



**Higher National Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2015
Sociology**

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

Higher National Units

Units verified included:

Sociology A (FK8R 34 and DP3R 34)

Sociology B (FK8T 34 and DP3T 34)

Sociology C (FK8V 35) and Sociology D (FK8P 35)

General comments

From visiting verification undertaken at centres, there is evidence that centres have a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards. Internal verification is well-documented (pre-, ongoing and post-delivery). There was also good evidence of standardisation within centres, which provided good support to new assessors. Centres make good use of assessment exemplar support packs, and there is evidence of centre-devised alternative assessments that had been developed and submitted for SQA prior verification. All centres visited had master teaching packs in place (paper or electronic) and these were kept up to date by pack holders or internal verifiers.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

There was evidence from centres that assessors were using correct Unit specifications and instruments of assessment were appropriate. It is recommended that Unit specifications be downloaded, dated and signed to demonstrate the latest version is being used.

Some centres did not make alternative assessments for closed-book available. These should be available for External Verifiers to look at.

Evidence Requirements

The centres visited had a clear understanding of the Evidence Requirements for the Units sampled. However, the balance between appropriately preparing students for progression to university and not over-assessing is a fine one and centres should be careful not to ask for evidence that goes beyond the Evidence Requirements of the Unit.

Administration of assessments

Where assessments were at the appropriate level, there was evidence of good quality assurance procedures — for instance, instruments of assessment that had been prior verified by SQA and an overall internal verification process that was well managed and administered with available records of meetings for verification and standardisation between assessors.

With college mergers taking place across the sector, the issue of standardisation across campuses has come into focus with the need to ensure rigorous internal

verification and standardisation across campuses as merged colleges become single centres.

Although the internal verification process appeared to be well managed in centres, very few assessors or internal verifiers held HN Assessor or HN Internal Verifier qualifications. It is recommended that staff undertake these qualifications where possible.

General feedback

Overall, centres provided feedback to all candidates.

Where feedback to candidates was good, comments were included on a section of a student checklist that identified where Evidence Requirements were met.

Comments were found to be generally positive, supportive and clear where advice on improving candidate performance was specified.

It can be the case where two or more assessors are involved in delivering Units, that there may be an inconsistency in the level and depth of feedback, eg one assessor offering 'in text' close marking comments as well as summarising feedback, whilst the next assessor makes no 'in text' marking and comments offering only basic summarising feedback at the end of the assessment.

Candidate feedback is generally very good and students appear to be getting a positive experience from studying these Sociology Units. Candidates felt supported by staff and were happy with the pre-entry and induction process.

Candidates can be slightly unclear about assessment advice on remediation/re-assessment. Centres should address this.

In some centres where assessment is more 'traditional', candidates were asked how they felt about the opportunity for more diverse assessment methods and the response was receptive and positive. In centres where a diverse assessment was used, eg academic posters, students enjoyed the task and were conscious of new skills being developed.

There appeared to be no barriers to assessment and centres made adjustments and additional requirements for assessment where they were needed.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ Good, organised administration and record keeping of the whole assessment process — prior, during and post-assessment
- ◆ The use of Turnitin software providing candidates with supportive feedback and/or checking the authenticity of candidates' work and the development of appropriate referencing conventions
- ◆ Documented feedback after internal verification to allow action points to be identified for future assessments

- ◆ Close contact with learning support, ongoing consideration, monitoring and reviewing of additional learning and support needs

Specific areas for improvement

Considering the diverse range of assessments available, centres generally seem reluctant to adopt more diverse assessment instruments that offer a more engaging and diverse approach to assessment under the new framework. Planning of diverse assessment could be managed if assessment was planned at the programme level and not at individual subject level. Diverse assessments should be submitted to SQA for prior verification in good time for delivery.

It is recommended that feedback is standard in centres and should offer clear and accurate instruction on the conditions and requirements of remediation and re-assessment. It is recommended that feedback indicates where the assessor/marker is making decisions as well as offering supportive and summarising feedback. First and second attempts should be clearly signposted on assessment checklists.

Centres could be more proactive in providing opportunities for staff to acquire suitable qualifications that support the internal verification process.