

**Information and resources for tutors of learners  
whose first language is not English**

## **Communication Units in SQA Advanced Certificates and SQA Advanced Diplomas**

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## Introduction

This document is aimed at tutors who are teaching learners whose first language is not English.

The Communication Units which are used in SQA Advanced Certificates and Diplomas are:

- ◆ HR1C 46 Workplace Communication in English at SCQF level 6
- ◆ HP75 47 Communication: Business Communication at SCQF level 7
- ◆ HP4A 47 Communication: Practical Skills at SCQF level 7

## The Communication Units

The purpose of the Communication Units in SQA Advanced awards is to develop the English communication skills of learners in a business or vocational context. The Units will provide support to learners in their programme of study and will prepare them for progression to further and higher education and employment.

There are three Outcomes in all the Communication Units; learners have to be able to grasp complex workplace issues and:

- ◆ understand, analyse and evaluate written information (reading)
- ◆ produce written information (writing)
- ◆ speak with others in a business/vocational situation (talking and listening)

Teaching and learning should focus on the conventions of the English language as used in the workplace.

## Approaches to skills development

Learners should be encouraged, and provided with opportunities, to take an active role in and assume responsibility for their own learning. In SQA Advanced qualifications learners are expected to be able to communicate with others at an extended level and should be able to complete assessment tasks unaided.

The Communication Units are about applying English language skills in a business/vocational context. Before beginning the full Communication study programme it is important that tutors are confident that the skills of learners are at a level that will allow them to cope with the demands of the course. As far as is practicable, class lessons should be delivered in English. Regardless of their existing entry qualifications in English, many learners will benefit from additional ongoing language support on a one-to-one basis, in small group workshops or through online interactive exercises.

There are several ways to check and monitor skills in English, for example: by setting a brief written exercise at the start of the programme or by introducing the subject with a short 'icebreaker' session — so that the learners feel more relaxed together. This technique is often used when people who do not usually work together need to discuss unfamiliar topics

and learn how to work as a team. Icebreakers take the form of interactive exercises including games, quizzes and other informal activities that introduce learners to each other and help them to communicate in English. They can make learning about Communication seem more interesting and less formal. As well as getting to know each other, learners will start to interact as a group. The role of the tutor is to facilitate learning, and support communication.

If there is the time available at or before the induction to the Unit, tutors can set one or two short practical group tasks that provide opportunities for learners to become familiar with language in context. The tutor can note any errors, without correcting or worrying learners, by walking around the groups, only responding to enquiries on word use or pronunciation if asked.

Undertaking a practical task encourages learners to focus on communicating meaning rather than concentrating on the correctness of grammatical structures. Learners talk freely, using the words and phrases that they understand and wish to use. This approach works on the basis that learners often know what they want to say but are unsure about how to say it and it gives some freedom in how they express themselves. The drive to communicate the message develops the learners' language skills. By presenting English in a business context the tutor encourages a more independent learning style.

The purpose of this document is to provide a selection of formative exercises that will:

- ◆ provide interesting exercises to motivate learners
- ◆ increase learners' confidence in their ability to communicate effectively in English
- ◆ prepare learners to successfully pass the summative assessments

Tutors and learners are encouraged to discuss, adapt and select the tasks to meet their needs.

## Planning for the delivery of communication

### Icebreaker activities

**Interviews:** Ask learners to choose a partner. Each interviews the partner for three minutes, asking appropriate questions about interests, reasons for study, and hopes for the future. Then each person introduces their partner to the rest of the group.

**True or false:** Ask each person to introduce themselves and make three statements about themselves, one of which is false. Now get the rest of the group to vote on which statement is false.

**Worst customer experience:** Ask learners to write their worst experience as a customer on index cards that have been provided. The tutor reads out a card to the class and the learners discuss the story and suggest solutions.

The internet can provide many other suggestions for icebreaker activities.

### Practical activities

Taking part in practical activities can help learners work with others in a group. The purpose is not to test language ability and accuracy of communication but to develop communication skills and confidence in a relaxed situation; tasks can be adapted and simplified.

Before they attempt a task, learners should read, listen to and/or watch examples of English used in a related business context.

### *Example of a task*

#### **Preparing for the task (about 15–30 minutes)**

- 1 Products or pictures of products and relevant charts are presented for the class to look at.
- 2 A short written passage (an advertisement, a product review, a business e-mail, etc) is first read aloud by the tutor. Learners may then read it for themselves.
- 3 Ideally there is also related listening material — for example, a recording or an extract from a TV programme showing a business or vocational situation. This might be an advertisement, or a short interview with a company spokesperson or a customer.
- 4 The tutor draws attention to relevant key words, phrases and structures and writes them on the board to provide useful vocabulary for the main task.

#### **Carrying out the task (30–40 minutes including reporting back)**

The tutor should make the end goal clear to the learners before the main task begins and advise that they will be required to report back to the wider group.

The purpose of the exercise could be, for example, to find out the choices of the group, to make a decision from options. Having a clear purpose makes the task meaningful and provides motivation. Learners concentrate on what they have to do and use their own ideas to discuss and agree what they will report to the wider group.

Working in small groups, learners could find out what their own most popular products are (eg soft drinks, computer games, mobile phones). They talk about the reasons for their choices. They draw a chart to help them to present their findings to the whole class.

During the discussions, the tutor should be supportive and should not correct learners — but may help with useful words or phrases if asked.

The tutor should discreetly monitor progress and take notes of any errors to determine the language skills that require to be developed.

### **Reporting**

After the investigation, each group presents its findings to the class.

Follow up: (15 minutes or longer).

### ***Sample activity — What soft drinks do you like?***

#### **Preparing for the discussion**

- 1 Show learners a graph or table representing a best-selling product line, such as soft drinks. Show some examples or pictures if practical.
- 2 Explain that Irn Bru, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Dr Pepper and Red Bull are the five most popular soft drinks products in Scotland.
- 3 Read out a short product review of one of the products. (It can also be handed out to learners or projected on an overhead.)
- 4 Explain to learners any meanings that they ask about. Write some useful words and phrases on the board. Depending on the knowledge and understanding of the class you could include words like:
  - like/dislike
  - cost
  - design
  - marketing
  - fashion
  - national pride
- 5 Ask learners to read the review by themselves and check their understanding.

#### **The activity**

- 6 Split learners into groups of six to eight.

- 7 Give them the task of finding out the five most popular soft drinks of people in their group. Write the task on the board.
- 8 Suggest that they write notes/bullet points about the choices (eg likes/dislikes, the product, the price, the marketing).
- 9 Each group should work together to draw a graph/chart and rank choices in order.
- 10 Learners present their graph and each person makes a statement about the choices to the class. This is to encourage fluency rather than reading skills.

The tutor can, from errors noted during the task, then give feedback and discuss areas such as pronunciation, sentence structures or use of grammatical tenses. Learners practise any problem areas; written gap-fill exercises could be presented for self-study if necessary or learners could write a short product review.



## Introducing learners to communication skills

### Self-reflection

The study programme in Communication could begin with establishing the communication skills used by learners in their own country and/or culture. Learners could be encouraged to consider their existing communication skills in their own language and identify what they know already before reviewing their existing strengths (see template on page 13). This should raise their confidence before they analyse their strengths and identify any areas requiring improvement in the use of business/vocational English (see page 14). It is essential to convey to learners the importance of thinking about the intended purpose and audience of a communication before choosing the most effective system, language and style to convey a message. This could generate a discussion on why — particularly in a business context — a message may, or may not, reach the intended receiver.

### Developing a learning plan

A learning plan could be discussed and agreed as part of the induction to the Unit.

A sample learning plan is provided (see page 14), but many centres may have their own preferred format. Learning plans do not necessarily have to be detailed — it is how they are used to inform discussion and any future review that is important.

### Teaching and learning resources

Ideally, as well as class work, all centres should provide additional learning support for language skills development. This could take the form of workshops, drop-in one-to-one guidance or access to a virtual learning environment with online resources.

Teaching should provide guidance in the form of:

- ◆ examples of vocational communication in different formats and house styles — for example: letters, reports and articles from journals or websites, meetings papers, recordings of business meetings or formal discussions from news programmes
- ◆ reference sources for independent study — including current business news articles, websites and textbooks for the development of written, verbal and non-verbal English language skills
- ◆ examples of surveys/questionnaires — these will be useful for learners who want to carry out a survey as part of a report for their written assessment

### Formative work

Tutors should lead learners through reading, writing and talking tasks similar to those that they will meet in summative assessment while discussing and explaining examples of correct responses. Providing detailed feedback on practice work and formative assessments will further support and help learning.

## **Summative work**

There may be opportunities to integrate assessment with work for other course Units, where able learners are reading complex materials, analysing and discussing issues and writing in a range of business formats. Pre- and post-course team reviews should consider a holistic approach to assessment so that learners are not over burdened with assessment and are using their language skills in context. But care must be taken to ensure that the Evidence Requirements of the Communication Unit are still being met. Assessment need not follow the order of the Unit Outcomes and evidence may be gathered from a range of sources.

The skills of learners should be satisfactorily developed before they are presented for summative assessment. Learners should always be made aware of when they are undertaking a summative assessment. Tutors should let learners know as soon as possible if they have achieved an Outcome or whether they must develop a response further or be re-assessed using an alternative instrument of assessment. The assessment decision should be recorded.

The following guidance/worksheets are not mandatory. They could be adapted, handed out for use in class group work or given as study homework for individual learners. There are many workbooks and websites providing similar exercises.

## Ways to communicate

### ***Spoken communication***

Spoken communication is direct verbal and non-verbal communication with others. You can communicate using words as well as non-verbally through body language (facial expression, gestures). You get immediate feedback from the receiver and can check for understanding and change your approach if necessary.

Some examples of face-to-face workplace communication include informal and formal discussions, meetings and interviews. A similar type of communication can be enabled by technology in phone calls, video calls (eg Skype), video conferencing, and tele-conferencing.

### ***Written communication***

Written communication is any type of communication that involves the written word. It is used for both formal and informal communications. Feedback is not likely to be immediate. Planning is required to ensure that the reader will understand the writer's purpose and meaning.

Written communication is essential in business because it can be used to make ideas clear and to record what has been said or agreed to. At work you need to be able to read and write effectively. Some examples of written communication are letters, e-mails, texts, and reports.

### ***Social media communication***

Social media is used increasingly in communicating with others. It allows for immediate feedback from a reader or audience and there is a written record of what has been communicated. It can be used socially, but is also used routinely for business, marketing and project team work. Examples of social media include YouTube, Twitter and Facebook.

## Communication in the workplace

### ***Purpose of communication***

Communication in the workplace can have many purposes, including:

- ◆ to give or ask for information
- ◆ to give instructions
- ◆ to persuade
- ◆ to promote, to market, to sell
- ◆ to report
- ◆ to evaluate
- ◆ to complain
- ◆ to respond to others
- ◆ to make recommendations
- ◆ to make a record of decisions and agreements
- ◆ to keep records

Can you think of any others?

Most organisations have a preferred system and 'house style' for communication — a company's preferred manner of presentation and layout of written information.

### ***Communication systems***

The systems used to communicate with others can include:

- ◆ office-based systems, electronic or paper-based — eg hardware: input/output devices, software, laptop/tablet
- ◆ systems based on direct verbal communication — including interviews, meetings and conferences (in person, by phone, using other technology)

Consider which system(s) would be most effective for:

- ◆ issuing instructions to employees
- ◆ dealing with customer complaints
- ◆ selling products

### ***Presentation of communication***

The way a communication is presented will depend on the purpose of the writer and on the readers for which it is intended. Presentation includes:

- ◆ the medium — paper, electronic
- ◆ the format
  - internal: memos, e-mails, notice boards, company newsletters, reports, meetings, intranet
  - external: letters (including mailmerge), flyers, leaflets and e-mails, meetings, conferences
- ◆ style, tone, words used — generally formal/business-like

## **You and communication**

Think about how good you are at communicating in your own language. You have studied for years, reading, writing and talking.

You understand:

- ◆ the message (what you want to say)
- ◆ the purpose (why you want to say it, what you hope to achieve)
- ◆ who you are addressing (your listeners or readers)
- ◆ your relationship or role with the person/people
- ◆ the best style and medium for the effect you want to achieve (how)

What are your strengths? What do you need to work on?

## Review of current communication skills in own language

Learner's name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Skills	Strength? or What I need to improve?
<b>Technology</b>	
Use of technology for research, communication, social media	
<b>Reading</b>	
Understanding written communication Analysing Summarising Evaluating	
<b>Writing</b>	
Planning Finding out information Writing letters, reports, e-mail	
<b>Business talking</b>	
Planning Verbal and non-verbal communication skills Listening	
<b>Working with others</b>	
Understanding roles and responsibilities in a business situation Choosing the best way to communicate	

Learner

## Review of current communication skills in English

Learner's name \_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Skills	Strength? or What I need to improve?
<b>Technology</b>	
Use of technology for research, communication, social media	
<b>Reading</b>	
Understanding written communication Analysing Summarising Evaluating	
<b>Writing</b>	
Planning Finding out information Writing letters, reports, e-mail	
<b>Business talking</b>	
Planning Verbal and non-verbal communication skills Listening	
<b>Working with others</b>	
Understanding roles and responsibilities in a business situation Choosing the best way to communicate	

Learner

## Learning plan

Learner's name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Strengths — what am I good at?**

**Weaknesses — what do I need to develop?**

**What are my goals?**

**What do I need to do to achieve my goals?**

**Where can I get help to achieve my goals?**

**What may stop me achieving my goals?**

**By (date/next week/next term) I want to have achieved**

## Sample completed learning plan

Learner's name Jon LeeDate June 2015

### Strengths — what am I good at?

*I am always using technology and I like to use social media — so I can communicate well with other people.*

### Weaknesses – what do I need to develop?

*My report writing is not so good. I find it hard to get started and to know how to write down my ideas.*

### What are my goals?

*I need to work on my report writing.*

### What do I need to do to achieve my goals?

*I could do this by attending a drop-in study skills workshop in the library and I could read business reports on the internet.*

### Where can I get help to achieve my goals?

*I could ask my tutor to read my first draft a few days before the submission date. I could ask my friends to remind me. Or I could set up a text alert.*

### What may stop me achieving my goals?

*I may put off starting work until there is not enough time to write a draft for checking.*

### By (next week/next term/date) I want to have achieved

*All this I need to do before next Monday when I will have to start my assignment.*



## Developing English language skills

Learners will benefit from studying and analysing language as they practise reading and understanding texts on vocational issues. Although the issues in texts studied may be complex, much of the language used, apart from specialist terms, will be direct and straightforward — as in the workplace.

Approaches to skills development could include:

- ◆ comparing business documents in English with texts in their own language
- ◆ reading short business texts, such as e-mails, memos and notices
- ◆ discussing the impact of language and tone on the reader
- ◆ collecting lists of useful words and expressions
- ◆ examining ways in which a communication could be improved — for example, changes to language, structure or layout, adding more information or graphics

Learners need to become familiar with the accepted conventions of business and vocational writing in English, and to understand their relationship to purpose and readership.

Group discussion in English on topics related to the course and the learner's vocational area will develop and extend verbal language skills as well as help learners understand approaches to summary and evaluation. Learners should also be encouraged to read useful information on current business issues independently, using books, magazines, and business and news websites.

Learning and teaching should provide opportunities to examine and discuss a range of business documents — for example: articles, reports, letters, and e-mails. It may be helpful to begin reading work by looking at short texts and discussing whether they meet the needs of purpose and readers. Short centre notices such as rules on plagiarism could be evaluated for content, language and presentation.

As learners' confidence grows, an analytical report on, for example, technology, environmental issues or health and safety could be suitable for analysis and general discussion in a class group. A particularly helpful approach to understanding and evaluation could be to read and analyse an example of a vocational report produced by a learner. Learners could be asked to provide the executive summary often required in a vocational situation. The class should be familiar with the topic, and, as they consider and discuss the strengths and any areas for improvement in the written document, they will be learning about the structure, layout and language expected in their own work for Outcome 2.

Generic questions for Outcome 1, as provided, may be used in practice (formative) work. Explaining the detail of correct responses to learners will provide a model for summative assessment. Checklists can provide useful support for learners in interpreting the Evidence Requirements for Outcome 1 (reading).

Providing detailed feedback on formative work will be essential to support and help learning. Tutors should review learner progress and give advice and encouragement on planning and draft work.

Most learners will find any revision or redraft work needed more straightforward where responses are written and feedback from the tutor has been provided. If oral questioning has been used in Outcome 1, either to elicit a complete response or to make adjustments to written evidence, written or recorded evidence of questions and learner responses must be kept. All evidence must be retained, signed and dated by the tutor.

## **Outcome 1: Teaching, learning and formative assessment guidance**

**Skill: Reading, analysing, summarising and evaluating texts on complex vocational issues**

Assessment will be carried out in open-book conditions under supervision. Learners can use all types of dictionaries.

There is no time limit on completion of the assessment but for practical reasons most centres set a supervised test of three hours.

### **Revision**

If minor improvements are needed after the work has been assessed then it would be reasonable to indicate any points that require to be developed and arrange another supervised session. Any minor revision or amendment can be added at the end of the original response.

It is important to remember that written communication skills are not assessed in Outcome 1. Attention can be drawn to any language errors — every opportunity to practise the use of English is valuable — but learners cannot fail because of weaknesses in writing skills. These will be assessed in Outcome 2. Oral responses (scribed or recorded by the tutor) may be useful for some learners.

### **Teaching/learning approaches**

The following suggestions are designed to give tutors some ideas on teaching approaches to Outcome 1. They are not mandatory.

The focus should be on building confidence around the existing skills of learners when they are using their own language. This should allow for discussion on why communication is important in personal and workplace situations, and the possible results of poor understanding of the process and systems involved. Over time, it should be possible for tutors to build up banks of resources that work for them and their learners.

Learners could work through some information individually in their own time and then discuss ideas in pairs or small groups before sharing conclusions in a larger class group.

## Outcome 1

One of the most important aspects of communication in the workplace and in studying is **reading** — understanding information and ideas written by other people.

The key skill to be developed in Outcome 1 is the ability to summarise and evaluate texts that present information.

Summarising and evaluating are a part of receiving, analysing and reporting information. The skills are essential to the note-taking and research required while studying and in employment.

### ***Summarising***

A **summary** is a shortened version of a text. It reduces a long text to a short text by identifying, analysing and selecting only essential information. The main points are then written or spoken in your own words — a summary shows understanding.

### ***Evaluating***

Evaluating text means analysing a piece of writing, deciding whether it achieves the writer's purpose and considering the possible effect on the reader. Views may be changed, knowledge may be gained and emotions aroused. A business text can be evaluated at several levels. Most people can work out quickly whether the content of a document is informative and useful. Sometimes it is evident that the approach taken by the writer is one-sided or is out of date. You may benefit from a checklist to support analysis and remind yourself of the important features of written communication.

## Writing a summary

- 1 First, read the text to get an idea of what it is about and the writer's attitude to the topic.
- 2 Read it through again one section at a time and identify the key sentences. Check the first sentences of each paragraph. They usually introduce the main idea for the paragraph (with the following sentences supporting this main idea). Look also at the last sentence in the paragraph, as this often sums up what has been written.
- 3 Look for only key facts or findings in the text that support the writer's main idea (or ideas). Decide which are the most important or relevant and underline or highlight them. Leave out detail or examples.
- 4 Write the main point in each paragraph (or section) in one sentence. Use your own words as far as possible.
- 5 Organise all the information in the most logical way. Delete any repeated ideas or details.

Important points to remember:

- ◆ Do not add any of your own ideas or opinions.
- ◆ Useful words/phrases are 'therefore', 'yet', 'however', 'the author claims /states /suggests ...'
- ◆ If you have to quote directly from the original text, use quotation marks.
- ◆ Check your grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- ◆ A summary is likely to be about one-third of the length of the original text.

Try to summarise in a single short sentence the advice for travellers given in the following paragraph:

*People who travel to Britain should understand that the climate of the United Kingdom is notoriously variable and it can change from day to day without warning. Weather is generally cool to mild with frequent cloud and rain, but occasional settled spells of weather occur. A pattern of alternating and unpredictable periods of dry and wet weather, accompanied by a similarly irregular cycle of temperature changes is to be expected at all seasons of the year.*

### Summary

British weather is changeable.

## Evaluation checklist for written information

<b>Purpose and readership</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<p>Is the aim of the writer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ to provide facts, information</li> <li>◆ to give different points of view</li> <li>◆ to evaluate</li> <li>◆ to persuade?</li> </ul> <p>Is the intended reader:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ an expert or specialist</li> <li>◆ or an educated general reader?</li> </ul> <p>These considerations affect the detail of the content as well as the format, style and presentation.</p>	
<p><b>Format, language, structure and layout</b></p> <p>Does the document use a business format, such as a formal report, specification, proposal, meetings papers?</p> <p>Is it in a formal style — business/technical language?</p> <p>Is it structured in an order that makes sense and has impact?</p> <p>If appropriate, does it sum up conclusions/recommendations?</p> <p>Is it designed to be easy for a reader to follow (headings/bullet points/numbering/font/white space)?</p>	
<p><b>Could the written communication be improved?</b></p> <p>Is the information/advice accurate?</p> <p>Is there enough detail provided?</p> <p>Is it up to date?</p> <p>Is the text too long? (Is an edit or executive summary needed?)</p> <p>Could more references, web links/bibliography or addresses have been helpful for people wanting to find out more or check on points made?</p> <p>Is the language/style suited to the intended purpose and reader?</p> <p>Has the best format for purpose been used?</p> <p>Could more headings be helpful?</p> <p>Is the font used effective?</p> <p>Is there enough white space?</p> <p>Could graphics, pictures or diagrams support the meaning?</p>	

Tutor

## **Reading, understanding and evaluating**

The general questions suggested here can be used with any suitable text. There is an example on the next page for learners to try.

The short texts on plagiarism that follow may be given out to learners and then read aloud by the tutor. The meaning may be explained in some detail. Class discussion can include discussion of possible answers to the following questions. Notes could be written up on a board or flip chart. To check that learners have understood, they could then be asked to write out individual responses.

***Practice exercise***

Read the examples of written communication. Then, for each example, discuss the following questions:

- 1 What is the topic?
- 2 What is the purpose of the communication? How do you know?
- 3 Who are the intended readers? How do you know?
- 4 Consider the strengths and any weaknesses in the text. Is it effective for the purpose and readers? Look at the content (is there enough information?) and the presentation (think about the layout, words used).
- 5 Which communication do you think is the most useful?



## Text 1

### Consequences of plagiarism

Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct by learners. Minor academic misconduct is defined to occur where it is manifest in less than five percent of a learner's response to an assessment item and where the academic misconduct is the learner's first offence. All other academic misconduct is defined to be major academic misconduct and is regarded very seriously.

The University Regulations on Academic Misconduct specify a range of penalties, which may be imposed when learners have plagiarised, colluded or cheated in any way.

The learner's name will be recorded in the Misconduct Register.

The learner may:

- ◆ be issued with a formal warning
- ◆ have marks reduced
- ◆ be required to resubmit an assessment
- ◆ be required to undertake additional assessment
- ◆ be failed in the assessment
- ◆ be awarded a grade of Fail for the course
- ◆ be excluded from a programme for a specified period of time
- ◆ be dismissed from the university

## Text 2

### Plagiarism

If you use ideas or words that appear in a document written by someone else, you must formally reference that work, even if it is not something that has been published. Whether the ideas were written by a recognised expert in your field, or by another learner, you must cite any words or ideas that did not originate with you.

If you paraphrase another person's ideas, you must still provide a reference citation. Leaving off quotation marks is a major error, even if there is a parenthetical reference at the end of the sentence or passage; you could face a charge of plagiarism for such an omission.

If you are given an example or model of the work that you are going to produce, you may use the format to guide your own work, but you should not use any portion of the text or ideas in your own work (except for well-known and accepted phrases and terms used in your field), unless you cite the example in your own written report. If you plan to quote or paraphrase an example or model provided for you by your tutor, ascertain whether they will allow you to use the example in this way.

Learners should clarify what information in a report is new and where the previous information is published. Standards of academic honesty would indicate that they should refrain from submitting the same paper in another course, without the permission of the tutor.

Penalties for plagiarism are very severe.

### Text 3

#### Plagiarism — Information for learners

Plagiarism is when written work submitted is not your own work but has been taken from another source.

Plagiarism is a serious offence — you may be asked to leave or fail your course if you present written material that is not your own work.

Plagiarism includes:

- ◆ copying the work of another learner
- ◆ copying course material or lecture notes
- ◆ copying material out of a textbook or journal
- ◆ copying and pasting material from websites

What **is** allowed in written reports and essays?

- ◆ You can quote from sources if you use quotation marks and give details of the source.
- ◆ You can summarise a text (select key information and rewrite it in your own words). You must give details of the source.

**Guidelines for discussion of written texts (plagiarism)**

Tutors may use any other short texts that they feel are appropriate to the needs of learners. Learners can be encouraged to bring in their own examples from books, magazines and/or business papers.

There is no one 'correct' response — each text has its strengths and potential room for improvement.

The points below are, however, worth considering and drawing to the attention of learners if they have not seen them for themselves.

**1 What is the topic?**

- (In each example) the heading includes the word 'Plagiarism' to indicate its topic to any readers. The content is all about copying and its consequences.

**2 What is the purpose of the communication? How do you know?**

- The general purpose of all of the texts is to provide some information on the plagiarism policy of different colleges and universities.
- The first one advises on the consequences of plagiarism (there is a list of what may happen if people copy).
- The second text gives instructions that all sources must be referenced or a learner could be charged with plagiarism and face penalties (it tells learners what to do, as in 'you must...' 'you may...').
- The third text defines plagiarism and gives some details about what learners can and cannot do when writing a report.

**3 Who are the intended readers? How do you know?**

- The intended readers are learners who have to answer questions and write reports or essays.
- You know this because: the third example is headed 'Information for learners'; the word 'learner' is used in all of the texts and they are all about writing course reports.

**4 Consider the strengths and any weaknesses in the text.****Text 1**

**Strength:** All the possible penalties for plagiarism are listed — the information in this section is detailed and easy to understand. There is white space to separate sections in a logical structure. The bullet points help to make each point clear.

**Weakness:** Some of the words used — such as 'manifest' and 'colluded' are difficult to understand. The advice does not explain what plagiarism is.

### **Text 2**

**Strength:** What is meant by plagiarism is explained. The text is informal, friendly, the reader is addressed as 'you'. The words used are mostly easy to understand, apart from the phrase 'Standards of academic honesty would indicate that they should refrain'.

**Weakness:** There is no information on the possible consequences of plagiarism. There are no bullet points/lists to emphasise penalties.

### **Text 3**

**Strength:** plagiarism and its possible consequences are explained. The text is short. It is friendly. The reader is addressed as 'you'. The words used are easy to understand. The spaces and bullet points make it easy to follow.

**Weakness:** There isn't much detailed information. Some may see that as a strength, in that learners are more likely to read a short text. Possibly there could be a note on where learners could ask about more information. An image (of a learner reading?) might help to attract attention.

5 Which communication do you think is the most useful?

- Discussion should provide an opportunity to ensure an understanding of the centre policy on plagiarism, and how it can be avoided. The session will also stress the importance of taking purpose and intended readership into account in any communication. If none of the texts is seen as very useful, learners might be asked to write a version suitable for learners like themselves.

### **Outcome 1 (Reading): Formative assessment**

Learners should be given the following text and questions. The tutor may read the article aloud to the class and the meaning can be explained and discussed in some detail.

Discussion of short extracts can be followed by a class analysis and attempt at the questions provided, with learners taking turns to write up some key points (not complete answers) on a board or flip chart. Any difficult words can be looked up in a dictionary. Finally, learners can attempt the complete formative assessment task. This will give tutors the opportunity to find out any areas of knowledge and skill that need more practice and whether learners are ready for summative assessment.

## Outcome 1 (Reading): Formative assessment instructions

Read the extract from the BBC news site article:

*How fair is Fairtrade? by Brendan O'Neill*

Using your own words, answer all of the following questions, referring to the text to support the points you make.

- 1 Explain the aim of the fair trade movement.
- 2 How do products get the Fairtrade label?
- 3 Summarise the arguments in favour of the fair trade movement.
- 4 Summarise the arguments against the fair trade movement.
- 5 What is the writer's main purpose? Give a reason for your answer.
- 6 For what type of reader is the article intended? Give a reason for your answer.
- 7 Evaluate the success of the article in achieving its purpose and meeting the needs of the intended reader. Your response should consider:
  - the content (are arguments for and against the fairness of the fair trade movement balanced and fair?)
  - the presentation and format of the article (is it logical? does it have an introduction, middle and conclusion? do the layout and headings make it easy for the reader to follow?)
  - the words used (are they complicated, specialist, suitable for an ordinary reader?)

Your comments should be supported with quotes and explanation from the article.

## Outcome 1 (Reading): Formative assessment text

### *How fair is Fairtrade?*

The Fairtrade label is increasingly common. But while shoppers are willing to pay more for fair trade products, some people question how effective it really is in helping developing world farmers.

Fair trade products are everywhere. There are more than 2,500 product lines in the UK that carry the Fairtrade mark. Last year £290m was spent on fair trade food, furniture and clothing — an increase of 46% on the previous year.

Marks and Spencer works with more than 600 fair trade cotton farmers in the developing world, using their cotton to produce chinos (for men), jeans (for women), hooded tops (for the kids), and a host of other fair trade fashion items. Sainsbury's sells fair trade chocolate and coffee, and recently announced that the only bananas it will sell in future will come from fair trade producers.

The aim of fair trade is clear — to get a better deal for Third World farmers. In order to win the Fairtrade label companies have to pay farmers higher than the market price for their products. This means fair trade farmers have extra money to invest in education for their children and other social needs.

### **Poverty trap**

But not everyone is convinced that fair trade is a good idea.

Some critics claim that by focusing on achieving a fair price for poor farmers, the movement doesn't address issues of mechanisation and industrialisation — radical changes that might allow farmers in the developing world to stop doing back-breaking work and break out of the poverty cycle.

### **So how fair is fair trade?**

Eileen Maybin, a spokeswoman for the Fairtrade Foundation, says it does help to improve farmers' lives.

'Fairtrade focuses on ensuring that farmers in developing countries receive an agreed and stable price for the crops they grow, as well as an additional Fairtrade premium to invest in social projects or business development programmes.

'Typically, farmers' groups decide to use the premium on education, healthcare and clean water supplies, or the repair of roads and bridges, and to strengthen their businesses, improve the quality of their crop or convert to organic production.'

Ms Maybin says that those farmers involved in fair trading are happy with the results.

'The farmers and workers involved in Fairtrade always talk about how much they, their families and their communities benefit.'



Yet others argue that fair trade can end up being a trap for farmers, tying them into a relationship of dependence with charity-minded shoppers in the West.

Madsen Pirie, of the right-leaning think-tank the Adam Smith Institute, says that in protecting the market for certain producers, the movement effectively makes farmers 'prisoners to our market'.

'They become dependent on us continuing to pay premium prices for their goods.'

Many tens of thousands of people escaped poverty last year, most of them in India and China, but he says that was done through real market developments rather than small-scale fair trade deals. They were lifted out of poverty because they could sell their products on the open global market, rather than being sectioned off in the fair trade market.

### **Extra pennies**

In the charity world, too, there are critical voices in the fair trade debate.

Steve Daley, who works with the education development charity Worldwrite, argues that fair trade's horizons are dangerously low.

'How can a few extra pennies a day from Fairtrade be celebrated as an outstanding achievement for the poor?' he asks.

He cites a report from the Financial Times last September, which revealed that some Fairtrade coffee farmers in Peru were being paid 10 soles a day (about US\$3) for working from 6am to 4.30pm. This is more than the conventional coffee farming wage of eight soles a day, but not much more.

Mr Daley is concerned that the fair trade movement is reshaping the debate about underdevelopment, so that the main concern today is with increasing farmers' wages by fairly small amounts rather than really transforming poor communities through development, modernisation, even industrialisation.

'Fairtrade seems to be rooted in a conviction that "small is beautiful",' says Mr Daley, who argues that the movement does not focus enough on developing modern agricultural methods, which is 'surely what farmers in the developing world need'.

Mr Daley says that fair trade is more about 'flattering Western shoppers' than transforming the lives of Third World farmers.

### **Self-sufficient**

Justin Purser, the commodities manager for Trade Aid Importers in New Zealand, disagrees. He has witnessed some of the big changes fair trade can make.

'It is very common for fair trade coffee co-operatives to seek to build infrastructure which will cut down on the amount of labour required to process their coffee, and will also enable them to improve their coffee quality and, thereby, the higher prices they can command in the market.'

He gives as an example Prodecoop, a coffee cooperative in Nicaragua that he has worked with.

‘Prodecoop has grown, with the aid of a longer history of fair trade sales, to the size where it is now constructing wet mill facilities for its smaller member co-ops. And to help them along, Trade Aid is supplying an additional US\$7,000 in funding this year.’

Fair trade helps to ‘promote self-sufficiency’ among Third World farmers, he says.

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<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/6426417.stm>

## Outcome 1 (Reading): Marking guide — how fair is Fairtrade?

### **Main ideas**

The tutor should use professional judgement as to whether responses demonstrate understanding and are sufficiently analytical. Some answers may vary from these suggestions or may be expressed differently.

The learner could be expected to cover **as a minimum the points in bold**.

- 1 Explain the aim of the fair trade movement.
  - **To improve the lives of poor farmers in developing countries.**
  
- 2 How do products get the Fairtrade label?
  - **Farmers have to be paid more than the standard market price.**
  
- 3 Summarise the arguments in favour of the fair trade movement.
  - Many shops in the UK support fair trade.
  - **There are benefits for farmers** (money/education for children).
  - **There are successful schemes** (the co-operative, Prodecoop, in Nicaragua) **where the farming methods and machinery have been transformed.**
  
- 4 Summarise the arguments against the fair trade movement.
  - It may not be the best way to get farmers to break the poverty cycle.
  - **The scheme traps farmers into dependency.**
  - **Farmers' wages are only increased a little.**
  - Much more needs to be done to change farming methods.
  - Fairtrade may be only to make Western shoppers feel good.
  
- 5 What is the writer's main purpose? Give a reason for your answer.
  - To evaluate the 'fairness' of the fair trade movement.
  - And/or**
  - To raise awareness about the debate on the value of fair trade.
  - **Reason: the title asks the question or different viewpoints are provided.**
  
- 6 For what type of reader is the article intended? Give a reason for your answer.
  - A well-educated or serious reader.
  - And/or**
  - A reader with an interest in global business issues.
  - **Reason: The topic/content or the source (BBC News item).**

7 Evaluate the success of the article in achieving its purpose and meeting the needs of the intended reader.

- **Success:** Responses may vary to a degree in terms of how successful this article is in raising awareness about the debate.
- **Content:** Comments could be made about the fairness of the article by considering the balancing of opinions between the four experts.

**The writer makes a good attempt to show two sides of the debate by introducing two experts who support the movement and two experts who feel that it does more harm than good.**

- **Structure:** Positive and/or negative comments on the structure of the article may be made.

There is a clear and logical sequence in the article: The writer introduces the topic with points about the popularity of the Fairtrade movement in the UK; he then goes on to provide a brief explanation of fair trade; he then presents the ideas of two supporters and two critics of the movement.

Some learners may point out that the article ends rather abruptly. There is no concluding paragraph.

- **Format:** Comment could be made about the layout and white space which makes each point stand out for a reader. Title: comment on the brief, attention-getting title, could be made. The sub-headings such as 'Poverty trap' emphasise the argument of the section.
- **Words:** Comment could be made on the fact that the words used are fairly informal and that a lot of direct speech makes it easier for a reader to understand; it makes it seem real and more interesting. Comment might also be made on the choice of words — eg 'poverty trap'; 'organic production'; 'prisoners to our market' and how these make the reader feel sympathy with the farmers.
- **Evaluation:** Comments should be reasonably analytical and supported by reference and/or quotation where appropriate.
- **Overall response:** Where responses are broadly accurate but too 'thin' in some aspects, it is acceptable to redirect the learner to the task and ask for further detail to be given. This can be added to the end of the response. Alternatively, answers may be supplemented by oral questioning, but in this case additions must be recorded in writing, dated and initialled by the tutor.

## Outcome 2: Teaching, learning and formative assessment guidance

### Skill: Writing

Learners must demonstrate skills in written communication by presenting and analysing information on a vocational issue. Ideally, Group Award course teams should work together to examine if there are practical possibilities for integrating work with examples of written communication — such as reports, specifications, or proposals — produced by learners for other Units in the programme. Depending on the requirements of the Unit tutors may also consider a portfolio approach, where evidence comprises several types of documents to include, for example, one or two short reports, meetings papers, memos, e-mails and/or letters. Many learners will find this approach more manageable. If a portfolio approach is used at least one document should be substantial (500 or 800 words as indicated in the Unit specification).

Learners should be encouraged to try some original research thus reducing opportunities for plagiarism.

The use of informal style and language is not acceptable in documents used for recording information and for wider distribution within the workplace. A formal report is written in the passive voice using the third person unless a company house style specifies otherwise.

The detail of the remit given in the assessment task is very important. As well as giving deadline dates for submission of draft and complete work, tutors need to make clear exactly what is expected in terms of purpose and structure. If the learner has to write an investigative report or proposal, the plans, outlines and first drafts can be submitted to the tutor for initial approval before it is completed. Keeping records of tutor guidance/feedback and copies of drafts will support learners and help to assure that work is original and authentic.

The task is 'open book'. Learners may access any class notes on acceptable structures and layout for written communication. As in a workplace situation, they can research information from any source. Software packages can be used to check spelling and grammar. Some written work may be undertaken without direct supervision but the 'controlled conditions' that allow the centre to verify the authenticity of work produced should be explained in any agreement made with learners at the start of their programme.

Tutors should ensure learners understand the policy on plagiarism — that materials submitted as evidence of skill in writing must be their own work. The penalties for copying should be explained. Group work or direct downloading of unedited material will not be acceptable. All sources should be referenced.

It is important to ensure that learners are at the skills level required. It might be useful to start with a letter or memorandum, or to ask learners to try to write a brief report before they start work on longer documents.

There is no single format for business documents — many companies or universities have a preferred house style. Learners can, however, be provided with outlines, headings or software packages in a preferred format for all required documents. In all the Communication Units learners should be made aware of the need to communicate in a format, structure and style appropriate to a workplace situation. Shorter reports may not require cover title pages and lists of contents but they will still need to have a logical structure, that is, an introduction, body and conclusion. Learners should understand the value of headings and numbering in helping readers to follow a communication. They should know the value of bullet points to draw attention to important information within a document so that key issues and facts can be easily identified.

The following notes/examples may be adapted to suit the preferred style of the centre.

## Written communication

### ***Memo/memo report format***

These can be used for short proposals or to reply to a request for information. In contrast with a standard memo, memo reports may be two or three pages long and may contain headings and references.

### **Heading**

Use could be made of either stationery or a template with standard headings such as:

- ◆ To:
- ◆ From:
- ◆ Subject:
- ◆ Date:

and other relevant information, for example, reference numbers, names of people who receive carbon copies (cc:).

The subject/topic should be stated concisely.

### **Introductory statement**

The general topic, specific question or task being reported on should be stated in two or three sentences.

### **Findings or results**

This section will be the longest part of the report.

Findings should be clearly and concisely stated. Results should be arranged logically so that the most important ideas are placed first. Use should be made of headings and key points should be numbered so that readers can find what they want.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

These summarise the most significant points or recommendations for action. Recommendations may not be included unless specifically requested.

Tables and any other information including sources can be listed at the end or attached.

## **Long report format**

A long report usually has:

- ◆ a title page (if appropriate)
- ◆ a list of contents
- ◆ terms of reference/introduction
- ◆ procedure (often included in investigative and technical reports)
- ◆ findings
- ◆ conclusions
- ◆ recommendations (if requested in the remit)
- ◆ a list of sources/references
- ◆ appendices(if required)

### **Title page**

The title page should state briefly what the report is about. It should include the date of completion, the name of the writer and the name of the person to whom it is being submitted.

### **Contents page**

This lists all the headings and sub-headings in the report.

### **Terms of reference/introduction**

This is a definition of the task, the objective and purpose. If recommendations have been requested these should be stated in this section.

### **Procedure(s)**

This section is about how the investigation was carried out and how information was gathered. This section is routine in technical or scientific reporting but not essential in workplace situations. It can, however, be a useful way to remind learners that work has to be shown to be original.

### **Findings**

This section is the main part of the report in which all information is presented, analysed and interpreted. Information is arranged in order of priority, following a logical sequence. Each section can be divided further into subsections with sub-titles within each subsection. Everything should be clearly numbered.

This section should give enough information, analysis, and evidence to support the conclusions, and it should provide justification for any recommendations. Where the purpose of the report is to recommend the best solution to a problem, an analysis of all options is needed. Any analytical framework used, such as SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) or cost–benefit analysis, should be explained. Analysis of options can often be presented in tables.



## **Conclusions**

These give a summary of the writer's viewpoint, based on the findings. No new ideas should be added.

## **Recommendations**

These are sometimes included, if stated in the terms of reference.

These list possible solutions or action points — often using bullet points, ie:

- ◆ what needs to be done
- ◆ who needs to do it
- ◆ how, when and where it needs to be done

## **List of reference sources**

All sources should be included — books, articles, websites, interviews, etc with information that would help the reader check information or find out more (eg title, author, publication date, publisher, etc).

## **Appendices**

Supporting charts, diagrams, questionnaires, etc are sometimes included in appendices.

## **Covering letter/memorandum**

A letter or memo is often attached to a report. It can:

- ◆ introduce the report to the reader
- ◆ state the purpose of the report
- ◆ indicate future actions to be taken

Tutor

## **Outcome 2 (Writing): Formative assessment**

The tutor could specify a topic for investigation that involved some original research, such as recommendations for additional equipment or resources for the course. Alternatively learners could be encouraged to have a group discussion that might lead to suggestions on a business-related topic of their own choice, eg fashion, sport, social media, music. The aim of the formative work is to have learners conduct some original and interesting research, as a way of discouraging plagiarism. Practising reporting in this context should improve writing skills as well as introducing learners to required reporting formats.

## **Outcome 2 (Writing): Formative assessment instructions**

You have to submit an investigative report on...

Your report should be .....words long

**Use the report format as advised by your tutor.**

### ***Planning stage***

- 1 Introduction — State the purpose of the report; who has asked for it and the due date.
- 2 Procedure — Think of three pieces of research you can carry out to find information.
- 3 Findings — Remember that this section should contain facts only.
- 4 Conclusions — Remember that these will be based on what you find out in your research.
- 5 Recommendations (if requested) — You will need to think of two or three reasonable ideas or solutions you could suggest.
- 6 References/Sources — Remember you will need to include a list of all sources used.

**The first draft should be handed in on .....(Date).**

**The final report should be submitted on.....(Date).**

- 1 First read some background information. You can look at business articles, websites and textbooks for ideas.
- 2 Consider your purpose and intended reader and produce an outline plan.
- 3 Consider the style to use (formal or more direct? — check with your tutor).
- 4 Discuss your plan with your tutor before you start to write.
- 5 As you carry out research make notes, keeping a careful record of your sources of information.
- 6 Write the first draft/outline of your report. Give it to your tutor for feedback.

Make changes suggested (if any). You could try reading it aloud to see if it makes sense. Look at the way you have presented the information and check your spelling and grammar.

**The report must be your own work and you must not copy material directly from other sources.**

The information in the report must be accurate and relevant to your purpose and intended readers.

The structure must be effective and present ideas clearly and logically.

Your spelling, punctuation and grammar must be accurate (you can use a dictionary or spellcheck software).

A list of sources should be provided.

## **Investigative report — Example 1**

Here is a sample report outline for an investigation that was carried out comparing the learners' canteen facilities with that of another university.

### ***Sample report outline***

#### **1 Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to compare our learner canteen with that of another university. This report has been asked for by the learner council and will be completed within the next three weeks.

#### **2 Procedure**

There were three stages to the research for the report.

2.1 Interview with staff

2.2 Survey with 10 learners — questionnaire

2.3 Fact finding visit to local university

#### **3 Findings**

3.1 Staff Interview

3.2 Questionnaire results

3.3 University visit

#### **4 Conclusions**

Staff were unhelpful.

Too few people completed the questionnaire for the results to be useful.

Visit to the university provided interesting observations.

#### **5 Recommendations**

Staff should be sent on a customer care training course.

Design the questionnaires with closed questions to encourage more to complete.

Organise a visit to another campus.

#### **List of sources**

## Investigative report — Example 2

In this example a complete report is given to show the standard expected for a successful summative assessment at SCQF level 7.

### *Investigative Report on Solar-powered Electricity*

#### **1 Introduction**

The idea of harvesting energy from the sun is not new. According to David MacKay in *Sustainable Energy — Without the Hot Air*, ‘the simplest solar power technology is a panel making hot water’. There has been interest recently from house owners in generating power from solar panels on their roofs.

This report investigates the practicability of doing this for an average homeowner in Fife, Scotland. It will be of interest to those house owners considering investing in solar energy.

#### **2 Procedure**

- 2.1 Prepare background information taken from websites (refer to references)
- 2.2 Explain the current situation in Britain
  - 2.21 Contact the Office of Fair Trading
  - 2.22 Refer to The Energy Savings Trust website re The Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS)
  - 2.23 Visit the Scottish Parliament to see what the panels look like on a building

#### **3 Findings**

##### *3.1 Background*

Drawing energy from the sun is not a new idea, nor are solar heating systems. Horace de Saussure, a Swiss naturalist, invented a ‘hot box’ in 1767 that effectively trapped heat from the sun. It was the start of a whole series of experiments, some of which led to heating systems. The first solar water heaters were tanks of water painted black and angled towards the sun. It was not subtle but it worked. In 1891 Clarence Kemp, in Baltimore, Maryland, patented the ‘Climax Solar-Water Heater’, the first commercial system of its kind. Using panels on house roofs, it sold well in American states, which had plenty of sunshine, such as California. Systems quickly developed and became more efficient. Ironically, the advance of the technology slowed down when huge quantities of natural gas were discovered in the Los Angeles Basin. Meanwhile, in the 60s and 70s the Japanese, short of other sources of natural power, developed extensive solar heating systems. Australia and Israel followed.

Countries with plenty of sunshine have been able to take advantage of the natural heat of the sun and technology has developed to make systems more effective. It is the contemporary concern about future gas, coal and oil supplies that has made countries with less sunshine, such as Scotland, increasingly interested in these renewable sources, even without the same sort of sunshine as Australia.

### 3.2 *The current situation in the UK*

The UK government is currently carrying out a consultation on its Microgeneration Strategy. This includes solar power, which could be accessed by ordinary home owners.

The Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) is industry-led but has consumer representation. It is widely accepted that supplies of the new solar technologies (among others) be registered with this scheme, which would give some consumer protection.

It covers the following:

- ◆ product certification
- ◆ installation company certification
- ◆ a consumer code of practice which meets the Office of Fair Trading requirements

Some companies are offering solar-powered heating systems 'free'. They install the panels and heating systems in return for control of the power which is sold back to the national grid.

Other systems, in some areas, may attract local government subsidies.

The Energy Savings Trust website offers a survey which allows the consumer to assess which system, if any, is suitable for their home, as well as considerable advice about ways of saving money on energy.

It is easy to locate at least a dozen companies in Fife, ranging from tiny to sizeable concerns, which advertise the service of installing solar heating panels on suitable roofs. Not all of these are MSC registered and some claim to offer the 'free' service. It is a fairly confusing picture to the average home owner.

### 3.3 *How solar panels work*

The Energy Savings Trust website, among others, offers a simple animation showing the way a photo-voltaic panel on a south-facing roof collects heat from the sun and channels it into the hot water system of the house, as well as into the national grid if there is an excess supply. The basic principle looks fairly straightforward. However, many people will not have suitable roofs for installation. The roof obviously needs access to sunlight (though it does not have to be hot sun all the time) and it has to be strong enough to bear the weight of the panels, which are heavy. The Scottish Parliament Building in Edinburgh has prominent solar panels on the roof.

### 3.4 *The cost*

Fife-based companies will offer to assess properties and give an estimate. However, typical costs for an installation of solar electricity panels, before grants or subsidies, are between £8,000 and £14,000. Financial savings on heating costs per year, at the present time, could be up to £190.00.

## 4 **Conclusions**

Although subsidies are available in some areas for those choosing to install solar panels, they are unlikely to contribute more than a third of the cost, and in many cases there will be no subsidy. The 'free' schemes, when investigated, must create significant profit for the

installer, so they will be limited to buildings which have significant access to solar sources, ie not the average house. At least one business offering free installation in Fife was not MSC registered.

Collecting electricity from the sun is a simple and attractive idea. However, the cost of installing the device to do that, in the form of photo-voltaic panels, could not be recovered by savings within the installer's lifetime. On the other hand, it is a satisfying idea for those concerned about reducing use of fossil fuels and it could certainly increase the value of the property if the installation is well done.

## 5 Recommendations

Anyone thinking about installing these photo-voltaic panels will have to weigh up the environmental benefits against the considerable costs involved. In view of this it would be wise to wait for five years or so in the hope that advances in technology make solar energy more affordable for the average house owner in Scotland.

### Sources

- 1 David Mackay, *Sustainability Energy — Without the Hot Air* <http://www.withouthotair.com/>
- 2 The California Solar Centre [http://www.californiasolarcenter.org/history\\_solarthermal.html](http://www.californiasolarcenter.org/history_solarthermal.html) (Accessed 09/06/15)
- 3 John Patterson, Solar Hot Water Basics in *Home Power Magazine*, <http://homepower.com/basics/hotwater/> (Accessed 09/06/15)
- 4 The Energy Savings Trust UK website <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/domestic/content/solar-water-heating> (Accessed 09/06/15)
- 5 The Microgeneration Certification Scheme website <http://www.microgenerationcertification.org/> (Accessed 09/06/15)
- 6 *Consultation on a Microgeneration Strategy* (Government Consultation Strategy paper) <http://www.decc.gov.uk/assets/decc/Consultations/microgen-strategy/1077-consultation-on-a-microgeneration-strategy.pdf> (Accessed 09/06/15)



## Tutor guidance

### ***Investigative report on solar-powered electricity***

This is a satisfactory report. It is an original, if general, investigation into a topic of local interest. The topic has been examined from a range of aspects.

The format and outline will have been agreed with the tutor at the planning stage.

The report format selected is appropriate to the intended readers and the subject matter. The layout, structure and vocabulary selected make the writing clear, suit the topic, and are appropriate for readers. Information is accurate, relevant, but lacking in depth and detail. It has been presented in a logical and effective order with sub-sections, and a sensible conclusion. All sources have been referenced.

Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are consistently accurate. The standard of written communication is acceptable.

If a longer report were required then additional information on existing projects and feasibility studies could be added.

More technical detail, diagrams and graphics — including possibly, appendices with energy and cost calculations — would be useful and could be requested. Tutors would have to make this clear in the task remit and in early reviews of planning and drafts.

## Outcome 3: Teaching, learning and formative assessment guidance

### Skill: Talking and listening

Learners will learn most effectively when they take an active part in learning. They need to understand the value of actively listening to their peers, tolerating opposing viewpoints, and being open-minded. They also need to recognise the importance of staying focused and expressing themselves clearly. They should understand how team projects prepare them for the workplace and the importance of record keeping.

The final assessment will be 'open book'. That means that learners can have access to any notes, cue cards, software or similar sources of information and support as needed. During formative work, tutors should decide whether dictionaries or lists of key business words might be useful or could be a distraction. The tutor should ask:

Would it be acceptable practice in the workplace?

Recording at least some examples of the class undertaking oral tasks is good practice. It can provide an opportunity for learners to evaluate and improve on their own performance. It is helpful to demonstrate and maintain standards across the centre. It provides useful supporting evidence for internal and external verification. If recording performance is difficult then cross-marking (two or more tutors) may be helpful to ensure standardisation.

### Teaching and learning notes

#### Preparing for a discussion

Having each person prepare a short presentation for the group on aspects of a relevant topic is a useful active learning strategy.

You can ask them to think about a list of useful words and phrases, prepare possible questions, or collect evidence for and against the topic for discussion.

- ◆ Make clear how much time you have for discussion, and what you expect at the end. Are you expecting suggestions, recommendations, agreement, decision making or problem-solving?
- ◆ Distribute a list of key points/agenda items. Identify and list the important points that are to be discussed.
- ◆ Provide worksheets for planning and note sheets for records.

#### Encouraging learner participation

- 1 Create a comfortable environment. Learners will be more likely to contribute to a discussion if they feel that they are in a comfortable environment.
- 2 Arrange the seating so that the group members can see each other.

- 3 Ask learners to state their name before they begin speaking. Use their name when responding to them.
- 4 Write down questions and points made on whiteboards or on flipchart paper.
- 5 Positively reinforce contributions. You can emphasise the value of responses by restating comments, writing ideas and questions on the board, and/or making connections between their comments and the discussion at large.
- 6 Keep eye contact, look interested and use non-verbal gestures such as smiling and head nodding to indicate your attention.
- 7 Limit your own involvement. Avoid talking too much and/or responding to every contribution. Encourage learners to develop their own ideas and to respond to one another (that is, peer interaction). Some silence can be useful to allow thinking.

### **Guiding the discussion**

Keep the discussion focused. Have a clear agenda for the discussion and list questions/issues on the board to inform and remind everyone of where the discussion is heading.

Draw quiet learners into the discussion by asking questions that don't require a detailed or correct response (What is your view on that statement? How do you feel about the suggestions so far?) and by positively reinforcing contributions made by summarising what has been said.

Clarify contributions by asking the learner to rephrase/explain the comment, paraphrasing the comment if you can interpret it, asking a probing question, or encouraging the learner to give an example.

- 8 Conduct an informal evaluation of the discussion. Consider the following questions when making an evaluation. If there is general agreement, an audiovisual recording can be made to help with the evaluation.
  - Did everyone contribute to the discussion?
  - Did the discussion stay focused?
  - What worked especially well?
  - How satisfied did the group seem about the productiveness of the discussion?
  - What (if anything) would each person do differently next time?
  - What did you learn today?

Meetings and discussions can, in both formative and summative work, be integrated with other elements of the course programme.

At all stages of delivery, learners should be encouraged to apply knowledge and skills by discussing case studies. They could be provided with a practical study relevant to such areas as marketing, law or technical systems and asked to make some notes after doing

background research. The purpose of the discussion (for example, to make recommendations or decide on a solution) should be clear.

A course review and evaluation is another practical and useful exercise.

Learner

## Planning sheet (individual presentation)

Learner name	Date
What will the presentation be about?	
What will be the purpose of the presentation?	
Who will your audience be?	
What sources of information will you use to research your topic (eg people, class notes, textbooks, websites)?	
What sort of prompts or visual aids might help you back up your points effectively (eg cue cards, notes, pictures)?	

**Notes**

## Sample completed planning sheet (individual presentation)

Learner name	Date
What will the presentation be about?	<i>Impact of offshore windfarms.</i>
What will be the purpose of the presentation?	<i>Pros and cons of offshore windfarm as renewable energy. Reaching a conclusion about whether a good idea.</i>
Who will your audience be?	<i>Class group — they will know quite a lot about renewables</i>
What sources of information will you use to research your topic (eg people, class notes, textbooks, websites)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <i>Class notes</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Survey/questionnaire</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Friends of the Earth website</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Renewable UK website</i></li> </ul>
What sort of prompts or visual aids might help you back up your points effectively (eg cue cards, notes, pictures)?	<p><i>Notes and pictures from websites.</i></p> <p><i>Graphs of projected figures.</i></p>

### Notes

*Why wind power? Wind energy resource at sea is extremely large, infinite/sustainable — could supply the local area.*

*Jobs: Cheaper than other renewable technologies. A significant new offshore industry? Already a highly skilled offshore workforce — could be employed as in Germany. Need for local jobs.*

*Looks: Low visual impact (8 km off shore, not in an obvious place/blue to blend with landscape). Noise — less than those on land.*

*Tourism: Should not affect tourism as will not be seen from most places. Radar signals for ships.*

*Marine life: Some disturbance during build but lots of studies. No effects proven on bird populations in areas with turbines. Increases in fish numbers — turbine foundations act like a reef — also good for bird populations in the area.*

*So overall — benefits rather than negative effect!*

## Some useful phrases for discussions and meetings

(You can add to this starter list)

### Talking about discussion items

We need to discuss . . .

We need to talk about . . .

The first thing we need to discuss is . . .

The first item on the agenda is . . .

First, we need to talk about . . .

### Presenting options

We have several alternatives:

We have some options:

Maybe we could either . . . or . . .

The next item of business is . . .

Before we move on, can we talk about . . .?

We haven't discussed . . .

### Asking for clarification

What do you mean by . . .?

Could you explain that/give us more detail?

### Making a suggestion/proposal

Maybe we should. . .

I suggest...

Why don't we...?

How about...?

We could...

What do you think?

What's your opinion on that?

Does anyone have any other ideas on that?

### Checking for agreement

Do we all agree?

So, we've decided to . . .

We are agreed that we will . . .

### Closing the discussion

That's all for today, thank you all for coming.

(informal)

The meeting is adjourned.

(formal)

It is better to avoid some expressions. These are clichés — expressions that were once effective but have been used so often that they no longer have impact. Ten of the most over-used expressions heard in the workplace are:

- 1 It's a no-brainer
- 2 Thinking outside the box
- 3 At the end of the day
- 4 It's a win-win situation
- 5 Touch base
- 6 Going forward
- 7 110 per cent
- 8 Close of play
- 9 On my radar
- 10 Flagging up



## Common business expressions

Note: The phrases with \*beside them are clichés that are best avoided in formal business writing and discussions.

Expression	What it means	Example
24/7	24 hours a day, seven days a week.	The customer service phone line is open 24/7.
ASAP	An acronym for 'as soon as possible'.	My manager needs the answer ASAP.
at stake	At risk.	There's a lot at stake in the meeting with the bank.
back to square one	To start something over again.	We thought we understood the problem but we are no further forward. So it looks like we have to go back to square one.
back to the drawing board	As above: to go back to the planning stage.	The prototype did not work. We have to go back to the drawing board.
ballpark figure*	An estimate.	To give you a ballpark figure on costs, about five thousand pounds
behind someone's back	To do something without someone's knowledge/in a way that is unfair.	He went behind his manager's back to report the problem.
blue collar worker	Someone who works with his/her hands.	Building houses is a blue collar job.
by the book	To do things strictly according to the rules.	The auditor will check that we are doing everything by the book.
call it a day	To stop working on a project.	We have done enough. Let's call it a day.
catch off guard	To surprise someone by saying or doing something unexpected.	She was caught off guard when the manager asked for her sales figures.
corner the market	To dominate/take over a particular market.	Apple has cornered the market in smart phones.
cut corners	To find an easier or cheaper way to do something (and compromise quality).	Do not cut corners on luxury products.
cut one's losses	To give up doing something that is unproductive.	Advertising was expensive. So, we decided to cut our losses and stop the campaign.
cut-throat	Very aggressive business dealing.	The competition was cut-throat.

<b>Expression</b>	<b>What it means</b>	<b>Example</b>
game plan	A strategy or plan.	We do not have a game plan for the marketing campaign.
get down to business	To stop small talk and start talking about serious topics.	Let's get down to business and talk about the proposal.
get the ball rolling	To start something off.	We really need to get the ball rolling on this project.
get/have foot in the door	To take any position with a company in order to get a better job in the future.	I want to get a foot in the door at an international company.
give a pat on the back	To praise someone for a good job.	He got a pat on the back for his good idea.
give the thumbs down	To deny approval.	I can't believe we got the thumbs down. It was a great idea.
give the thumbs up	To 'give something or someone the thumbs up' means to approve.	They gave our new proposal the thumbs up. We're going out to celebrate tonight.
go the extra mile	To do more than customers expect.	We go the extra mile in customer service.
ground-breaking	New, innovative.	The Apple watch is ground-breaking technology.
have your work cut out	To have a particularly demanding assignment.	She has her work cut out to complete the report by tonight.
hit the nail on the head	To say something that is totally accurate.	He hit the nail on the head when he said the boss is a bully.
in the black	A company is making a profit.	At least the company is still in the black.
in the red	Not profitable and are operating at a loss.	The company was in the red for the first two years.
keep your eye on the ball	To focus and not lose concentration.	We can win the contract if we keep our eye on the ball.
long shot	Something that has a low probability of happening.	It's a long shot but customers might buy an electric car.
lose ground	To lose some type of an advantage (market share) to a competitor.	Apple lost some ground to competitors last year.
lose-lose situation (no-win situation)	When someone has to choose between various options and all the options are bad.	It's a no-win situation. People will complain whatever managers do.
nine-to-five	A job during the usual working hours.	She wanted a nine-to-five job without shift work.

<b>Expression</b>	<b>What it means</b>	<b>Example</b>
no brainer*	A decision that is obvious or easy to make.	Taking a promotion was a no brainer. More money and less work.
no strings attached	Something is given with no conditions.	They will let you try the product for free — no strings attached.
not going to fly	A suggested solution is not likely to work.	I don't think that idea is going to fly.
off the top of one's head	An answer given without thinking or doing any research.	I have no idea how many people are being interviewed. Off the top of my head, about five.
on a roll	Several successes in a row.	Profits have been high for the last year. We're really on a roll.
on the ball	Knowledgeable and aware.	The new personal assistant is really on the ball.
on the same page*	In agreement about something.	Let's go over the agreement to make sure that we're on the same page.
on top of something	To be 'on top of something' means to be in control of a situation and aware of changes.	I read a lot to stay on top of the latest developments in the industry.
raise the bar*	To set the standards or expectations higher by achieving something better.	The new product is getting good reviews. It looks like the developers have really raised the bar for the competition.
read between the lines	Understanding what someone is implying but not saying directly.	Reading between the lines I think that there will be job losses.
red tape	Excessive rules, procedures, and regulations that make it difficult to accomplish something.	The new law is going to create a lot of red tape.
rock the boat	To cause problems.	He thought about demanding more money, but then he decided he didn't want to rock the boat.
round-the-clock	24 hours a day.	We have round-the-clock production at all our facilities.
see eye to eye	To agree with a person.	We don't always see eye to eye, but I respect her opinions.
see something through	To do something until it is completed.	I want to see my current project through before taking on more work.
sky's the limit	No limit to the possibilities of something.	The sky's the limit to the commission you can make.
small talk	Polite conversation about unimportant topics (the weather, the journey, etc).	We generally spend five minutes making small talk before we start the meeting.

<b>Expression</b>	<b>What it means</b>	<b>Example</b>
stand one's ground	To not change an opinion or position on an issue.	Customer services stood their ground and refused the complainant a refund.
start off on the wrong foot	To begin something badly.	He started off on the wrong foot by being late for the interview.
state of the art*	Technologically advanced.	The design for the new ship is state of the art.
take something lying down	To accept something unpleasant without arguing.	We're not going to take any changes to working conditions lying down.
talk someone into something	To convince someone to do something.	My mother talked me into going for a new job.
the elephant in the room*	A big problem that no one wants to talk about.	At the meeting the elephant in the room was the proposed merger.
think big	To have high goals or big plans.	I'm thinking big — I want to double my salary in the next five years.
think outside the box*	To think creatively or have unconventional ideas.	The proposal to have a paperless office is thinking outside the box.
throw in the towel	To give up.	I was trying to learn German, but it was difficult and I threw in the towel.
touch base*	To make contact with someone.	Let's touch base later today.
up in the air	Something undecided that could go any way.	Nothing has been decided yet. Everything's still up in the air.
upper hand	Someone has an advantage over someone else.	He knew the facts so he had the upper hand in the argument.
White-collar	Someone who works in an office (administration, management, etc.)	I would like a white-collar job in sales or customer service.
win-win situation*	A situation where everyone gains an advantage.	Giving customers a free first call was a win-win situation.
word of mouth	Communication by informal conversation.	A lot of traders rely on word of mouth to get new customers.
yes man	Someone who always agrees with his superiors.	The management only hire 'Yes' men.

## Frequently asked questions — **Communication Units in SQA Advanced Certificates and SQA Advanced Diplomas**

### **General**

If learners have already achieved recognised qualifications in English language do they have to be assessed for the SQA Advanced Communication Unit?

The context and assessment tasks of the SQA Advanced Units are different from those in other qualifications. As they learn business-related approaches to communication learners will continue to develop their English language skills in a workplace context. They must, therefore, complete and achieve all the assessment tasks for the Unit.

### **What allowances can be made for learners who have language difficulties?**

No 'allowances' may be made. If learners have formal evidence of a disability and/or are identified as having additional support needs, the centre can apply to SQA for Assessment Arrangements. Advice should be sought from SQA if a centre believes that practical alternatives are needed. Information can be found at:

[www.sqa.org.uk/assessment arrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessment%20arrangements)

### **Must I use the latest exemplar assessment pack?**

All the published SQA assessment support packs (ASPs) for the Unit are valid. You should select one that best meets the needs of the learners and the award that they are undertaking. Be sure to check that the ASP that you are using supports the current Unit specification.

### **What if I want to change the tasks or design my own assessments?**

You will need to internally verify proposed instruments of assessment, including detailed marking schemes, before submitting them for prior verification and acceptance by SQA. This needs to be done before using them to assess learners.

[Prior verification request form](#)

### **Can learners use dictionaries for all Outcomes?**

Yes.

### **Outcome 1 (Reading)**

#### **What is meant by 'complex business information'? (Business Units)**

The term is used to cover any formal structured written business communication that presents complex information, eg reports or articles from quality websites, books, newspapers or magazines that analyse business news, financial matters, social issues, etc.

Before attempting summative assessment of Outcome 1, there should have been sufficient formative work for the tutor to be confident that the learner has the necessary skills to do this. Formative assessments prepare the learner to pass the summative assessment.

The marking scheme for the Outcome 1 assessment should identify all key ideas that are essential to achieve a pass.

If minor elements have been left out of the summary or the evaluation, the learner can be redirected to the weak part of the response and develop the response/add these minor elements. Alternatively the tutor can ask directed questions (with responses scribed and signed by learner and tutor) to be sure of full understanding.

If the tutor believes that the response is generally weak and the learner is unable to demonstrate understanding then a completely different assessment will be needed.

### **Can I read the Outcome 1 text aloud and then have a discussion with learners before they do the assessment task?**

Reading aloud and talking about the assessment text is not allowable in summative assessment. Group work in analysing similar texts to ensure understanding is good practice in formative work. General discussions on similar topics would also develop and support Communication skills while learners are being taught.

### **Do learners have to underline key points or write notes before they summarise texts?**

Underlining points or making notes can be a good way to support reading, by identifying and recording key ideas. But it is not a mandatory Evidence Requirement.

### **Is one hour long enough to assess Outcome 1?**

There is no recommended time limit on a reading assessment but for practical reasons most centres allow learners at least three hours for a supervised test.

### **Does the response to Outcome 1 have to be in writing?**

No. A written response provides an opportunity to practise written communication skills and can help to develop them. It also makes it easier if minor additions have to be made. Some learners may prefer to answer orally, for example in an interview or presentation, but if this approach is used the responses must be recorded and/or written out by the tutor.

## ***Outcome 2 (Writing)***

### **What exactly is meant by 'complex business documents'? (Business Units)**

Reports, proposals, specifications, e-mails, letters and records of discussions/minutes are some commonly used types of writing. Formats and styles should reflect what is acceptable in the vocational area.

**Do I have to follow the report format in the Assessment Support Pack?**

Not necessarily. If the centre has a preferred style for written reports or papers, learners can be given the outline to follow. Learners should be given complete details of the structure and style expected and may be provided with templates or models to follow.

**What if a report submitted by the learner is too brief?**

If the Unit specification requires evidence in the form of one report the tutor could indicate areas that need to be further developed. If a portfolio of related written documents can be submitted as evidence such texts as meetings papers, log entries or another short report could be added. Undertaking similar formative work can help ensure that learners are sufficiently ready for summative assessment.

***Outcome 3 — Talking and listening***

**If someone is too nervous or shy to speak but co-operates with others and shows interest and attention in a discussion, can they pass? After all, not everyone speaks in a workplace meeting.**

Learners cannot pass unless they are able to meet all the Evidence Requirements listed in the Unit specification. A situation such as that described in the question would indicate that more formative work is needed. The learner would need to practise further and be re-assessed, possibly in a different group and context.

**Can the class group work together to submit a single set of minutes/record of discussion?**

No. Each person must write an individual record in order to demonstrate the knowledge and skills in the Evidence Requirements. An audio recording of a meeting for the class to refer to can be a particularly helpful support in making an accurate record.