

Guide to Internal Moderation for SQA Centres

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About this guide

This guide provides an update on internal moderation policy and practice*. It is primarily intended for those staff in centres who are responsible for:

- ◆ managing the assessment process
- ◆ internally moderating internal assessment
- ◆ assessing SQA qualifications

By reading this guide, everyone involved in internally assessing SQA qualifications should be aware of the contribution they make to the internal quality assurance of SQA qualifications.

We welcome your feedback on the usefulness of this guide and have included a feedback form.

*For Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), we use the term 'internal verification' and 'internal verifier'. These terms have the same meaning as 'internal moderation' and 'internal moderator' respectively.

Part A: Assessment and Moderation

1 Principles of Assessment

SQA defines assessment as *measuring evidence of candidate's attainment of knowledge and skills against qualification standards*. There are two modes of assessment — internal and external. Internal assessment is where centres apply assessment instruments and make assessment decisions about candidate evidence. Centres may also devise the assessments but this does not apply equally across all SQA qualifications. External assessment is where the awarding body takes on these duties and centres administer assessment activities on its behalf.

In common with all awarding bodies, we strive to ensure that assessment of our qualifications is *valid, reliable* and *practicable*. We also aim to make it flexible and cost-effective.

Validity

Each assessment should be designed so that it provides candidates with the opportunity to produce evidence to show they have the knowledge and skills they need to meet the requirements of the qualification.

An assessment is valid when it:

- ◆ is appropriate to purpose (eg a practical assessment should be used to assess practical skills)
- ◆ allows the production of the evidence of candidates' performance which can be measured against standards defined in the qualification
- ◆ allows candidates to produce sufficient evidence of all the skills and knowledge required to satisfy standards in the qualification
- ◆ facilitates the making of reliable assessment decisions by all assessors for all candidates
- ◆ is accessible to all candidates who are potentially able to achieve it

Reliability

To be reliable, assessment decisions on candidates' performance must be consistent between all assessors and for all candidates undertaking the same assessment task. In any assessment system, procedures have to be put in place to ensure this.

Assessment decisions are reliable when they are based on evidence that is:

- ◆ generated by valid assessments
- ◆ generated under consistently-applied conditions of assessment (eg open-book, supervised or invigilated)
- ◆ the authenticated work of the candidates being assessed

and when they are:

- ◆ taken on the basis of clearly-defined performance and/or grade-related criteria
- ◆ consistent across the range of assessors applying the assessment in different situations and contexts, and with different candidates
- ◆ consistent over time

Practicability

For assessments to be practicable (ie capable of being carried out both efficiently and cost-effectively) there has to be adequate resources and time. Your assessment system should have the flexibility to meet the needs of all candidates.

Examples of issues associated with practicability are:

- ◆ in the context of oral assessments or interviews, balancing the need for assessment reliability with considerations of staff and candidate time and potential stress
- ◆ in the context of assessing practical skills, bearing in mind any resource implications

2 Assessing SQA Qualifications (overview)

In this section, we briefly outline how assessment is carried out across our three main qualification families:

- ◆ National Qualifications (NQs)
- ◆ Higher National Qualifications (HNQs)
- ◆ Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)

National Qualifications

National Courses

National Courses at all levels except Access have an internal and external assessment component — this could be question-paper based or project-based. The external assessment component may include an internally-assessed part, such as a piece of Course-work or a practical activity. SQA sets external assessments and marks all candidate evidence arising from them. For some project-based National Courses, candidate evidence is internally assessed subject to external moderation.

At Access level, all National Courses are internally assessed.

National Units

Centres assess National Units by:

- ◆ Using an appropriate assessment instrument. This could be:
 - a version available from SQA’s National Assessment Bank
 - a modified version of the National Assessment Bank assessment, which may be sent to SQA for prior moderation. Where adjustments are minor, centres can opt to submit assessment instruments to internal moderation only without seeking prior moderation from SQA
 - devised locally within a centre or consortium of centres and, most likely, sent to SQA for prior moderation
- ◆ Applying the assessment instrument
- ◆ Making assessment decisions

Where there are internally-assessed parts to the externally-assessed components for National Qualifications, these are marked by centres and results sent to SQA. These internally assessed components are also subject to external moderation.

Higher National Qualifications

Currently, to achieve an HNC, candidates have to achieve a minimum of 12 Unit credits, and for an HND candidates are required to achieve a minimum of 30 Unit credits.

However, HNQs have recently been the subject of a major review, and new design rules for Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) have now been agreed by all stakeholders. Full implementation of the new design rules will begin in Spring 2003. Further information on the new design rules for HNQs is provided as an appendix.

Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)

SVQ Units are internally assessed and externally verified — this is the term used for ‘moderated’ in SVQs, for consistency across the UK. Centres are required to assess candidates against national occupational standards, as defined in mandatory and optional Units.

By April 2002, all National Training Organisations* (NTOs — the bodies responsible for the national occupational standards for each sector) should have begun to develop assessment strategies for all the SVQs in their sector. A fair number of SVQs already have an assessment strategy in place. An assessment strategy is the set of recommendations and specifications made by the NTO about the approach to the assessment arrangements to meet the requirements set down in the regulatory criteria. There are four components to an assessment strategy:

1. external quality control methods
2. details of those aspects of the standards which must be assessed through performance in the workplace
3. use of simulation and the nature of a realistic working environment
4. occupational expertise of assessors and verifiers

The important criterion is that the assessment strategy is appropriate to each and all of the SVQs to which it applies.

*The role (and designation) of NTOs is currently under review.

3 Principles of Moderation

Any national system of assessment must be effectively quality assured to ensure that consistent and accurate standards are being applied and maintained. Internal assessment is quality assured by means of a process called Assessment Moderation. It focuses on:

- ◆ the validity of assessment instruments
- ◆ the reliability of assessment decisions
- ◆ the practicability of applying assessment instruments
- ◆ the consistency of the quality of assessment practices within centres over time

There are two parts to assessment moderation: internal moderation and external moderation.

Internal moderation is managed by the centre. SQA manages external moderation. For more information see *External Assessment Moderation in National Qualifications and Higher National Qualifications: a guide for centres (AA0892/2, December 2001)*.

Internal moderation

Internal moderation is designed to ensure that staff in centres are making consistent and accurate assessment decisions in accordance with the assessment criteria defined in SQA's qualifications. Our quality assurance criteria — see *Quality Assurance Principles, Elements and Criteria (A0798, December 1998)* — clearly outline the partnership arrangements between SQA and centres, and set out the standard to which internal moderation must conform.

We will assume that where candidates are entered for a qualification, consistent and accurate standards of assessment are being applied. Unless our system of external moderation reveals a significant problem or inconsistencies with candidates' results, we assume that internal moderation is being carried out effectively in centres. For SVQs, however, External Verifiers are expected to be more proactive.

Where centre-wide difficulties emerge, SQA systems verifiers or auditors will investigate the matter, and centres are expected to produce evidence that internal assessments have been subject to internal moderation.

4 Internal moderation of assessment

Internal moderation should provide *checks* and *support* for the three key stages of assessment:

- ◆ selecting and/or devising and/or modifying assessments (including marking schemes)
- ◆ applying assessments
- ◆ making assessment decisions

The way that your centre organises this layer of internal quality assurance will reflect *local* needs, though it will be in line with *national* criteria and guidelines.

Your system should include:

- ◆ the sampling of assessment evidence
- ◆ continuous review of assessment practices
- ◆ continuous review of internal moderation

Practical examples of applying internal moderation processes are provided in section B of this guide.

You can be assured that internal moderation processes are working effectively in your centre when staff responsible for the key stages of assessment are qualified, experienced, and able to call on the support of colleagues in an organised and systematic way. All internal assessment materials should be subject to centre-wide scrutiny, expertise and endorsement.

While, in most contexts, internal moderation relates to internal assessment decisions, it is equally important when applied to candidate evidence which has been produced in the centre for external assessment (for example, folios).

The desired output of your internal moderation processes should be that all assessors are assessing to national standards. Following the steps we have outlined below (numbered 1–8) should help ensure that you are achieving this.

1 Assessment specification: content and standards

You should become familiar with the documents which set out the requirements for the evidence which your candidates must be able to generate (the documents can specify how much evidence must be produced, and in what contexts it must be produced). This information can be found in, for example, National Course Arrangement documents, and the evidence requirements section of Unit specifications (the format may differ for some older Units). All of this information is available from SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk

2 Selecting an instrument of assessment and devising the assessment task

NAB instruments for National Qualifications have already been moderated, and we don't need to moderate minor amendments to them.

Where your centre is devising assessments, you should:

- ◆ Be clear who has overall responsibility for the assessment of a particular qualification within the centre (ie who has responsibility for internally moderating the subject/occupational area).
- ◆ Check the qualification standards carefully to see what type of assessment instrument is expected or suggested, eg a case study, a practical assignment. The assessment instrument should be fit for purpose.
- ◆ Start devising assessments and assessment (marking) schemes early enough to allow time for them to be internally moderated (ie subject to a centre-wide process of scrutiny and endorsement).
- ◆ Ensure that all Outcomes are covered (ie the assessment is valid) to the appropriate level of demand (as described by performance criteria).
- ◆ Where possible, combine the assessment of Outcomes by grouping related tasks to a particular problem solving situation or scenario (see the next sub-section 'Integrated assessment').
- ◆ Work together as a team which involves all those assessing the qualification. All candidates taking the qualification should be assessed by an internally-moderated assessment instrument.

Instruments of assessment must:

- ◆ be fit for purpose (eg where a practical skill needs to be demonstrated, you should choose a practical assessment)
- ◆ allow candidates to produce enough evidence of the skills and knowledge specified in the qualification and ensure adequate coverage of all the Outcomes
- ◆ generate evidence which can be measured against the standards specified in the qualification
- ◆ help all assessors of all candidates to make reliable assessment decisions where the same assessment task has been applied

Note: where a choice of assessment instruments is offered to candidates, you must take care to ensure that the options are of equal demand — otherwise a candidate's result could depend on which option was chosen.

3 The responses or solutions expected

It is important to think about what you will accept as evidence and how this will be marked or measured. Ideally, assessment schemes ('marking instructions') should be devised at the same time as the assessment — this will ensure they complement each other. For example, for a practical skills test, you should

consider devising an observation checklist defining the skills and activities you expect to see during assessment.

For a written test, assessment schemes must cover all (or an example of) possible valid responses and how they will be marked. You should bear in mind that your notional pass score (or ‘cut-off’ score) may need to be adjusted in the light of candidate evidence — sometimes a test can turn out to be easier or more demanding than you intended.

You must ensure that you anticipate all the acceptable responses or categories of response to your questions. In other words, where you set an open question, make sure that your solution identifies all the acceptable responses from your candidates. For a short-answer question, there may only be one correct answer. Ensuring that your marking instructions match your questions in this way is an important reason why your assessment scheme should be tried out before being applied to all candidates.

It is good practice to avoid setting questions with two related parts where the correct answer in the second part depends on having the correct answer to the first. However, if this is unavoidable, for example in a subject like Mathematics, your assessment scheme should ensure that you do not apply a double penalty for a mistake in the initial part of the question. In other words, if the two parts of a question are related, the candidate may be required to carry forward an answer from the first part of the question and apply it to the second. If the first answer is wrong, assessors should not apply a double penalty where the candidate has been shown to carry out all the steps correctly in the second.

4 Vetting the assessment and associated assessment scheme

While the task of writing assessment specifications may have been delegated to one member of staff, it is important that others delivering the Unit have a chance to vet the assessments and assessment schemes before they are finalised. This will help to ensure that they are fit for purpose, valid and practicable. Where this vetting results in a change to part of the assessment, care must be taken to make a corresponding change in the assessment scheme. It is important that marks allocated to tasks reflect both the importance of the knowledge or skills tested and the relative ‘size’ of the task in the overall assessment instrument.

The usual way of ensuring that assessments are appropriate is to consult with a more senior member of staff who has responsibility in that subject area. Colleges have established processes where members of staff are assigned internal moderation duties for particular moderation groups. All centre-devised internal assessments are subject to internal moderation, and it is the responsibility of the internal moderator to oversee the assessments in the moderation group. This involves confirming that the assessments are of a suitable standard and apply to current Unit descriptors for the qualifications being offered.

Note: even after an assessment has been applied, you may have to make further adjustments. For example, after a few candidates have been assessed for process

or practical skills, the observation checklist might need to be amended. For a written test, where a group of candidates are completing an assessment at the same time, you may have to make changes to the marking instructions to include further valid answers.

These changes can often be made informally, but it is essential to make sure any changes are agreed and communicated to all assessors.

5 Assessing candidate evidence

You should now have a valid and practicable assessment. However, valid assessments can be used inappropriately, and you need to be aware of how the reliability of your assessors can have a bearing on the fair and consistent assessment of your candidates. Assessment decisions are reliable when:

- ◆ they are based on evidence produced by valid assessment instruments
- ◆ they are based on evidence produced under assessment conditions which have been applied consistently
- ◆ a range of assessors have reached consistently accurate decisions applying the assessment in different situations, in different contexts, and with different candidates
- ◆ they are consistent over time (eg irrespective of whether they were assessed/marked early in marking period or later)

Conditions for assessment

When applying an assessment, you should be aware that there are certain conditions which need to be created at the time in order for the assessment to be valid and reliable. There are many different types of assessment conditions, but what they all have in common is that they must be applied consistently and effectively to all candidates within centres if national standards are to be maintained. Arrangements documents and Unit specifications are frequently prescriptive on such conditions.

For example, in a written test, you should ensure that candidates are:

- ◆ given a quiet environment in which to complete the assessment
- ◆ subject to the same time restrictions for the test unless there are arrangements for special assessment requirements
- ◆ subject to invigilation to ensure silence and non-collaboration
- ◆ aware of when they are able to consult text books, dictionaries or use calculators

Decisions about interpreting assessment conditions — eg what we mean by ‘open’ and ‘closed book’ assessments — should be taken on a centre-wide basis and not left to individual assessors to decide.

In assessments involving observation of practical skills, you should ensure that:

- ◆ candidates know they are being assessed
- ◆ candidates know what skills or activities you expect them to demonstrate, and
- ◆ your observation, as an assessor or internal moderator, is as unobtrusive as possible

For assessments, such as projects, where candidates may be asked to complete practical assignments, case studies or portfolios, you should ensure they are aware of:

- ◆ how much they can confer amongst themselves
- ◆ the level of support you will offer them, and
- ◆ to what extent they are able to consult text books, dictionaries or use personal computers

Authentication

Where an assessor has not had the opportunity to observe candidates carrying out activities or producing evidence at first hand, you need to confirm that your candidates' evidence was produced by the candidate. This process is referred to as 'authentication'.

There are several ways of carrying out authentication and you should follow assessment guidelines which are provided. For projects for National Courses, for example, you should follow the procedures stipulated in Arrangements documents.

Authentication can be achieved by one or more of these methods:

- ◆ oral questioning
- ◆ use of personal logs
- ◆ personal statements produced by your candidates
- ◆ peer reports
- ◆ witness testimony
- ◆ write-ups under supervised conditions
- ◆ countersigning of work by candidates, and/or by lecturer/assessor
- ◆ electronic tools

6 Checking the consistency of assessment decisions

How to avoid assessor bias

The reliability of assessment can be enhanced by being aware of how assessment decisions could be biased by factors which should have no bearing on the assessment process. These factors may include an assessor's subconscious personal prejudices. For example, some assessors may find females easier to teach or neater in their work, and may therefore assess their evidence more generously.

For SVQs, appearance or dress sense should not be allowed to influence the assessor's decision unless these are of significance in the qualification — where a dress code is to be taken into consideration, this will be explicitly stated in the standards.

Another factor which could affect an assessor's judgement is the 'halo and horns' effect. The halo effect may emerge when good performance in the past leads the assessor to assume the candidate is performing well at present. The opposite of this is the horns effect where, no matter how well a candidate is performing, poor performance in the past continues to influence assessment decisions now.

Another way of ensuring that assessment decisions are objective and consistent, and based only on the criteria laid down in the national standards, is separating the role of adviser/coach/mentor from the role of assessor — a member of staff other than the mentor or adviser (where a mentor or adviser is being used) makes assessment decisions about the candidate's evidence. Note, however, that separating the roles could have resource implications for centres where there may be few staff. There is no formal need to have a mentor, nor is there a need for this person to be qualified — assessment decisions can only be made by the qualified assessor.

Further methods for enhancing objectivity and consistency:

- ◆ well written national standards with assessment instructions
- ◆ training for assessors
- ◆ standardisation of assessment decisions

Standardisation of assessment decisions is an important part of ensuring assessor reliability. The internal moderation process should ensure that staff carry out checks on the on-going application of standards. This will establish that part-way through assessing candidate evidence, the assessment decisions have not become too harsh or more lenient. Standardisation methods will depend on the nature of evidence. There are a number of techniques:

- ◆ If the candidate evidence consists of scripts from written tests, you should divide up the evidence so that assessors assess the same section across all candidates. This allows each assessor a better chance to internalise and apply associated assessment schemes. It also balances those assessors who might be a little hard or a little lenient in their assessment, and helps to eliminate halo and horns effects. You should pay particular attention to borderline decisions.
- ◆ If using coursework, folios, reports or case studies, you should consider setting up agreement trials based on the assessment scheme. In a small centre, this can be done informally by sharing samples of candidates' work, discussing it and reaching a consensus. In larger centres with many staff, this will require a more formal system of agreement under the direction of the internal moderator. By discussing discrepancies and coming to a shared understanding based on the assessment criteria, a standard will be applied which is accurate, consistent and centre-wide.

- ◆ For practical or process skills, you will also need a form of agreement trial, perhaps involving pairs of assessors. This model is most effective if an internal moderator assesses a sample of candidates alongside the assessor. Both should initially make independent judgements, and then discuss discrepancies and reach consensus.

For smaller centres, it may be necessary to work with another centre. The outcome of this stage of the process of internal moderation is a finalised assessment decision for each candidate.

Presenting and recording evidence

Here are a few tips for presenting and recording evidence and internal assessment decisions you may want to consider:

- ◆ Consistency in the approach to presenting evidence and recording assessment decisions helps to clarify what is expected of candidates and other assessors involved in the assessment process. For example, you may want to consider producing some standard forms for recording questions (and candidates' responses). These can help to ensure that the national standard is maintained for those candidates doing the same qualification.
- ◆ Using an evidence index at the front of large pieces of documented evidence, eg a folio with space to number, describe, and indicate where the evidence can be found, helps all those involved in the assessment process, including internal moderators, to keep track of the evidence.
- ◆ Encouraging the candidate in the process of collecting and presenting the evidence (where appropriate) helps them to become more familiar with the standards.
- ◆ cross-referencing evidence back to the national standards as required (a requirement of SVQs). This is to ensure that all parts of the standards have been assessed.

7 Recording assessment decisions

Once your assessors have carried out the assessments and have sufficient, relevant, and authenticated evidence showing that your candidates have met the standards, they are in a position to make and record the final assessment decision. You may decide in reviewing the evidence, however, that there is some part of the evidence which requires re-assessment.

Re-assessment

Where candidates have been unsuccessful in demonstrating their attainment of skills and knowledge or competence, they can be re-assessed.

Whether candidates need to re-take the whole assessment or only part will depend on:

- ◆ the assessment instrument that has been used
- ◆ the purpose of the assessment

For example, in demonstrating a practical skill or in completing a practical assignment, it may not be possible to re-assess only those parts of the performance in which the candidate failed to demonstrate competence. Otherwise you would fragment the assessment process and be unable to make a judgement about the candidate's performance in the Outcome or Unit as a whole.

In assessments which test knowledge and understanding and other cognitive skills, it would be bad practice to give candidates the same assessments repeatedly, and to ask them identical questions — they would be able to rehearse the expected answers without knowing why they were acceptable. In these situations, you will need to have alternative assessments available and ensure that other candidates have also not undertaken the assessment recently.

In all cases of re-assessment, the assessment must be of equal demand to the original assessment.

For written tests designed to identify the candidate's knowledge at a given point in time or as a single entity, it may also be necessary to reassess the whole Unit since it may not be possible to extract some of the items for re-assessment.

Where it is possible to isolate an Outcome which has not been achieved, it should be possible to re-assess just that Outcome. Where parts of several Outcomes are involved, it would be more straightforward to present the candidate with a complete new assessment.

Where the evidence is generated over a period of time, such as in a long-term project, it may be possible to re-do parts of an assessment. It may, for instance, be feasible for the candidate to resubmit the part of the project where there is a problem and for this then to be incorporated into the final submission.

However, where a project has been designed as an integrated assessment, the candidate may be required to undertake the whole assessment again to show ability to complete the project as a single complex task. In such cases, the candidate may have to work to a different project specification.

8 Forwarding results to SQA, and maintaining assessment records

All qualifications which are assessed wholly or in part by internal assessment are subject to external moderation. As your candidates complete their qualifications, we will carry out external moderation in the form of visits to your centre or by asking you to send material to SQA. You should familiarise yourself with SQA's *External Moderation in National Qualifications and Higher National*

Qualifications: a guide for centres (AA0892/2, December 2001) to find out what candidate evidence and assessment records should be made available for external moderation.

Internal moderation processes should ensure that the candidate evidence, assessment materials and records are maintained and/or dispatched to SQA in line with external moderation requirements.

The SQA publications *Registrations, Entries and Results: a guide for secondary schools* (AA1239, September 2001), *Registrations, Entries and Results: a guide for colleges* (AA1417, September 2001) and *Registrations, Entries and Results: a guide for employers and training providers* (AA1418a, September 2001) explain how you should inform us of your candidate achievements and the forms you should use to forward your candidates' results.

Part B: Centre Case Studies

About these case studies

This part of the guide provides real life scenarios of the way three centres are putting internal moderation into practice. We have selected one centre from each of the following education and training sectors:

- ◆ school
- ◆ further education
- ◆ employment and private training provider

Features of each which may affect the organisation of internal moderation include:

Schools

- ◆ mainly come under the auspices of Local Authorities
- ◆ usually single-site or in close-proximity sites
- ◆ usually full-time mode of attendance
- ◆ experience of external assessment, varying degrees of experience of internal assessment
- ◆ experience of working in subject departments
- ◆ mainly deliver National Qualifications

Colleges of Further Education

- ◆ independent institutions
- ◆ often split-site or multi-site
- ◆ often with various modes of attendance — part-time, open, distance, flexible etc
- ◆ experience of internal assessment, varying degrees of experience of external assessment
- ◆ often varying organisational structures
- ◆ offering a wide range of qualifications from all three qualification blocks

Employer/Private Training Provider

- ◆ wide variety of organisations
- ◆ wide variety of locations
- ◆ varying modes of delivery
- ◆ long experience of internal assessment, less so external assessment
- ◆ often dynamic organisational structures
- ◆ mostly involved with delivering work-based training (SVQs)

The three centres providing scenarios are:

1 Holyrood Secondary School, Glasgow

The case study centres on internal moderation processes for second year (S2) French. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance given by an Assistant Head Teacher (representing Senior Management), the Principal Teacher of Modern Languages, and the Assistant Principal Teacher of Modern Languages who undertakes the role of internal moderator for S2 French.

2 Reid Kerr College, Paisley, Renfrewshire

The case study provides a brief overview of the internal moderation system which operates in the college and focuses on the college's approach to sampling assessment evidence. This is particularly relevant given the large number of assessors and candidates. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance given by Senior Management, Head of Quality and the Qualifications Manager who are responsible for developing and implementing the internal moderation system within the college.

3 Grampian Primary Care NHS Trust

The case study provides a brief overview of the internal moderation system which operates within the Trust and focuses on their Learning and Development team's approach to managing assessment across a large number of sites. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance given by Senior Management and the SVQ Co-ordinator who oversees the internal moderation process.

Case Study 1: Holyrood Secondary School

Purpose

This case study is designed to:

- ◆ highlight examples of good practice relating to internally moderating internal assessment within the study of Modern Languages.
- ◆ explore some of the issues affecting the internal moderation of assessment within a large school

Method

We have based the study on:

- ◆ the subject area of French (because of its integral internal assessment component)
- ◆ this school to illustrate ways in which internal moderation systems operate where there is a large number of pupils
- ◆ second year pupils because all of the assessment at this stage is internal

The school

Holyrood Secondary school is a large, six-year comprehensive school situated in the south side of Glasgow with a school roll of approximately 2,300 students. The central mission of the school is to provide teaching and learning of the highest quality and to maximise development of each student.

The department

There are fifteen teachers in the Modern Languages department, three of whom are members of the school's Senior Management Team. The department is managed by the Principal Teacher Modern Languages and three Assistant Principal Teachers. The department offers Courses in French, Spanish, Italian and German.

Assessment

Assessment has become more and more diagnostic and is a continuous process. In the first two years of school, formal examinations have largely given way to more informal classroom tests, while the teacher is constantly assessing learning through oral and written work. This approach continues throughout third year, supplemented by short, more formal examinations towards the end of the year. Assessment for fourth, fifth and sixth years is in line with requirements of the National Courses which pupils are undertaking, supplemented by prelim examinations.

The assessment process for S2 French

The principle which underpins the department's approach to assessment is that pupils should be provided with sufficient assessment opportunities to facilitate accurate and consistent assessment decisions. This is in keeping with the whole school policy. The department seeks to ensure that assessment decisions are based on evidence arising from more than one test. The department is looking to identify emerging trends in candidate performance rather than place too much importance on one-off assessment events.

The rationale for the system of assessment which is used with S2 pupils is that it provides:

- ◆ regular feedback to teachers on how pupils are progressing within the subject area
- ◆ regular feedback to pupils
- ◆ accurate information for parents
- ◆ a sound basis for organising third year classes in French
- ◆ several opportunities for pupils to show attainment of knowledge and skills

The assessment process is organised as follows:

- ◆ second year pupils are divided into 16 sections
- ◆ one of the Assistant Principal teachers is the internal moderator for S2 French and oversees all assessment material and associated marking schemes.
- ◆ each teacher is given a syllabus for S2 French based on the content of the Course, ie there are agreed teaching, learning and assessment materials which apply to all sections
- ◆ common rules for aggregating marks for candidate performance in parts of the Course apply
- ◆ common recording of assessment decisions takes place

Internal moderation in the Modern Languages department

All moderation processes for internal assessments should address the following stages of assessment:

Before the assessment event

The department has given a great deal of thought to:

- ◆ time-tabling assessment activities
- ◆ allowing sufficient assessment opportunities and feeding back results to parents
- ◆ integrating assessment activities into the Course
- ◆ making the time-table known to individual members of staff and pupils

- ◆ ensuring that assessment materials, marking schemes and marks records are developed according to centre-wide criteria
- ◆ making these available to all staff who require them.
- ◆ practical ways of building up accurate pupil profiles in the subject (pupils are issued an assessment exercise book so that there is a record of progress throughout the year)

During the assessment event

The process of applying the assessment instruments is largely devolved to the individual teachers themselves. However support is given to new and inexperienced teachers by the internal moderator. This could involve cross marking for example, where the internal moderator assesses the same evidence independently and then compares assessment decisions.

After the assessment event

To help ensure that internal standardisation of assessment decisions is working effectively:

- ◆ Every teacher submits a sample of the candidates' writing or reading evidence that they have marked to the internal moderator so that she can check that all teachers are assessing to an agreed standard.
- ◆ The department has produced a series of recorded pupil evidence — teachers are able to listen to a sample of pupil speaking performances in the Foreign Language and agree levels of attainment and mark allocation.
- ◆ The department provides internal moderation training based on consensus moderation.

Case Study 2: Reid Kerr College

Purpose

This case study is designed to:

- ◆ identify issues relating to designing and implementing an internal moderation system within a large college
- ◆ focus on methods used by the college to sample assessment evidence, particularly relevant where there is a large number of assessors and sites.

Method

We have based the study on:

- ◆ an overview of the process to illustrate priorities for a large FE college where there are several modes of delivery (eg open and distance learning, outreach) and where there is a large number of sites
- ◆ this college, because it has recently undergone a programme of staff development relating to changes in the internal moderation system
- ◆ sampling assessment evidence — because this is an area largely devolved to centres themselves

The College

Reid Kerr College is a large community college, in Paisley in Renfrewshire. The college provides learning programmes for 16,000 students who can attend on a full-time, part-time or flexible learning basis. The central mission of Reid Kerr is to develop people and improve their life opportunities.

Qualifications Portfolio

The college offers:

- ◆ Higher National Qualifications (HNQs)
- ◆ National Qualifications (NQs)
- ◆ recognised groupings of National Units
- ◆ Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)
- ◆ General Scottish Vocational Qualifications (GSVQs)

in the following subject/occupational areas:

- ◆ Built Environment
- ◆ Creative Art and Design
- ◆ Science, Sport, Health and Care

- ◆ Business and Management
- ◆ Engineering
- ◆ Computing
- ◆ Hospitality, Hairdressing and Beauty
- ◆ Communication, Humanities and Languages
- ◆ Student Services

Assessment

A good deal of the assessment which is carried out is internal: the college is responsible for developing and marking assessments and transferring results information to SQA. This is quality assured by the college through its internal moderation processes and procedures, and by SQA through its processes of external moderation, system verification and quality auditing.

Developing the system

The internal moderation system has been subject to recent development and fine-tuning. Some of the operational issues facing senior management in the college when they were devising an effective system of internal moderation, can be summarised under the following headings:

Logistics

the number of:

- ◆ departments within the college, some of which are wide-spread
- ◆ outreach centres
- ◆ internal moderators, assessors, and candidates

Data management

- ◆ the number of subject/occupational areas covered
- ◆ the number of Moderation Groups
- ◆ availability of software to support effective internal moderation
- ◆ data transfer to SQA

Assessment

- ◆ national developments in assessment policy and practice
- ◆ the various modes of learning, namely flexible learning, open and distance learning etc
- ◆ conditions of assessment and authentication of candidate evidence
- ◆ large number of internally assessed qualifications

Qualifications Portfolio

- ◆ national developments in qualifications
- ◆ changes to qualification frameworks and Unit specifications

Communication/training*

- ◆ communicating the internal moderation process to all staff
- ◆ engaging assessors and internal moderators in the process
- ◆ providing adequate training and support for assessing and moderating staff

* For the purposes of this case study we provide further information on the way in which Reid Kerr College has tackled this operational issue (see next page).

Key features of the system

The internal moderation process is designed to operate on a two year cycle. In relation to internal moderation processes, the college has defined:

- ◆ purpose
- ◆ responsibilities for:
 - Assessors
 - Internal Moderators
 - Moderation Group Leaders
 - Qualifications Manager
- ◆ college assessment activity in response to SQA's quality element criteria — see our publication *Quality Assurance Principles, Elements and Criteria* (A0798, December 1998) for details
- ◆ documentation
- ◆ sampling requirements (see next page)

In relation to external moderation processes of SQA qualifications, the college has defined:

- ◆ purpose
- ◆ Moderation types
 - central moderation
 - postal moderation
 - visiting moderation
 - retrospective moderation
- ◆ timing of external moderation
- ◆ documentary evidence required
- ◆ retention of evidence
- ◆ candidate evidence sampling

Communicating internal moderation processes to staff

Currently in the college there are 400 assessors and 84 internal moderators. Effective communication of new processes is vital to the success of the system. The college approaches this task in the following ways:

- ◆ by issuing an internal moderation procedures handbook to all staff outlining
 - how the system works
 - what their contribution is
 - the documentation to be used
- ◆ by providing all internal moderators with staff development at the beginning of the session, and as part of a wider staff development programme

Training/supporting assessors and internal moderators

- ◆ The college selection and recruitment programme ensures that lecturers are selected and recruited on the basis of their subject/occupational and assessment expertise.
- ◆ The college's staff development programme encompasses assessment and internal moderation duties.
- ◆ Where an assessor is new to the system, candidate evidence is sampled a minimum of once per occurrence for each Unit for the first academic session.
- ◆ Where an assessor is inexperienced in the system, candidate evidence is sampled a minimum of once for the second academic session in post.

The approach to sampling candidate evidence

This is an outline of the way that Reid Kerr College approaches sampling candidate evidence (Higher National and National Qualifications blocks):

The sample chosen must be comprehensive enough to give confidence in the conclusions drawn, by ensuring that:

- ◆ new/revised Units must be sampled once per occurrence during the first teaching block of delivery
- ◆ other Units should be sampled on a two year cycle
- ◆ new Assessors' judgements must be sampled a minimum of once per occurrence for each Unit for the first academic session
- ◆ inexperienced Assessor judgements should be sampled a minimum of once during the second academic session
- ◆ all other Assessor judgements should be sampled over a two year cycle
- ◆ all locations should be included in a sample over a two year cycle

- ◆ Outcomes should be sampled by selecting a variety OR the same Outcome for candidates as considered appropriate
- ◆ all modes of delivery should be sampled over a two year cycle
- ◆ details of sampling activity should be recorded on the class register

Note: Sampling and scrutinising of assessment evidence should be carried out during, not at the end of, Unit delivery. This allows time for remediation.(External moderation focuses wherever possible on completed candidate evidence.)

Sample size

For each class group sampled, the number of candidates sampled by this college is normally:

Number of candidates in the class group	Sample size
5 to 6	3
7 to 12	4
13 to 19	5
20 to 30	6

Note: Sample Size = the square root of the number of candidates plus one. Thus for 16 candidates, the sample size is 5. For 30 candidates, the sample size is 6 etc.

Case Study 3: Grampian Primary Care NHS Trust

Purpose

This case study is designed to:

- ◆ identify issues relating to designing and implementing an internal moderation system in a large organisation
- ◆ focus on methods used by the Trust's Learning and Development Team to co-ordinate SVQ assessment and internal moderation activity for assessors and verifiers based in sites spread throughout Grampian region.

Method

We have based the study on:

- ◆ this employer because of its workbased qualification portfolio and its multi-site structure
- ◆ the way that the Trust's Learning and Development Team maintains effective communication with its assessors and internal verifiers who are dispersed across a wide area.

The organisation

Grampian Primary Care NHS Trust covers the Grampian Region, with its headquarters in Aberdeen employing approximately 6,000 members of staff. The Trust consists of eight Local Health Care Co-operatives (LHCCs), Grampian Mental Health Services, and Services in Transition, which covers learning disabilities and care of the elderly. The services provided are a mixture of both hospital and community based staff. The Trust has achieved the Investors in People award (IIP); it promotes and encourages the learning culture and supports planned investment in learning for the benefit of patients.

Assessment

All assessments are carried out internally, in the workplace. Assessors are staff working alongside the candidate regularly. This helps minimise disruption to normal working activity and to ensure the validity and currency of evidence. It also helps maintain patient confidentiality. In some cases where candidates rotate between days and nights, they have two assessors to enable continued support while working towards achieving their award. In other areas of the Trust, eg Central Stores, there is a supervisor for each of the three parts of the department. In this situation, the candidates are assessed by whichever supervisor is responsible for the area the assessment of the task is appropriate to. This method allows assessors to become familiar with assessing common Units within their working area.

Qualifications Portfolio

The Trust is an SQA Approved Centre and is approved to offer the following SVQs:

- ◆ Care Levels 2 and 3
- ◆ Administration Levels 2 and 3
- ◆ Early Years and Education Levels 2 and 3
- ◆ D32, D33, D34
- ◆ Management Levels 3 and 4
- ◆ Reception Level 2
- ◆ Distribution, Warehousing and Operations Level 2
- ◆ Catering & Hospitality Levels 1, 2 and 3

The Team

In the Trust's Learning & Development Team there is an SVQ Co-ordinator to support and co-ordinate all SVQ activity and overall quality assurance. The Trust is currently supporting 207 SVQ candidates.

Internal Verification Process for Care Qualifications

There is an Internal Verifier for the Care award in each LHCC. Internal Verifiers are also in place for Mental Health and Services in Transition. Each Internal Verifier supports the assessors within their area by holding assessors' meetings (minimum of four per year) in a central point within their area. The purpose of these meetings is to allow:

- ◆ portfolios to be passed between assessor and verifier safely
- ◆ information relating to the award to be passed to all assessors
- ◆ queries/problems to be addressed and resolved

This forum promotes a network of assessors within the area, which gives additional support and helps ensure standardisation of assessment decisions and practices.

The Internal Verifiers for the Care awards meet once every two months. This provides a forum to:

- ◆ cross verify portfolios from one Internal Verifier to another to ensure standardisation across the centre
- ◆ discuss issues relating to Care
- ◆ discuss improvements to the current system
- ◆ support/mentor/coach verifiers undertaking their D34 qualification

These meetings last approximately two hours and are held at a central point in the Region to facilitate staff travel.

A second Internal Verifiers' meeting is held on alternate months for Internal Verifiers across all awards. This is the centre's last layer of quality assurance. This meeting:

- ◆ allows for cross verification of awards
- ◆ facilitates standardisation of assessment decisions
- ◆ provides support to verifiers who have sole responsibility for an award area
- ◆ allows for information sharing
- ◆ promotes good practice from one award to another
- ◆ provides a forum for general SVQ discussion and support

There are, of Course, resource implications for the Trust in holding this series of meetings. Possible disadvantages of using this method to help ensure quality assurance are:

- ◆ the amount of time taken to travel to and attend meetings
- ◆ not everyone is able to attend
- ◆ meetings may focus on information-giving, and not provide opportunities for group participation and interaction

The Trust's Learning & Development Team has tried to overcome these issues by:

- ◆ holding meetings at a central point in the region
- ◆ holding meetings every alternate month
- ◆ circulating minutes to all members to keep them informed if they are unable to attend
- ◆ having agendas for each meeting and sending information via a circulation memo to all verifiers

The advantages of this system are:

- ◆ allowing time at the meeting for cross verification which ensures standardisation across the centre
- ◆ everyone is sharing good practice within and across awards
- ◆ issues which are common to all areas can be discussed in a central forum at the Internal Verifiers' meeting instead of individual award meetings
- ◆ centre policies and procedures are adhered to

Sampling Strategy

The Trust has an Internal verification sampling strategy under which all new assessors and/or new awards will have a 100% sample undertaken on completion of the first Unit. This is to ensure that support is given to new assessors with immediate feedback after their first assessment and guidance where necessary to make any improvements/amendments to assessment practices. A 100% sample will continue to be applied until the verifier is satisfied. Thereafter, every third Unit will be sampled until completion of the award. This will be by a random sample of performance criteria, range and knowledge.

In awards where there is more than one Internal Verifier, 'cross verification' will take place. This means that internal verifiers will verify a sample of assessment evidence and ensure standardisation of assessment and verification decisions. The cross verification sampling process operates like this:

- ◆ the evidence to be sampled is taken from groups of four assessors at any one time
- ◆ the evidence is internally verified on completion of one Unit, on completion of four Units, and then again on completion of the qualification

Trainee Internal Verifiers will receive cross verification (ie support from more experienced internal verifiers) as requested. For awards with only one Internal Verifier, cross verification will take place across awards at the Verifiers meeting once a year. This system was implemented to ensure standardisation of awards throughout the Trust.