



**Higher National Qualifications 2011
Internal Assessment Report
Administration and Information
Technology**

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

Higher National Units

General comments

For many centres, this was the first offering of the revised frameworks G9M7 15 (HNC) and G9M7 16 (HND) which are replacing G7YV 15 (HNC) and G7YW 16 (HND). The selection plan covered a range of Units from both old and new frameworks.

All centres visited were represented at the HN network event held in Stirling Management Centre in February 2011. Attendance at this event provided delegates with feedback on external verification activity for the academic year 2009–10, an overview of the revised framework, workshops to demonstrate good practice, and the opportunity to network with the SQA Qualifications Team, Qualification Review Team, external verification team and colleagues. Feedback from the event was very positive. A video recording was made of all presentations and is available on SQA's secure website.

The majority of centres continue to use SQA assessment exemplar packs to assess candidates.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

At most visits undertaken, assessors and Internal Verifiers were interviewed and it was clear that current Unit specifications were being used. It is also encouraging to see many centres making use of the Understanding Standards website to ensure that the appropriate SCQF level is applied to the marking of student work.

Most centres had transferred teaching and assessment packs to electronic content management systems, which ensured that teaching and assessment materials were secure and that the most up-to-date versions were being used.

Evidence Requirements

Assessors in this area are, generally, very experienced and there is good evidence of support given to new staff. Centre staff make use of SQA's Qualifications Team to seek advice and support, where necessary.

Administration of assessments

Most centres have used the assessment exemplar packs to assess students. A small number of centres have produced their own assessments and have made use of the SQA prior-verification service.

Most centres have well-established internal verification procedures with appropriate sampling plans in place.

Centres are continuing to develop assessments which integrate Units, reducing the assessment burden for candidates. Centres which have moved to the revised frameworks are identifying new and innovative ways of integrating assessment and, at the same time, are working to embed Curriculum For Excellence in delivery and assessment.

Further general feedback

Feedback to candidates continues to improve, but this still varies in quality and quantity. Greater use is being made of virtual learning environments within centres to record candidate feedback. There were very good examples of electronic feedback.

Feedback from candidates interviewed

Candidates were interviewed during most external verification visits. All candidates interviewed were very positive about their experience at college and were able to see how the Group Awards would help them to progress to higher education or employment. There was an increase in the number of students looking to move into related employment at the end of courses, although there was still a high percentage of students taking advantage of articulation agreements negotiated by individual colleges.

Access to assessment

Many modes of delivery were offered by centres — full-time, infill, part-time day, part-time evening, blended learning, open and online learning. There was also evidence of Courses and individual Units being delivered and assessed at community outreach locations. In a small number of cases, it would appear that candidates were not always ready for assessment — in this case, remediation, followed by re-assessment had taken place.

Other issues

The presentation of candidate work was, generally, very good and well marked. Internal verification was also well documented.

Areas of good practice

There were good examples of electronic feedback to students, using virtual learning environments.

Centres are using content management systems to ensure that appropriate staff have access to up-to-date teaching materials and assessments. There is also evidence of automated tracking of internal verification.

Centres continue to ensure the authenticity of candidate work, with more making use of anti-plagiarism software.

Specific areas for improvement

In a small number of centres it was noted that more than one department could be offering the same Unit on the Group Award frameworks. In these circumstances, it would be good practice for the departments to work together to ensure consistency in marking and feedback to candidates.

Where a centre devises assessment and alternative assessments, it should make use of the prior-verification service offered by SQA.

Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified

DE1T 34 — HN Administration and IT: Graded Unit 1 (Examination)

DE22 35 — HN Administration and IT: Graded Unit 2 (Examination)

DE23 35 — HN Administration and IT: Graded Unit 3 (Project)

F8KW 34 — HN Administration and IT: Graded Unit 1 (Examination)

General comments

For many centres, this was the first offering of the revised frameworks G9M7 15 (HNC) and G9M7 16 (HND) which are replacing G7YV 15 (HNC) and G7YW 16 (HND). The selection plan covered a range of Units from both old and new frameworks. Examinations were verified at a central event in June 2011. Projects were verified by visiting verification between April and June 2011.

Most centres selected for external verification of the Graded Units were successful. All centres used SQA assessment exemplar packs.

Centres have used the exemplified materials on the Understanding Standards website as a source of reference.

The revised specification for Unit F8KW 34 (HN Administration and IT: Graded Unit 1 Examination), allocating 45 minutes for Paper 1 and 2 hours and 15 minutes for Paper 2, had produced high quality responses, particularly for the mandatory question in Paper 2. It was clear that the re-allocation of time had meant that candidates had used the extra time, in Paper 2, to read the case study and plan answers fully before writing.

The Graded Unit Projects (Unit DE23 35) reviewed at visiting verification were of a very high standard. Candidates interviewed were able to explain clearly the approach taken to meet the requirements of this very demanding Unit.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

All centres reviewed had been represented at the HN network event held in Stirling Management Centre in February 2011. Attendance at this event provided delegates with feedback on external verification activity for academic year 2009–10. It is clear that the good practice and issues for improvement had been embraced by the centres selected.

Evidence Requirements

There were no issues identified at central verification.

During visiting verification, it was clear that centres had made good use of marking grids for each stage of the project — showing a summary of the marks award for each of the areas highlighted in the ‘Suggested Solution’ and ‘Making Assessment Decision’ sections of the assessment exemplar pack.

Administration of assessments

There were no issues identified at central verification.

Candidate work was well presented, clearly marked and internally verified.

Further general feedback

Centres had maintained records of tutorial sessions held to support the Graded Unit Project. There was good evidence of the use of wikis to enable candidates to communicate with their nominated assessor and receive reasonable support.

Areas of good practice

Please refer to the HN Unit section of this report.

Specific areas for improvement

In some centres, candidates completed the Graded Unit examinations using a word processor. One centre had marked and internally verified scripts electronically. While this is innovative practice, it is important that there is differentiation between the work submitted by the candidate and the comments made by the Marker and Internal Verifier.

Candidates would benefit from guidance on referencing skills to enhance projects. While some candidates include extensive bibliographies, this is not always referenced in student work. Where candidates wish to include screenshots, demonstrating research undertaken, this could be included as an appendix, rather than being presented throughout the report. This approach would make the reports easier to read and assess.

Centres should be mindful of the level of support given to candidates undertaking the Graded Unit Project. Prior to submission of each stage of the project, the assessor can provide reasonable support and advice. However, after submission the work is final. It is not possible for candidates to remediate the Graded Unit Project.