

SQA Advanced Unit Specification

General information

Unit title: Marketing Research Applications (SCQF level 8)

Unit code: HW93 48

Superclass: BA

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Unit purpose

This unit is designed to allow learners to understand and apply qualitative and quantitative methods in the context of modern marketing research. The focus of this unit is on practical application of the ideas, theories and concepts of marketing research. The unit involves learners interpreting a brief, then selecting research options, tools and sampling methods. They will also construct digital questionnaires and look at how to use digital and statistical techniques to analyse survey data.

Outcomes

On successful completion of the unit the learner will be able to:

- 1 Conduct a qualitative research project.
- 2 Plan a quantitative research survey that will utilise digital, online software.
- 3 Process a quantitative survey utilising digital, online software.

Credit points and level

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

Recommended entry to the unit

Access to this unit is at the discretion of the centre however as learners are to apply marketing research theory in this unit, it would be helpful if they have knowledge of market research theory, eg achieved an SQA Advanced unit in *Market Research Theory* at SCQF level 7 and also have *Numeracy* skills at SCQF level 5.

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Core Skills

Achievement of this unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Complete Core Skill Problem Solving at SCQF level 6

Core Skill component None

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes for this unit specification.

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.

The Assessment Support Pack (ASP) for this unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable and practicable assessment. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the ASP to ensure a comparable standard. A list of existing ASPs is available to download from SQA's website (<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/46233.2769.html>).

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.

SQA Advanced unit specification: Statement of standards

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Acceptable performance in this unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

Outcome 1

Conduct a qualitative research project.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Qualitative brief
- ◆ Qualitative research options
- ◆ Qualitative research tools
- ◆ Sampling methods for qualitative research
- ◆ Qualitative research data

Outcome 2

Plan a quantitative research survey that will utilise digital, online software.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Research-survey brief
- ◆ Digital, online questionnaire
- ◆ Sampling methods for survey research
- ◆ Methods of questionnaire administration

Outcome 3

Process a quantitative survey utilising digital, online software.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Survey data using online survey development software
- ◆ Questionnaire-generated data
- ◆ Questionnaire findings

Evidence requirements for this unit

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills across all outcomes by showing that they can:

For Outcome 1

- ◆ interpret a qualitative brief.
- ◆ select, design and discuss qualitative research options.
- ◆ explore, select and design appropriate qualitative research tools.

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- ◆ apply selected research tool.
- ◆ discuss and select appropriate sampling method.
- ◆ interpret qualitative research data.

For Outcome 2

- ◆ interpret a research-survey brief.
- ◆ construct a digital, online questionnaire appropriate to the brief.
- ◆ assess alternative sampling options, appropriate to survey research.
- ◆ assess alternative methods of questionnaire administration.

For Outcome 3

- ◆ use appropriate digital, online techniques to analyse survey data.
- ◆ explain the appropriate statistical technique used to analyse survey data.
- ◆ interpret questionnaire-generated data.
- ◆ formally present the questionnaire findings.

Assessment guidance:

Assessments carried out on an outcome-by-outcome basis. See support notes for more details on assessment.

SQA Advanced Unit Support Notes

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Unit support notes are offered as guidance and 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 may form part of a group award or be completed as a free-standing unit. This unit is intended for learners who are already familiar with the basic ideas and concepts of marketing research which underpin this unit, such as those included in SQA Advanced unit *Marketing Research Theory* at SCQF level 7. The focus of this unit is on practical application of the ideas, theories and concepts of marketing research. It is important to highlight to learners the impact that the rapid growth of digital media is having on marketing, including marketing research.

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this unit

Outcome 1: delivery should be directed towards giving learners a sense of the realities and practicalities of conducting a piece of qualitative research. The learner should be encouraged to reflect on this experience through their narratives. It should be stressed to the learner that there is no 'right' or 'wrong' qualitative tool to select when answering the case study. The assessment should centre on the learner's understanding of the options available and ability to justify whatever choice s/he has made. The learner should be encouraged to explore the full range of qualitative research techniques before making a final choice.

Outcome 2: delivery should confront the learner with the scope and nature of the preparatory work undertaken before a single respondent completes a questionnaire.

This should cover:

- ◆ justification of every question included
- ◆ justification of question formats chosen (open, scaled, dichotomous, multiple response, ranked, etc)
- ◆ coding frame decisions
- ◆ quantifying of qualitative/open-question responses
- ◆ structure of the questionnaire and question order
- ◆ clarity of question wording/respondent instructions
- ◆ critical examination of questions for in-built bias
- ◆ pre-testing of questionnaires
- ◆ how population of interest is to be sampled
- ◆ how the questionnaire is to be administered

However, it should be noted that the learner should already be familiar with the key theoretical concepts underlying both qualitative research and sampling — as the emphasis in this outcome is on successful application of the theory. It is suggested that the tutor/lecturer may wish to adopt a 'tutorial' and 'project supervising' form of delivery.

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Outcome 3: delivery should introduce learners to the realities of the post-questionnaire completion stage:

- ◆ The 'number crunching' dimension should be stressed.
- ◆ The distinction between 'reporting' and 'interpretation' of research findings should be highlighted.
- ◆ A firm grasp of presentation skills should be evident from the learner's report in terms of intended audience; readability, highlighting of key findings; use of graphs to easily communicate key findings; the use of appendices for those readers wishing to investigate the data on which the report is predicated in more detail, etc.

Attention is drawn in particular to the evidence requirement of Outcome 3, which involves the explanation of statistical techniques. The realities of a limited time frame for delivery and working with learner groups who have little or no statistical background are appreciated. However, although software applications are utilised in this unit, learners should still demonstrate some basic grounding/understanding of the statistical techniques used when analysing data, eg basic knowledge of standard deviation from the mean.

In Outcomes 2 and 3, learners should be made aware of the increasing use of online research tools such as use online techniques to analyse survey data.

Guidance on approaches to assessment of this unit

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

This unit can be assessed as a single, holistic assessment such as an assignment or a project. But where centres would prefer to assess on an outcome-by-outcome basis, guidance is given below:

Outcome 1:

This could be assessed in a variety of ways, eg a clear and unambiguous brief requiring qualitative research could be issued to the learner in advance of the assessment period. The scope and nature of the research required by the brief must be achievable by the learner in terms of a small-scale study. It is necessary for the learner to provide evidence for all items listed in the evidence requirements.

Where a written response is given for this assessment, it is advised that it would be c.1,000–1,500 words in order to cover all evidence requirements. Also, the response and the research on which it is based could be completed in the extra hours of learner time rather than under supervised conditions. It should be borne in mind that the length of response is merely indicative and it is accepted that some learners may require a little longer to complete the assessment. A flexible and pragmatic approach is encouraged and any additional time given to a learner will be at the discretion of the individual centre.

Alternatively, assessment could take the form of an oral presentation or use of wikis or a blog.

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Outcome 2:

This outcome could be assessed in a variety of ways. For example, a clear and unambiguous brief requiring questionnaire-based research could be issued to the learner in advance of the assessment period. It is necessary for the learner to provide evidence for all items listed in the evidence requirements.

It is advised that evidence should include:

- ◆ a narrative explaining the structure and content of the questionnaire
- ◆ a copy of the final questionnaire
- ◆ details of sampling method to be used, with reasons
- ◆ details of how the questionnaire is to be administered, together with reasons.

Where a written response is given for this assessment, it is advised that it would be c.1,000–1,500 words in order to cover all the evidence requirements. Also, the response and the research on which it is based could be completed in the extra hours of learner time rather than under supervised conditions. It should be borne in mind that the length of response is merely indicative and it is accepted that some learners may require a little longer to complete the assessment. A flexible and pragmatic approach is encouraged and any additional time given to a learner will be at the discretion of the individual centre.

Alternatively, assessment could take the form of an oral presentation or use of wikis or a blog.

Outcome 3:

Again assessment for this outcome could take a variety of forms, eg the learner could be supplied with the original research objectives set for the questionnaire and the intended audience for the results. The learner could then produce a report covering all of the evidence requirements.

Where a written response is given, it is envisaged that it would be c.1,000 words in order that all evidence requirements are covered and could be completed in the extra hours of learner time rather than under supervised conditions. As with earlier outcomes, it should be borne in mind that the length of response is merely indicative and it is accepted that some learners may require a little longer to complete the assessment. A flexible and pragmatic approach is encouraged and any additional time given to a learner will be at the discretion of the individual centre.

Alternatively, assessment could take the form of an oral presentation.

Opportunities for e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the evidence requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment.

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

This unit has the Core Skill of Problem Solving embedded in it. This means that when learners achieve the unit, their Core Skills profile will also be updated to show they have achieved Problem Solving at SCQF level 6

Learners are to plan, organise and complete the complex task of undertaking qualitative research, which is an area fraught with pitfalls. They will deal with issues and problems that arise in this type of research. They also have to plan an online digital research survey which involves extensive planning and preparatory work. They have to apply a rigorous and disciplined approach to ensure accurate and appropriate survey results. This also involves learners assessing sampling options and interpreting research data by eg, quantifying of qualitative and open-question responses; critical analysis of questions for built-in bias, etc. Learners will develop review and evaluation skills by providing eg justification of qualitative tool selected; justification of every question included in their questionnaires and justification of question formats selected such as open, scaled, multiple responses, ranked, etc.

Depending on the teaching, learning and assessment approaches adopted there are also opportunities to develop Core Skills as follows:

Communications: Components Oral Communication and Written Communication

Across this unit, learners are expected to read and understand complex written information. They are to design complex questionnaires which involves consideration of issues such as structure of questionnaire and question order; clarity of question wording and respondent instructions, etc. Assessments for this unit can include written work and/or oral presentations, eg responses or reports for Outcomes 1 and 2, plus formal presentation of findings in Outcome 3.

Information and Communication Technology: Components Accessing information and Providing/Creating Information

As well as accessing relevant information online, learners are to use a range of online digital software and tools for both planning and processing their research survey, eg online questionnaires, online analysis tools, etc. They could also use a range of digital tools to present their evidence across the unit.

Numeracy

Learners will have many opportunities to develop numeracy skills, eg interpreting and analysing survey results; the application of statistical techniques and use of standard deviation from the mean.

As learners progress through this unit, they will acquire skills and knowledge necessary for undertaking sound marketing research using contemporary online digital tools. They also have to formally present their findings. These could be used to enhance learners' employability prospects.

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History of changes to unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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

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General information for learners

Unit title: Marketing Research Applications (SCQF level 8)

This section will help you decide whether this is the unit for you by explaining what the unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

This unit may form part of a group award or be completed as a free-standing unit. In addition, achievement of this unit could help you with further study of marketing and marketing research at SCQF level 9 or above.

It is intended for those already familiar with theories and concepts of marketing research - you will therefore already be familiar with many of the ideas and concepts that you will meet in this unit. However, as suggested by the title for this unit, the emphasis here is on application.

You will be asked to conduct a piece of qualitative research, an area fraught with pitfalls for even the most experienced researchers. This exercise will allow you to appreciate and document the issues and problems that arise with this type of research. Equally, the advantages and possibilities offered by this type of research should also be apparent.

You will also be asked to plan an online, digital research survey. The focus here is on the extensive preparatory work required for a successful questionnaire and survey. This aspect will require you to apply a rigorous and disciplined approach in terms of what you want to find out and whom you want to ask.

Complementing the above, there is a section that focuses on what happens after the questionnaires are filled in. It will require you to apply numeracy skills (in terms of processing the data) and literacy skills (in terms of interpreting and presenting your results).

On completion of this unit, you should therefore be able to:

- ◆ conduct a qualitative research project.
- ◆ plan a quantitative research survey that will utilise digital, online software.
- ◆ process a quantitative survey utilising digital, online software.

The assessment for this unit can take a variety of forms, such as the production of reports and/or presentations. However your tutor will provide full details of all assessment arrangements.

This unit has the Core Skill of Problem Solving embedded in it, so when you achieve this unit your Core Skills profile will be updated to show that you have achieved Problem Solving at SCQF level 6.

There are also opportunities to develop Core Skills in *Communication*, *Numeracy* and *Information Communication Technology (ICT)*.