



**Higher National and Vocational Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2014
Learning and Development**

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in Higher National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications in this subject.

Higher National Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

HN Assessor/Verifier Units:

H290-35: Conduct the Assessment Process

H291-35: Conduct the Internal Verification Process

F86F 36: Externally Verify the Assessment Process

HN Training and Development Units:

F81Y 33: Planning and Delivering Learning Session to Groups

General comments

The HN Assessor/Verifier Units

The Assessor and IV Units (H290-35 and H291-35) are suitable for those who are assessing or internally verifying skills and knowledge in contexts other than the candidate's workplace (eg in classrooms and training rooms).

SQA clarifies the target audience for these Units in *Awarding Body Guidance for Centres and Assessor/Internal Verifier Candidates: choosing appropriate assessor and/or verifier qualifications* — which can be found on the [Learning and Development web pages](#):

The External Verifier Unit (F86F 36) is suitable for those who are externally verifying SQA qualifications other than SVQs, NVQs and CBQs. SQA provides in-depth training in relation to the role, and a contracted training provider provides follow-up assessment and verification services, helping clarify Unit terms and Evidence Requirements.

The purpose of these Units is generally well understood by centres. This is because the context for Assessor/Verifier-Candidate achievement relates directly to the activities performed by assessors and verifiers working in SQA approved centres. Much of this is written about in SQA guidance documents, and assessment and verification practice is externally quality assured by SQA Qualification Verifiers.

Training and Development Units

The Training Skills and Planning and Delivering Learning Session to Groups (PDLSTG) Units are suitable for those who are seeking a first 'off-the-job trainer' qualification.

PDLSTG is based on a well-known 'train the trainer' model that has been in existence for many years. As such, the Outcomes and contexts for delivery are generally well understood by the centres who are delivering it.

The Unit has been in existence for approximately five years and is about to be reviewed to ensure the content mirrors up-to-date practice. Centres wishing to participate in this review should contact SQA. Contact details can be found on the main [SVQ Learning and Development web page](#), under Qualifications Team.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The Unit specifications for all Units are based on the current HN Unit template, which centres are very familiar with.

The instruments of assessment for the Assessor and IV Units measure the application of skills and knowledge required in the candidate's work setting and are generally well understood. The evidence required includes significant work products, such as assessment/verification plans and schedules, and assessment/verification records. These records are central to the assessor and internal verifier roles and form an integral part of each centre's procedures.

SQA publications such as the [Guide to Assessment](#) and [Internal Verification: A Guide for Centres offering SQA Qualifications](#) provide guidance and exemplification of assessment and verification practice, and are frequently used and well regarded as a reference source.

A significant number of candidates (SQA appointees) have achieved the *F86F 36: Externally Verify the Assessment Process* Unit since its introduction in 2010. Similar to the Assessor and IV Units, this Unit measures the candidate (trainee External Verifier) applying their skills and knowledge. The Unit is supported by comprehensive guidance relating to the External Verifier role — all guidance and role profiles can be found on SQA's Qualification Verification web pages.

The *Planning and Delivering Learning Sessions to Groups* Unit includes a structured Marking Scheme with an in-built scoring system which centres have found pragmatic and useful.

Evidence requirements

The Evidence Requirements for all of the HN Assessor/Verifier Units are based on the application of centre procedures for the Assessor and IV Units, and SQA procedures for the External Verifier qualification.

Centres sometimes give feedback that the word count has been set too low for some of the required explanations and that candidates should be encouraged to give fuller accounts. This will be taken into account the next time the Units are revised. Other than that, we receive very few queries in relation to the Unit requirements, which were updated in 2012.

The External Verifier Unit is currently being revised. Centre feedback identified the following main points:

- ◆ Clarification is required as to whether the Unit is looking for knowledge of EV practice or the EV's knowledge of centre practice or both.
- ◆ Visit planning and report requirements to be updated in the Unit in line with current SQA requirements.
- ◆ The incorporation of current Qualification Verification procedures, eg action points, recommendations and outcome ratings to be incorporated into the Unit.

The *Planning and Delivering Learning Sessions to Groups* Unit is also about to be revised this autumn. Feedback to date suggests that the Evidence Requirements are generally well understood. However, some comments have been received relating to the assignment in Outcome 1. Some centres feel the assignment demands a higher than necessary level of knowledge in comparison with the skills required for overall Unit achievement.

Some feedback has been received in relation to the wording of the assessment component, suggesting that it should be 'lightened' to reflect what a new trainer of basic programmes might use.

Administration of assessments

Approved centres tend to manage the administration of the Assessor/Verifier Units fairly well as assessment and verification is an integral part of their operation. This means that the starting point, in terms of understanding Unit purpose, tends to be relatively easy to establish.

The advice to all centres who offer both sets of Assessor/Verifier Units (HN and Workplace) is to review the Evidence Requirements in detail. This helps eliminate assumptions that both sets of Units are identical and that assessment materials from one can be wholly used for the other.

General feedback

Assessors/Internal Verifier candidates are generally pleased that there is now a route for recognising the prior achievement of their HN Assessor/Internal Verifier Unit should they decide to go on to undertake the equivalent Workplace Assessor/Internal Verifier qualification at a later date. RPL guidance is now available on SQA's secure site.

On some occasions, Assessor/Verifier candidates cannot meet the Evidence Requirements as they don't have access to the requisite number of assessors or candidates. Where these situations exist, and centres have explored all options, they should contact SQA who will help them explore options and in certain circumstances grant a special assessment requirement.

Areas of good practice

Centres that make reference to SQA materials in their training and candidate materials help ensure that candidates use the most appropriate terms when (for example) describing the methods and principles of assessment.

Candidate explanations that link to SQA Quality Assurance Criteria can also show the candidate understands the rationale behind maintaining quality assessment/verification practice.

E-portfolios that have links to the centre's assessment/verification procedural documentation can help streamline the evidence-gathering process for candidates. This facility allows candidates to explain for example the purpose of their centre's internal verification policy and then add-in the appropriate link.

Higher National Graded Units

The HNC Learning and Development Graded Unit 1 was not verified.

SVQ awards

General comments

This report relates to SVQs in Learning and Development and the single Unit Professional Development Awards (PDAs)

The current Learning and Development (L&D) National Occupational Standards (NOS), encompass 13 standards. These individual standards were used to develop two SVQs in Learning and Development:

GA2C 24 SVQ Level 4 Learning and Development

GA29 23 SVQ Level 3 Learning and Development

and four single-Unit stand-alone Professional Development Awards:

FD40 04 Assess Workplace Competence Using Direct Methods

FD41 04 Assess Workplace Competence Using Direct and Indirect Methods

FD43 04 Internally Monitor and Maintain the Quality of Workplace Assessment

FD44 04 Externally Monitor and Maintain the Quality of Workplace Assessment

The standards have been in place now for nearly four years. Centres have generally welcomed the reduction in Performance Criteria as they say it gives more clarity as to what to expect from candidate performance, ie the right balance of flexibility and detail.

Overall, there are no significant or repeating centre queries about the interpretation of the Unit specifications. There are some concerns over the amalgamation of delivery methods in some of the Learning Units, which is mentioned in more depth in the following guidance.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The purpose of the SVQ Units is broadly understood.

There are now exemplification materials on SQA's secure site (under 'Learning and Development SVQs') for all SVQ Units. These candidate support materials have been very well received as their content can be built into taught lessons as well as being used as candidate workbooks in their own right.

SQA's Professional Development Workshops for the Assessor/Verifier Units are still proving very popular with centres, and are now in their tenth year and run almost every month.

The contents of these PDWs are kept under review and are updated periodically throughout the year.

Evidence requirements

Centres are generally familiar with the type of evidence described in the current Assessor and Verifier Units and queries relating to their understanding are fairly infrequent.

The most common queries from centres relate to ensuring the assessment environment meets the L&D Assessment Strategy requirements. However, these types of queries have been on the decline for some time now.

Centre feedback confirms that SQA's guidance [Choosing appropriate Assessor and Verifier Qualifications](#) has helped to answer most queries concerning the assessment environment, and the identification of the most suitable types of Assessor/Verifier qualifications.

Centres can also contact SQA directly should they have any queries concerning Evidence Requirements or any other part of the Unit specification. Contact details can be found on the main [Learning and Development SVQ web page](#), under Qualifications Team.

A significant number of centres assessing the SVQ/Assessor/Verifier Units have commented on the prescriptiveness of knowledge requirements in terms of not providing scope to allow assessors to infer knowledge through the assessment of performance evidence, as happens in the A and V Units. In 2010, the assessment methodology for the proposed SVQ Units was consulted on across all centres in Scotland and at that time it was felt that the previous A/V Unit Evidence Requirements were too flexible. The options for providing knowledge evidence were then tightened up as a result. Centre feedback will again be considered when these SVQ/SVQ Units come up for review.

Meanwhile, SQA Qualification Verifiers are advising centres that the use of intelligence-led evidence gathering (eg questioning/professional discussion based on existing performance evidence) provides a natural link between performance and knowledge and recognises performance as an important evidence source.

In a number of workplace settings, workplace coaches may not always use demonstration and/or instruction when they practise. These particular methods are listed in the *L&D7 Unit: Facilitate Individual Learning and Development*. Many coaches also use questioning to elicit information and to encourage reflection which is not listed as an optional coaching method in this Unit.

As a result of this feedback, SQA has decided to develop a Practitioner Workplace Coaches Award to provide another qualification option for those who find it difficult to achieve this particular SVQ Unit.

Centres wishing to provide feedback/views on this award can contact SQA.

Administration of assessments

All centres have some form of system in place to help recognise each candidate's starting point when it comes to assessment. Time spent on this initial phase of the assessment process is well spent, as it is used to inform development and can help streamline the evidence-gathering process for those candidates who already have some experience/knowledge or skills in relation to their chosen qualification.

This phase is important in ensuring candidates are signed up for the right level of qualification.

Centres assessors/verifiers are also required to work in line with the current National Occupational Standards (NOS) in assessment/verification. The NOS in Assessment promote the practice of using the learner's job role to determine the assessment approach and in particular which Units he/she should undertake.

This practice of matching Units and identifying skills levels is common across SQA centres offering SVQs, and is promoted by SQA through the support materials provided in the Professional Development Workshops and the *Practical Guide to Developing Assessor-Candidate Competence*, which can be found on SQA's secure site.

General feedback

Candidates generally found the learning materials (for each SVQ Unit) on SQA's secure site to be of benefit when, for example, trying to work out the terminology used in their chosen Units.

Very much the majority of candidates interviewed during Qualification Verification visits felt they had fair access to assessment. The quality of recording candidate contact and progress has seen steady improvement from centres over time. In general, candidates don't have significant issues over the interpretation and requirements of the Units. Where candidates have re-qualified, some have mentioned that the current Assessor/Verifier Units are more pragmatic than the predecessor Units as they have a clearer focus on the quality of practice.

Areas of good practice

Centres who have adopted continuous rolling Assessment Plans allow the reader to see at a glance where assessment is currently at, which has clear benefits for candidates, assessors and verifiers.

Standardisation Logs are being used more often. Again, using one continuous log means that information is kept in one place and can be accessed effectively by all assessors and IVs, and can give the SQA Qualification Verifier a valuable insight into the decisions being made by the assessment/verification team.

A number of centres are using their standardisation meetings as a way of identifying, prioritising, planning and undertaking generic CPD for the complete

assessor/verifier team. This does not preclude individual CPD being undertaken/maintained (this can be an Assessment Strategy requirement). It does however have the advantage of ensuring that important CPD is being undertaken. This kind of systematic approach also maps well with the practice covered in Unit L&D10. It is an L&D Assessment Strategy requirement that assessors/verifiers show that they practise in line with L&D10 requirements.

Specific areas for improvement

Some off-the-shelf e-portfolios only include the Performance Criteria and knowledge requirements for each of the Units they cover. This means either that the Evidence Requirements need to be loaded by the centre or that the centre has to commission the e-portfolio company to do the loading. It does not matter how the loading happens — the most important point is that it happens before assessment takes place, so that there is transparency in terms of how each Element/Unit is to be evidenced/assessed. E-portfolios without the Evidence Requirements are missing an important part of the Unit specification and without it, it is difficult to show referencing has been completed for the entire Unit.

We would advise centres to check that the Evidence Requirements, which are included in the Evidence Trackers, are built into the system before assessment begins. The Evidence Trackers can be downloaded from SQA's secure site.

E-portfolios normally contain an internal verification comments field. The field is used to provide feedback on assessment decisions/evidence on an ongoing basis. This kind of intervention has many benefits in that internal verification can be carried out at any time and spontaneously. This avoids the issues of distance, availability and time that sometimes hinder traditional internal verification (using paper portfolios).

However, the IV Role, as detailed in L&D11, is not only about feedback on evidence/assessment decisions. The role has evolved to include planning and monitoring of assessment practice, based on a risk approach. It is important that this practice is maintained when using e-portfolios, and that centres include the appropriate procedural documentation/functions to allow it to happen.

Assessors and verifiers assessing and verifying the L&D SVQs and Assessor/Verifier Units are required by the L&D Assessment Strategy to provide CPD evidence in line with Unit L&D10 requirements. At times, centres only provide standard CPD evidence, which falls short of this Assessment Strategy requirement. There are guidance documents and templates on SQA's secure site that can assist centres with this.