

Next Generation Higher National Unit Specification

Social Sciences: Social Policy (SCQF level 8)

Unit code: J7D4 48
SCQF level: 8 (24 SCQF credit points)
Valid from: session 2024–25

Prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 3.0) 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.

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Unit purpose

This unit develops learners' knowledge of how social science research supports the development of social policy. Learners analyse a social issue and related social policy in the context of different social science disciplines, look at how social science research and its underlying philosophical principles have influenced the development of the policy, and critically evaluate the policy's effectiveness.

Learners also reflect on their development of meta-skills and their understanding of Learning for Sustainability.

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 social science disciplines, for example Higher National (HN) Qualifications at SCQF level 7, Professional Development Awards (PDAs) in social science subjects at SCQF level 7, or other similar qualifications
- ◆ other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the unit

Learners normally study the unit as part of Higher National Diploma (HND) Social Sciences. They can also study it on a stand-alone basis.

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

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

- 1 analyse a specific social issue that has a related social policy, using knowledge from social science disciplines
- 2 explain how research and its underpinning philosophical principles have influenced the development of social policy
- 3 critically evaluate the effectiveness of a social policy in supporting solutions for a social issue
- 4 develop meta-skills in a vocational or academic context
- 5 develop sustainability knowledge, understanding, and skills in an academic context

Evidence requirements

You must assess this unit through open-book assessments. One assessment covers outcomes 1 to 3, and the other(s) cover(s) outcomes 4 and 5. Learners should provide written or oral evidence covering all unit outcomes, produced under open-book conditions. You should give the tasks 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.

Learners must produce a written response for outcomes 1 to 3 of approximately 3,000 written words, or an oral response that is 20 to 22 minutes in duration.

You must assess outcomes 1 to 3 by a research investigation project, and outcomes 4 and 5 using any appropriate method.

Outcomes 1 to 3

Learners must use two social science disciplines to examine one social policy. They study three social policy topic areas with related social policy papers but are assessed on only one.

Learners must choose their social policy topic areas from this list:

- ◆ Poverty and inequality
- ◆ Global and regional social governance
- ◆ International trade and welfare
- ◆ Labour and employment
- ◆ Welfare and health
- ◆ Pensions and social protection
- ◆ Education
- ◆ Criminal justice
- ◆ Housing, families and children
- ◆ City and community
- ◆ Race and racism
- ◆ Global population

Learners' responses must include:

- ◆ analysis of a specific social issue using knowledge from at least two of these social science disciplines: criminology, economics, geography, history, philosophy, politics, psychology, social anthropology and sociology.
- ◆ identification and summary of a related social policy that is being reviewed, making clear links to the specific social issue
- ◆ an explanation of how research and two of the concept groupings of its underpinning philosophical principles have influenced the development of this social policy
- ◆ a critical evaluation of the social policy's effectiveness

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

Learners must fully reference their assessment, using reliable sources appropriate for SCQF level 8. They must list all sources in a bibliography or reference list, in a recognised standard format such as Harvard or APA.

Learners must:

- ◆ 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

Outcome 4

In this unit, you assess a learner's meta-skills development as an outcome, following the evidence requirements set out below.

The meta-skills outcome is the same at SCQF level 7 and at SCQF level 8. Learners who progress from SCQF level 7 to SCQF level 8 should continue to develop their meta-skills. They should gather evidence in line with the evidence requirements as they work through this unit, or other units they may be studying, or projects they may be doing.

Evidence

Learners must gather evidence that shows they have:

- ◆ self-assessed their meta-skills baseline
- ◆ created a plan for their own meta-skills development
- ◆ carried out activities to develop and demonstrate their meta-skills
- ◆ used reflective practice to monitor and assess the meta-skills they have improved and developed

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[Skills 4.0, a skills model to drive Scotland's future](#), outlines three categories of meta-skills:

- ◆ self-management
- ◆ social intelligence
- ◆ innovation

Each of these comprises four meta-skills and a number of sub-skills.

There are many interrelationships and dependencies between these skills and, at SCQF level 7 and 8, learners should focus on holistic development relevant to their vocational or academic context.

See the Educator Guide for more information.

Outcome 5

You must assess outcome 5 in open-book conditions using any suitable assessment method. Whatever assessment method you choose learners must:

- ◆ identify and describe sustainability in the context of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)
- ◆ review the SDGs to assess their knowledge and understanding
- ◆ review the unit content against the SDGs to identify a sustainability-related issue
- ◆ explain how one product or process relevant to the selected area of study could be made more sustainable and help meet the aims of at least two selected SDGs
- ◆ apply their knowledge and understanding of sustainability and the SDGs to propose improvement to this sustainability issue

The standard of evidence produced must be consistent with SCQF level 8.

See the 'Meta-skills' section and the 'Learning for Sustainability' section in the Educator Guide for more information.

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"> ◆ what social policy means and how it differs from legislation ◆ social policy's role in developing solutions to social issues ◆ a range of social science topics ◆ the relevance of different social science topics to social policy ◆ the relevance of selected key developments in social science and social science research to social policy 	<p>Outcome 1 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ analyse a specific social issue using different social science disciplines ◆ identify and summarise a social policy related to a social issue
<p>Outcome 2 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the relationship between social science and objective knowledge ◆ concept groupings of philosophical principals 	<p>Outcome 2 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ explain how research and concept groupings of its underpinning principles have influenced the development of a social policy
<p>Outcome 3 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ how to critically evaluate the effectiveness of social policies ◆ how to use secondary research effectively 	<p>Outcome 3 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ critically evaluate the effectiveness of a social policy in supporting solutions to social issues

Knowledge	Skills
<p>Outcome 4 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ meta-skills, specifically <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — categories of self-management, social intelligence and innovation, and associated meta-skills, as described in Skills 4.0 — the importance of developing meta-skills, including employability, adaptability, effectiveness — what meta-skills are most relevant to the learner’s academic context ◆ approaches to developing meta-skills, in particular <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — self-awareness: analysing preferences, strengths and weaknesses; meta-skills self-assessment — goal setting and action planning — reflective practice: principles of reflective practice; tools and approaches for effective reflective practice 	<p>Outcome 4 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ plan a strategy for meta-skills development ◆ implement and review plans for their meta-skills development ◆ assess their meta-skills development
<p>Outcome 5 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ what sustainability is ◆ the UN SDGs ◆ subject-specific sustainability issues, how these relate to the SDGs, and potential improvements 	<p>Outcome 5 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ review the SDGs to assess their knowledge and understanding ◆ review unit content against the SDGs to identify a sustainability-related issue ◆ apply knowledge and understanding of sustainability and the SDGs to propose improvement to the sustainability issue

Meta-skills

Throughout the 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 will vary depending on the chosen topics and assessment method.

Self-management

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ integrity: acting in an ethical way when producing assessments or carrying out work for projects (ethics is a topic in outcomes 2 and 3); developing good working relationships with peers; including citations and references for the project
- ◆ 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 as early as possible; decision making; self-motivation; reading and thinking about theories; seeking 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 of tasks, building relationships with peers

Innovation

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ curiosity: seeking knowledge about theories and research, making the most of library research time; taking part in class discussion and debates, questioning motives, ideas, information and research evidence
- ◆ sense-making: participating in discussion, blending a range of ideas; considering and evaluating ideas
- ◆ critical thinking: making logical connections and reasoned judgements; drawing conclusions based on evidence; reviewing and evaluating research evidence

Learners could also develop other meta-skills in the unit, depending on the learning and teaching activities you carry out. These include:

- ◆ self-management: focusing
- ◆ social intelligence: leading
- ◆ innovation: being creative

You can find more information on how these meta-skills can be developed in the Educator Guide.

Literacies

Learners develop core skills in the following literacies:

Numeracy

Learners develop their numeracy skills by understanding facts and statistics related to data through consulting secondary data gathered from existing examples of research. They may also analyse data in primary research if their adopted method produces quantitative data.

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 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, theories and social policies. You can give them guidance on appropriate sources. Using a VLE also supports digital skills.

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 developments in social sciences research. Many of the topic examples, such as poverty and inequality, welfare and health, education, international trade and welfare touch on or directly link to [UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).

This unit fits with the following UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), if the associated topic is chosen:

- 1 No poverty: poverty and inequality topic
- 2 Zero hunger: welfare and health topic
- 3 Good health and well-being: welfare and health topic
- 4 Quality education: education topic
- 8 Decent work and economic growth: labour and employment topic
- 10 Reduced inequalities: race and racism topic
- 11 Sustainable cities and communities: city and community topic
- 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions: criminal justice topic

Delivery of unit

You should deliver this unit in the early stages of the programme of study to give learners underpinning knowledge and skills to support other units, and to help them make links between subject disciplines and social policy. We recommend that you deliver the unit throughout the year to allow for stop-and-review meetings on meta-skills and to support the delivery of the project.

Although meta-skills is an outcome in this unit, meta-skills development is an integral element in all the units, and you should continue to deliver teaching on meta-skills throughout. You can signpost meta-skills gained from work carried out in other subject units.

The amount of time you allocate to each outcome is at your discretion. However, we suggest the following distribution of 120 hours, including assessment:

Outcomes 1 and 3 — In outcome 1, analyse a specific social issue that has a related social policy, using knowledge from social science disciplines. In outcome 3, critically evaluate the effectiveness of a social policy in supporting solutions for a social issue. When you teach these together, you should allow 75 hours to cover three social policy topic areas, including time to discuss individual ideas for the project, and time to produce the project evidence.

Outcome 2 — Explain how research and its underpinning philosophical principles have influenced the development of social policy (15 hours)

Outcomes 4 and 5 — In outcome 4, develop meta-skills in an academic context and in outcome 5, develop sustainability knowledge, understanding, and skills in an academic context (30 hours).

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

While social science comprises individual subject specialisms, in practice these subjects are interdisciplinary. This unit aims to explore the nature of this interdisciplinary relationship by showing how social science research is applied to create social policy. Learners put this interdisciplinary study into practice by planning a research investigation that demonstrates the contribution of social sciences to understanding a specific social issue and its associated social policy solution. Learners analyse how these social sciences have influenced a social policy decision.

You should introduce learners to the nature of social policy. The study of social policy focuses on how states and society adapt to global concerns, such as poverty, migration, and globalisation, as well as social, demographic and economic change. Social policies can provide support to people throughout their life, from infancy to old age, in the context of family, education, and law. For example, services include assistance for children and families, education and schooling, housing and neighbourhood renewal, income maintenance and poverty reduction, assistance with finding work and training, pensions, and other benefits. Many of these social policy areas are covered by specific legislation or statutory guidance.

Social policies impact widely on daily life: on individuals, groups and major social institutions; affecting the structure of policy responses; and influencing social outcomes in ways that are sometimes subtle but nonetheless significant. Applying social policy can be problematic, however, especially when social groups — distinguished by socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, immigration status, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and age, as well as between countries — face unequal treatment when accessing services.

Although they are interrelated, legislation and social policy are not the same thing. Each has a distinct function. The examples that follow are the legislative frameworks or laws that enable the development or delivery of a social policy. A policy is defined as 'a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organisation or individual'. In other words, a policy document is not a law, but it will often identify new laws needed to achieve its goals.

Examples of legislation or statutory guidance related to social policy (learners can use other legislation or statutory guidance that relates to specific social policies, as appropriate):

Education: Conduct of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education in Schools Dec 2014

One of the main influences of social policy on young people's sexual lives has been through statutory guidance in Scotland (there is specific legislation in England). This guidance ensures that sex education is not delivered in isolation, but rather that it is part of a programme presenting a range of information about relationships, personal and social development, and healthy living; and values and beliefs that reinforce self-worth, respect for others and a sense of responsibility.

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You could examine social issues like teen pregnancy or sexual orientation to help learners study education policy or statutory guidance from either a sociological, historical, political or psychological angle.

Criminal justice: The Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) or Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004

The UK government released a white paper in March 2003 presenting its suggestions for combating anti-social behaviour. *Respect and Responsibility — Taking a Stand against Anti-Social Behaviour* centred on giving local governments and the police a greater, more flexible range of powers to fulfil their current obligations and address the needs of their local communities. The goal of the Act was to give the police the authority they needed to deal with serious anti-social behaviour. In 2004, the Scottish Parliament passed the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act, which introduced several measures in the areas of justice, the environment, housing and child welfare.

You could examine either policy on improving anti-social behaviour from a sociological, criminological, historical, political or psychological perspective. For example, you could use psychological theories of child development to explain how adolescents behave.

Housing, families and children: Divorce (Scotland) Act 1976 as amended by the Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006

Prior to the 20th century, divorce had to be granted in Edinburgh at the Court of Session and was only allowed on the grounds of adultery or desertion. In 1984, local Sheriff Courts could hear divorce cases, with grounds for divorce now including anti-social behaviour, cruelty and non-cohabitation. The Divorce (Scotland) Act 1976 included divorce by mutual consent. The Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006 strengthened children's rights, extended civil partnerships to all couples and modernised succession for inheritance, reflecting a fairer society.

You could explore the policy on divorce from a sociological, historical, political, social anthropological or psychological angle.

Housing, families and children: The Civil Partnerships Act 2004 and the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014

The Civil Partnership Act of 2004 gave same-sex couples across the United Kingdom comparable rights and obligations to those enjoyed by heterosexual couples in a civil marriage: the same property rights, exemptions from inheritance tax, and rights to social security payments and pensions. The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014 allows same-sex couples to enter into a marriage in Scotland on the same basis as heterosexual couples, and to register civil partnerships, increase the range of people who can solemnise marriage and make provision regarding gender change by married people and those in civil partnerships.

You could explore the policy on partnerships and marriage from a sociological, criminological, historical, political, economic or psychological perspective.

Race and racism: The Commonwealth Immigration Act (1968)

Views on immigration changed in the 1960s and leaned towards a more conservative approach, in contrast to the right of entry previously enjoyed by Commonwealth citizens. This new act allowed entry to only those applicants with a father or grandfather already in the UK.

You could explore immigration policy from a sociological, social anthropological, economic, historical, political or psychological perspective.

Poverty and inequality, or welfare and health, or criminal justice: Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Act 2005

Female genital mutilation (FGM), also referred to as female cutting or circumcision, is the practice of forcibly removing all or a portion of a woman's genitalia. FGM has no health benefits, and is a violation of girls' and women's rights.

You could explore the policy from a sociological, political and/or social anthropological perspective.

You can find information on other parliamentary acts on the following websites:

- ◆ [UK Parliament Acts](#)
- ◆ [Legislation: Scotland from The National Archives](#)
- ◆ [Legislation.gov.uk](#)

You should introduce learners to the role of social science in the formulation of social policy, and encourage them to explore, research, analyse and investigate complicated situations, assess policy solutions, and to think critically. Learners study a specific social issue using two social science disciplines and consider how these social sciences have influenced a social policy decision.

Learners must study three social policy topic areas. The list of social sciences you could use to discuss the social issues below is a suggestion only; you can choose other social sciences if you want.

Social science topic areas

You must choose three topics from this list:

Poverty and inequality

Criminology, economics, geography, history, sociology, politics or psychology

Global and regional social governance

Criminology, economics, geography, history, social anthropology, sociology or politics

International trade and welfare

Criminology, economics, geography, history, sociology, politics or psychology

Labour and employment

Criminology, economics, geography, history, sociology, philosophy, politics or psychology

Welfare and health

Criminology, economics, geography, history, social anthropology, sociology, philosophy, politics or psychology

Pensions and social protection

Economics, geography, history, sociology, philosophy, politics or psychology

Education

Economics, history, sociology, philosophy, politics or psychology

Criminal justice

Criminology, economics, geography, history, sociology, philosophy, politics or psychology

Housing, families and children

Criminology, economics, geography, history, social anthropology, sociology, politics or psychology

City and community

Criminology, economics, geography, history, social anthropology, sociology, philosophy, politics or psychology

Race and racism

Criminology, economics, geography, history, social anthropology, sociology, politics or psychology

Global population

Criminology, economics, geography, history, social anthropology, sociology, politics or psychology

Welfare and policy are not only national, they can also be influenced by global social politics; indeed, the national and international nature of policy is deeply entangled. Consequently, you could consider the global aspect in any of the three chosen topics.

In outcome 2, you should introduce learners to how research and its underpinning philosophical principles have influenced the development of social policy. Learners should study two concept groupings of philosophical principles from:

- ◆ positivism and interpretivism paradigms
- ◆ determinism versus agency
- ◆ theoretical rationale for choice of methodology
- ◆ validity and reliability
- ◆ objectivity and subjectivity
- ◆ trustworthiness (interpretivism)
- ◆ problem of imposition and bias
- ◆ values and ethics

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.

Analyse a specific social issue that has a related social policy, using knowledge from social science disciplines (outcome 1)

In outcome 1, you should start by exploring what social policy is and highlighting social policy's role in developing solutions to social issues. Give clear examples of specific social policies. Once learners are sure of what the unit is about, you should introduce a social issue related to one of the social policy topic areas, considered in the context of at least two social science disciplines. You could then discuss which areas learners are interested in for the other two social policy topic areas. You do not need to approach each of the three social policy topic areas in the context of the same social science disciplines areas during the unit. Using several social sciences disciplines across the unit helps learners to see that each social science discipline gives different emphasis and explanation for a topic.

Explain how research and its underpinning philosophical principles have influenced the development of social policy (outcome 2)

For outcome 2, you should choose two concept groupings (see the 'Content and context' section) to highlight to learners how underpinning principles influence research in general. You should emphasise the importance of objective knowledge to social sciences before focusing on each of the two concept groupings. You should encourage learners to recognise how research helps to influence social policy by highlighting individual or group needs or solutions for social issues. This only works, however, if the researcher has followed strict processes and used appropriate underlining principles.

You should introduce learners to research processes, using either secondary research or primary research. If they have already carried out research, while studying for previous qualifications, you can remind them of the key aspects relevant to this unit. You could give some formative exercises in searching for appropriate sources, how to cite them in text, and

how to use a referencing system, such as Harvard. They will need this for their research investigation project for outcomes 1 to 3.

Critically evaluate the effectiveness of a social policy in supporting solutions for a social issue (outcome 3)

Most, if not all, of the research done for this project will be secondary research. Learners can choose to carry out primary research to support the critical evaluation of the effectiveness of the selected social policy. To prepare them for this, you should explain how to use primary research to evaluate the effectiveness of a social policy. You must make them aware of ethical and legal standards in research. They should design and conduct their research in a way that respects the rights, interests, values, dignity and (whenever possible) autonomy of research participants (including individuals, groups and communities). You should introduce learners to the need for ethical controls in any primary research they plan to carry out and how they can plan for this.

If a learner chooses to carry out primary research, you must make them aware of ethical and legal standards in research. Course teams should apply the European Research Council Standard for ethics in research as there is a risk in primary research both for vulnerable people and vulnerable learners. Topics on mental health, criminality and housing may result in vulnerable people being interviewed or being in focus groups, and learners may not necessarily have the skills to cope should an adverse situation arise as a result of questioning or discussion topics. Course teams should set up a process that ensures learners seek permission to carry out primary research, including approving the design and methods to be used. You could design a checklist for learners that gives prompts for specific ethical controls, and which they could attach to the project as an appendix. If possible, learners should carry out primary research with advocate groups related to the subject of the policy under investigation, rather than with users themselves.

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.

This unit involves two or three assessments (the number of assessments depends on how centres choose to assess outcomes 4 and 5):

- ◆ an open-book research investigation project covering the evidence requirements for outcomes 1 to 3
- ◆ one or two open-book assessments for outcomes 4 and 5, which includes: self-reflection on the development of meta-skills in a social science context for outcome 4, and the acquisition of knowledge of the UN Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) and a recommendation for an improvement in a product or process relevant to social sciences, related to at least two UN SDGs for outcome 5.

If the unit is being delivered as a freestanding unit, learners should produce evidence to support all outcomes in the unit. They can support work on meta-skills and Learning for Sustainability with work they do for other units or other activities. This could include evidence from oral debates, oral or poster presentations, written journals or reports, Socratic seminars, peer instructions, podcasts or concept maps.

Outcomes 1 to 3

Learners can provide evidence for these outcomes in a variety of forms, but it should all be collated into a written research investigation project of approximately 3,000 words, or an oral presentation of 20 to 22 minutes duration. You should give learners a project brief at an appropriate point in the unit. Evidence for the project could include poster presentations, podcasts, reports, concept maps or any other relevant method to cover the essential requirements.

In the research investigation project, learners must explain what the background to the selected social issue is, use two social science disciplines in this explanation, and identify and summarise a social policy that relates to the issue. They should explain how two of the underpinning philosophical research principles influenced the research that informs the social policy. They could also use the research principles to carry out some primary research

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(qualitative or quantitative) that would feed into a critical evaluation of the policy in terms of its effectiveness. They could interview an organisation that advocates for individuals or groups that are impacted by the selected social policy.

Learners must critically evaluate to what degree the selected social policy is providing a solution to a social issue.

- ◆ Is it working?
- ◆ Does it create the circumstances for people to change practice?
- ◆ Is it a catalyst for specific legislation?
- ◆ Does it ensure financial gains?
- ◆ Is it having a positive impact on the subjects of the social policy, or is more work required to give appropriate support?

Learners focus on a specific social policy of their choice, which must be from the list of twelve social policy areas given in the 'Evidence requirements' section. They can also choose which two social science disciplines to use in their analysis.

Outcome 4 — meta-skills

You can assess outcome 4 using any suitable instrument of assessment.

As a minimum standard of evidence, learners must:

- ◆ undertake a self-assessment of their current meta-skills, referring to all 12 meta-skills headings
- ◆ generate an action plan and strategy for developing meta-skills
- ◆ implement and review their plans regularly
- ◆ provide an in-depth reflection on their meta-skills development, in which, as a minimum, they detail a mid-point and end-point self-reflection of their development of at least one meta-skill in each of self-management, social intelligence and innovation

The depth of reflection is more important than the number of meta-skills referenced. Learners can also record any meta-skills development in other activities, such as in activities for other units they study. Learners can present evidence in, for example, a written portfolio or blog, or in a podcast or recorded oral presentation, building on it throughout the programme of study. Learners could use a portfolio to gather all the various reflections together. Ideally, they would do this online, so they could record their development when working in their own time. You can choose to use any other suitable assessment method that captures the evidence for this outcome.

Outcome 5 — Learning for Sustainability

You can assess outcome 5 using any suitable instrument of assessment.

Learners should review their knowledge and understanding of the UN Sustainable Development Goals at the beginning of their learning programme. As they progress through the unit, you should encourage them to reflect on how that may be changing as they engage

with different topics. Later in the programme, you must ask them to identify a sustainability-related issue that relates to something discussed or studied during their learning. They must relate this to at least two of the UN SDGs. They must use their knowledge to propose an improvement to the sustainability issue. This should be explained in approximately 750 words, or in an oral presentation of 6 to 7 minutes duration.

Learners could suggest an improvement to the social policy that they used for the research investigation project for outcomes 1 to 3, or they can propose an improvement to something else they have an interest in. Whatever they choose, they should connect the improvement to at least two UN SDGs.

You can choose to use a mix of assessment 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 and 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 additional responses to structured questions or an essay. Learners should submit their work for marking on one submission date that you have provided or agreed with them.

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 9 study.

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 8. You should monitor learners' progress throughout to authenticate submitted work. Where possible, you should use plagiarism detection software.

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

Social Sciences: Social Policy (SCQF level 8)

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 develops your knowledge of how social science research supports the development of social policy. You analyse a social issue and related social policy in the context of different social science disciplines, look at how social science research and its underlying philosophical principles have influenced the development of the policy, and critically evaluate the effectiveness of the policy.

Before you start the unit, you should have good communication skills and previous study of social science disciplines. This could be Higher National Qualifications at SCQF level 7, Professional Development Awards (PDAs) in social science subjects at SCQF level 7, or other similar qualifications. It would also be helpful to have some basic digital skills.

During the unit you study two social science disciplines and three social science topics areas, to help you analyse one social policy from an interdisciplinary perspective. This includes a review of the research principles that informed the research, the research itself, and a critical evaluation of the policy and its effectiveness.

On completing this unit you can:

- 1 analyse a specific social issue that has a related social policy, using knowledge from social science disciplines
- 2 explain how research and its underpinning philosophical principles have influenced the development of social policy
- 3 critically evaluate the effectiveness of a social policy in supporting solutions for a social issue
- 4 develop meta-skills in a vocational or academic context
- 5 develop sustainability knowledge, understanding, and skills in an academic context

You should use the unit content to help you develop an enquiring and critical mind, thinking about ideas such as:

- ◆ social issues (poverty, family, education, crime, migration)
- ◆ the interdisciplinary nature of social sciences in social policy
- ◆ the impact of policy on society and individuals and groups
- ◆ research principles and practice

Outcome 1-3 are assessed by an open book research investigation project. This means that you have access to materials such as textbooks, notes and your VLE. You can give your assessment response in writing or orally. If your assessment response is written, it must be approximately 3,000 words, and if it is oral, it must be between 20 and 22 minutes long. Outcomes 4 and 5 are also assessed using any suitable open book instruments of assessment that allow you to develop and reflect on your development of meta-skills and increase your knowledge of Learning for Sustainability. You will produce a response of 750 words or oral equivalent for outcome 5.

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).

You may be able to study a degree programme in a related subject if you study this unit as part of HND Social Sciences.

Meta-skills

Throughout the unit, you can 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 range of learning and teaching activities and produce assessment responses. Improving meta-skills such as organising your time (self-management) and communicating ideas clearly (social intelligence) will be useful for current and future study, and employment.

Administrative information

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Superclass: PR

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ In 'Evidence requirements', fourth bullet point in outcome 5 changed from 'a minimum of one UN SDG' to 'at least two UN SDGs' to match design principles.◆ Wording in 'Approaches to assessment' section also updated to reflect the above change.	September 2023
3.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ In 'Approaches to assessment' and in 'Information for Learners', reference to holistic assessment has been deleted.	April 2024

Note: please check [SQA's website](#) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.