationships with peers; including citations and referencing for assessments

♦ adapting: acquiring new knowledge and skills; using different technologies to communicate and complete assessments; using a virtual learning environment (VLE); reflecting on performance to improve approach

♦ initiative: starting work as early as possible; decision making; self-motivation; reading and thinking about theories, research evidence and sources; using library facilities; setting own deadlines

Social intelligence

This meta-skill includes:

♦ communicating: listening to information on theories, research and sources; explaining ideas; producing suitable, understandable assessment responses; sharing written or oral ideas and opinions on theories and topics covered in the unit

♦ feeling: discussing theories and expressing opinions; understanding other perspectives; respecting other viewpoints in discussions

♦ collaborating: working together on formative presentations and project work; taking account of others in planning and carrying out tasks; building relationships with peers

♦ leading: taking account of others; sharing information in a useful way

Innovation

This meta-skill includes:

♦ curiosity: seeking knowledge of theories and research; making the most of library research time; taking part in class discussion and debates; questioning motives, ideas, information and research evidence
♦ creativity: developing new ways of working and approaching tasks; providing novel and individual analysis of geographical concepts and case studies
♦ sense-making: participating in discussion; blending a range of ideas; considering and evaluating different ideas
♦ critical thinking: making logical connections and reasoned judgements; drawing conclusions based on evidence; reviewing and evaluating research evidence

Literacies

Learners develop core skills in the following literacies:

Numeracy

Learners develop numeracy skills by investigating concepts fundamental to geography; for example, the effects of location and distance. They apply numeracy skills in geographical analysis by counting and measuring, constructing and interpreting tables and graphs, and calculating and interpreting statistics. There is scope for learners to understand comparative data relating to, for example, health, income, poverty and foreign investment.

Communication

Learners develop communication skills in formative and summative assessment. It is part of the evidence requirements for the unit to ensure learners convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent way, with academic references where appropriate. You can give learners opportunities to carry out oral presentations and engage in discussions.

Digital

Learners develop digital skills and computer literacy by using digital packages to produce assessments, and internet sources to research information on concepts, structures and ideas. You can give them guidance on appropriate sources. Using a VLE also supports digital skills. Learners can research how formal and informal representations of a place differ through contrasting media such as TV, film, music, art, photography, literature, graffiti and blogs. They can also source comparative data online; for example, using Eurostat.

Learning for Sustainability

Learning for Sustainability aims to build the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and confidence needed to develop practices and make decisions that are compatible with a sustainable and equitable society. In this unit, there are opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of social sustainability while studying patterns of inequality; physical, social and economic factors related to inequality; and strategies to improve inequality, linking to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

This unit fits with the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:

1   No poverty: through studying patterns of inequality and poverty
5   Gender equality: through considering strategies for reducing inequality in terms of, for example, employment and access to education
10 Reduced inequalities: through studying geographical patterns of inequality and considering comparative strategies for reducing inequality

You have scope here to incorporate these development goals into case studies and demonstrate how different geographies compare in these areas, and the extent to which governments and other agencies can play a role in reducing, reinforcing and creating patterns of inequality.

Delivery of unit

This unit is in the 'named social sciences' section of HNC Social Sciences. You can deliver it as part of the group award or as a stand-alone unit.

It is one of two Geography units within HNC Social Sciences. This unit works well alongside Geography B: Urban Change and Its Impact.

The overall unit delivery time is a notional 40 hours of contact time for delivery and assessment. We expect learners to commit a further 40 hours of self-directed study.

The amount of time you allocate to each outcome is at your discretion; however, you should consider all outcomes together during delivery. We suggest the following distribution of time, including assessment:

Outcome 1 — Describe patterns of geographical social inequality (10 hours).
Outcome 2 — Explain inequality from a geographical perspective (15 hours).
Outcome 3 — Evaluate strategies for reducing geographical inequality (15 hours).

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

This unit aims to provide an interesting and engaging introduction to the concept of social inequality and how this can be measured through indices such as housing, life expectancy and mortality, education, employment, and access to services. It can serve as a foundation for subsequent Geography units.

The unit provides an overview of the influence of geography and globalisation in driving structural economic change in places. Learners investigate how that change impacts patterns of social opportunities and inequality for people and places, as well as the role of government and other agencies in reducing, reinforcing and creating patterns of social inequality.

Learners should be able to identify and describe patterns and types of geographical inequalities. They could produce a map showing inequalities for their chosen areal context. Learning and teaching content should help learners develop an understanding of the relationship between geography and inequalities.

You should provide learners with an understanding of how inequalities develop and compare at a geographical or spatial level.

Key ideas include:

♦ The distribution of resources, wealth and opportunities are not evenly spread within and between geographies.
♦ Processes of socioeconomic change can create opportunities for some, while creating and exacerbating social inequality for others.
♦ Inequalities impact people, and geographies or places in different ways.
♦ Governments and other related agencies or actors play a role in both creating and reducing inequalities geographically.

You should introduce learners to GMTs, research, mapping, and statistical techniques. You can also help learners develop analytical and evaluative skills by getting them to analyse and explain the patterns listed above.

Where possible, each outcome should address a real-life geographical context using a case study or comparative case studies.

You should cover some or all of the following:

♦ Patterns of inequality and poverty at different scales: global, regional and intra-urban patterns.
♦ Explanation and causes of poverty and inequality: modernisation theory, dependency theory, colonialism and the core-periphery model.

♦ Consequences and impacts of inequalities: on a global, national and local scale.
♦ Management and mitigation of inequalities geographically: the UN Millennium Development Goals, approaches to reducing inequalities (top down and bottom up) and development strategies at different scales.

Approaches to delivery

You should structure the learning and teaching programme to allow time for learners to develop meta-skills, and academic and other transferable skills. You should also allow for assessment practice within the notional hours suggested.

You can shape delivery and assessment to support learners to develop their academic skills such as time management, multi-tasking ability, digital skills, essay writing skills and questioning ability. You can design formative and summative activities and assessments that encourage learners to practise the skills they need to progress to the next level of study.

Learners can benefit from a varied and active learning approach, where they engage in supported, independent and collaborative learning. You should encourage learners to take a participative and practical approach. Delivery methods could include:

♦ demonstration
♦ tutorial question and answer sessions
♦ debate
♦ individual and group research tasks
♦ presenting findings
♦ VLE
♦ digital tools and social media
♦ film and visual images
♦ close reading of sources

It would be useful for learners to have access to a laptop or other digital device.

You should deliver the unit in a learner-centred manner and always encourage a questioning approach. In doing so, you engage learners and encourage them to think like social scientists and be analytical and enquiring, rather than passively accepting facts. Developing essential transferable skills also helps learners access further study and employment.

The section on meta-skills provides further guidance on incorporating different skills into delivery and evidence.

Approaches to assessment

You can generate evidence using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable for learners.

Learners can choose to submit their assessment evidence in any format that meets each outcome. We recommend that you assess the unit holistically, as that is best to reduce the

learners' assessment burden. You can decide to use a portfolio approach with two or more assessment tasks issued at different times in the unit delivery, if that is better for your learners.

The assessment could take the form of an open-book essay question or a set of structured questions. Learners must provide a response of approximately 1,250 words, or an individual oral presentation or poster exhibition of 8 to 10 minutes in duration, or any other method that appropriately meets the evidence requirements. For example, learners could provide the evidence in the form of an individual blog or website, consisting of approximately 1,250 words.

You can choose to use a mix of methods across a group, as it may be more suitable for some learners to give a written response and for others to use an oral method. Whichever method learners choose, they must be able to access notes, textbooks and other materials, as it is an open-book assessment.

If learners choose an oral method, we recommend that you record this in some form or provide assessor notes on the presentation for external verification purposes. Learners must show evidence of meeting all evidence requirements. Ideally, they would complete oral presentations or poster exhibitions individually. If a group presentation is used, individual learners must show coverage of all evidence requirements. To do this, they may need to provide an essay or additional responses to structured questions. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.

Learners can combine a poster exhibition with an oral presentation. For example, a learner could produce a detailed poster of the spatial patterns and types of geographical inequalities, and cover the explanations of inequalities and strategies for reducing inequalities in an oral presentation. In this case, the total time across both outcomes and all evidence requirements would be 8 to 10 minutes. So, the learner would spend 8 to 10 minutes orally presenting the poster content.

You should make learners aware of the importance of good judgement in selecting appropriate academic sources. You should encourage them to choose academic sources rather than generic search engines, to enable them to be more confident of information and better equipped to progress to SCQF level 8 units.

If learners are creating a blog or website for their assessment, it should not be in the public domain. Rather, it should be on an intranet or private area of your VLE to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism.

Authenticating learners' work is essential. You could collect notes or visual presentation materials from learners as further evidence of meeting SCQF level 7. You should monitor learners' progress throughout to authenticate submitted work. Where possible, you should use plagiarism detection software.

It is important that learners' responses to the assessment are at SCQF level 7.

Opportunities for e-assessment

Assessment that is supported by information and communication technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software, may be appropriate for some assessments in this unit.

If your centre wants to use e-assessment, you must ensure that you apply the national standard to all evidence and that conditions of assessment (as specified in the evidence requirements) are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence.

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

Geography A: Examining Inequality (SCQF level 7)

This information explains:

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

Unit information

This unit introduces you to the concept of inequality in a geographical context.

Before you start the unit, you should have good communication skills and an interest in geography. It would also be helpful to have some basic digital skills.

During the unit, you learn about the types and extent of inequalities that exist geographically. In addition, you develop an understanding of how governments, agencies and other actors can impact the extent of inequality geographically.

On completing the unit, you are able to:

1   describe patterns of geographical social inequality
2   explain inequality from a geographical perspective
3   evaluate strategies for reducing geographical inequality

You are encouraged to develop an enquiring and critical mind, thinking about ideas such as:

♦ globalisation
♦ uneven development
♦ sustainability
♦ distribution of resources

You are assessed using an open-book assessment covering all three unit outcomes. This means that you have access to materials such as textbooks, notes and your virtual learning environment (VLE). You can give your assessment response in writing or orally. If your assessment response is written, it must be approximately 1,250 words, and if it is oral, it must be between 8 and 10 minutes long.

During the unit, you develop academic skills such as time management, multi-tasking ability, digital skills, essay writing skills and questioning ability.

You also develop key literacies such as communication. You learn to convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent way, with references where appropriate. Your lecturer may also use oral presentations and discussions to help you improve your communication skills.

You develop digital skills and computer literacy by using digital packages to complete assessments, and internet sources to research information on geographical information such as patterns and types of geographical inequalities.

The unit introduces you to Learning for Sustainability ideas, with links made to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which are particularly relevant to geographical and spatial inequalities (uneven development).

The unit can support learning in other related units, such as Geography B: Urban Change and Its Impact. You may be able to study HND Social Sciences or a degree programme in a related subject if you study the unit as part of HNC Social Sciences.

Meta-skills

Throughout the unit, you develop meta-skills to enhance your employability in the social sciences sector.

Meta-skills include self-management, social intelligence and innovation.

You develop these naturally as you take part in the learning and teaching activities and produce assessment responses. Improving meta-skills such as organising your time (self-management) and communicating ideas clearly (social intelligence) is useful for current and future study, and employment.

Administrative information

Published: August 2024 (version 2.0)

Superclass: RF

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	♦ Removed reference to the requirement to use holistic assessment in 'Evidence requirements', and in 'Information for learners'. ♦ In 'Approaches to assessment' additional words that a holistic of portfolio approach can be used were added. Also, additional information allowing group presentations was added.	May 2024

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