



NQ Verification 2014–15

Key Messages Round 2

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Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Graphic Communication
Verification event/visiting information	Event and visiting
Date published:	June 2015

National Courses/Units verified:

H27X 74 Graphic Communication (National 4) Added Value Unit
C735 75 Graphic Communication (National 5) Course assignment
C735 76 Graphic Communication (Higher) Course assignment

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Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

The verification team reported a mixed range of approaches to the Course assignment tasks for National 5 where many centres and candidates embraced the creative nature of the new Graphic Communication Course. This must be expected with the second year of presentation where centres and assessors are more confident in the delivery of teaching and learning leading into the Course assessment task.

The same level of creativity or variation in approach could not be seen within the Higher Course assignments that were verified, however we would expect this to change as centres become more familiar with the Course at this level. Centres are strongly encouraged to allow candidates to respond to the task in their own way, building upon the teaching and learning delivered during the Course. The Course assignment is an assessment activity designed to allow candidates to respond to the brief in their own manner and to use their skills with various technologies and techniques to best effect. It was disappointing to note at verification that many assignments resembled the structure and style of the exemplar and it is hoped that this will not be repeated. For the National 4 Added Value Unit assessment, National 5 Course assignment and Higher Course assignment, most candidates kept to within the 10 page limit for submissions and used a variety of manual and electronic responses to generate assessment evidence.

Some centres chose to supply their candidates with templates or additional data to complete the task. It was noticed by the verification team that centres choosing to give candidates a 'pro-forma' approach to the task had the effect of limiting their candidates' responses and, consequently, marks tended to be significantly lower, especially at Higher level.

With National 4 and National 5, most centres chose the Aqua-J juice bottle task, whilst with Higher, the majority of centres chose either the Reception Desk or Point of Sale task. At both National 5 and Higher, fewer candidates chose the more open briefs of Thirst4Music or Flat Pack Furniture.

Many centres provided candidates with CAD drawing templates for production drawings. Whilst this is permitted, it makes it significantly more challenging for candidates to access marks for conforming to British Standards (BS8888). Especially at Higher level, candidates would be expected to create their own templates, including title box and the setting of software for the required standards and scale.

Assessment judgements

The assessment judgements for National 5 candidates were very much in line with the national standard and it is apparent from the range of responses that centres have embraced the feedback from the last session. Additionally, centres were more commonly identifying where candidates had achieved particular marks, especially within analysis and research.

Centres that were verified for the National 4 Added Value Unit assessment were often too severe in their assessment judgements. In many instances, some of the candidate evidence would have been marked positively within an equivalent National 5 Course assignment. In a number of cases, centres tried to apply 'marks' to the Added Value Unit assessment which is not an acceptable approach to making assessment judgements as the Assessment Standards of this assessment are on a pass/fail basis only.

Centres were less reliable with their judgements within Higher. In particular, production drawings and the illustration of scenes were generously marked.

Some centres did not make any comments on their assessment judgements, which made it difficult to understand why certain decisions had been reached. Centres are advised to make comments to support assessment decisions as this will aid both internal and external verification.

Section 1: Research and analysis

With National 5, the verification team witnessed a wide range of approaches to the research and analysis component. Where this section had been completed well, candidates had completed some research that confirmed all the aspects of the assignment brief — data for production drawings and critical aspects for promotional aspects. However, several centres generously marked candidates who only researched the graphic design aspect of the task.

At Higher level, the analysis and research was not significantly above that of National 5 and this was correctly reflected in the marks for most centres. There should be deeper analysis and research at Higher level, representative of the additional knowledge and skill of the candidate.

Section 2: Preliminary graphics

At both National 5 and Higher level, some candidates produced retrospective planning. Work that is traced or is retrospective does not attract any marks — several centres failed to identify these issues and, subsequently, candidates had their marks reduced during verification. It is essential that centres reinforce with candidates that retrospective planning is unacceptable and that they be more vigilant in identifying instances where this has occurred. Retrospective planning is unacceptable for any aspect of the Course assignment.

Several centres were generous in their assessment of candidates with regards creating sufficient evidence to generate production drawings. Centres should consider whether the evidence is clear and detailed enough to enable the creation of a 3D CAD model or manual drawings. This could be in the form of a CAD modelling plan or pictorial sketches with sufficient dimensions (to BS8888).

Where preliminary promotional layouts were completed well, candidates made clear reference to design elements and principles and the DTP features and techniques they were intending to use. At Higher level, candidates should be making use of the further learning within the Higher Course and there should also be significantly more detail within annotation justifying design decisions. For both National 5 and Higher, there must be a clear indication of which promotional layout will be developed into the final item and a link between initial design work and final promotional item must be evident within the Course assignments.

Section 3: Production graphics

At all levels, production graphics were generously marked.

Many of the production drawings suffered from being in first angle projection, at a poor scale or having inappropriate line weights which made drawings poorly presented and difficult to read — candidates should be able to choose an appropriate scale and alter line weights within software. All candidates should be able to identify first and third angle projection and assessors must be more robust in identifying these errors when they occur.

Centres are reminded that BS8888 is the standard to be applied to these drawings; candidates should be able to change any settings within their CAD application to reflect these standards. There should be sufficient views and dimensions that could enable the product to be re-drawn via 3D CAD, if necessary.

Technical detail must be clear and relevant to the task. Where sectional, enlargements or exploded views are created, they must provide additional

information or enhance the clarity of the drawings. Several centres had given marks for simply creating a view and this is not acceptable.

Section 4: Promotional graphics

Within National 5, many centres incorrectly assessed candidates for producing a promotional item in relation to a brief. A candidate who does not respond to the brief cannot be awarded any marks for this activity. However, subsequent marks for illustration and the use of layout techniques may be awarded from the candidate's strongest work.

Higher candidates are required to create a 3D scene as part of the promotional activity. In many cases, the quality of illustration was below what should have been achieved. Many centres were generous with their assessment in this area as many scenes were insufficiently detailed, with components at a poor scale to neighbouring items. Materials and textures (bump-maps) were often in an incorrect orientation or scale, making scenes unrealistic and ineffectual. Lighting of scenes was also an issue — lights were inappropriate in intensity or direction — and this further reduced the quality of the assessment material.

At both National 5 and Higher level, a significant number of centres had not rendered work at an appropriate resolution. This makes work pixelated and diminishes the quality of the material produced. Candidates at National 5 and Higher should be confident in setting their software to render at a sufficiently high resolution for printing (typically a minimum of 350 dpi at 1:1 scale printing).

Centres may wish to consider using rendering software rather than the built-in system within CAD applications. There are a number of free applications that have significantly superior rendering engines that will help candidates demonstrate their skills better.

Section 5: Evaluation

The evaluation was assessed well by many centres. Most candidates had focused upon the DTP component alone. Centres are reminded that candidates can evaluate any aspect of their work and that a high scoring evaluation should make reference to the brief and how the graphics they have produced meet the requirements of the brief.

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Section 3: General comments

Sample format

Several centres have started using different equipment including hand-scanners and tablet computers to scan or capture work to create presentations. Embracing new technology is at the heart of the new Graphic Communication Course, but it is important that scanned work does not lose any of the quality or detail of the original. If in doubt, it can be useful to retain a copy of the original manual work with the rest of the candidates' work.

Approaches to learning

Many centres have changed their approach to teaching and learning and more CAD work is clearly evident. This change in approach is useful in preparing candidates for the Course assignment and final exam, however it was noted that many candidates had not applied appropriate drawing standards and conventions and had relied purely on the software to sort any issues. Centres may wish to consider different approaches to enable candidates to identify issues with production and technical drawings.

Internal verification

Internal verification is a key part of quality assuring internal assessments.

An effective internal verification process can highlight issues within the centre, which can then be rectified helping to ensure that a centre's assessment judgements are valid and reliable. The verification team identified several centres where an effective internal verification procedure had ensured the correct approaches to assessment and assessment judgements.

Evidence of internal verification was not present in all samples. It is a requirement of approval to offer SQA qualifications that an internal verification policy is in place and applied and there is information on SQA's website that looks at this in detail and offers suggestions for possible approaches.