



**Higher National Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2016
Applied Sciences**

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

Three external verification visits were carried out by the team this academic session, and the standard of assessing observed on the visits was good. The centres visited had a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards and correct and appropriate assessment specifications.

Centres offering specific HN qualifications are fully aware of the changes to the HN Applied Sciences frameworks and are fully prepared for the transition to the revised group awards. There was felt to be an improvement in the standard of exemplar assessments available for the new units in comparison to the old. The Understanding Standards materials for the Laboratory Skills for Science Industries unit (H91V 34) will also set the standard for laboratory work and reporting across the science units, and this was welcomed by centres.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

In all centres visited, the assessors showed a high degree of familiarity with the unit specifications and the instruments of assessment, and were familiar with the exemplification material.

In all centres visited, centres were using valid and reliable instruments of assessment which satisfied the unit specification. There was also good judgement of learner performance with clear marking schemes in use. In all cases there was clear evidence of fair and consistent marking.

The assessment judgments by assessors and internal verifiers were confirmed by external verification to be accurate.

Understanding Standards materials for the Laboratory Skills for Science Industries unit (H91V 34) had not been published until midway through the session but were being referred to for completion of current cohorts. These documents can be accessed from SQA's Understanding Standards website ([SQA Understanding Standards](#)). Centres are strongly advised to follow the standards as specified in these documents.

Evidence requirements

There was good evidence from all centres of a clear understanding of the evidence requirements for the units verified. This ensured that in these centres the assessment instruments were appropriate, fair and reliable, and the assessment specifications were correct.

Administration of assessments

All centres visited had clear, effective and routinely applied policies regarding the administration of assessments. All assessment conditions complied with the requirements of the relevant unit specification.

Centres had good policy and practice in ensuring the authenticity of learner submissions, and routinely applied anti-plagiarism software to learner submissions.

All three centres complied with SQA policies and procedures regarding retention of evidence, security of storage and dissemination of external quality control reports.

General feedback

Overall this was a successful year for all centres involved in the external verification exercise.

Delivery of units at the centres visited was appropriate and learners gave consistently positive feedback on the support received. Assessment materials and assessment decisions were equitable, valid, reliable and fair.

External verifiers were in agreement with all of the assessment and internal verification decisions made.

Assessors and verifiers were well qualified and had a good grasp of the standards required. The new assessment support packs and Understanding Standards materials will provide further support to centres in the next session.

Areas of good practice

External verifiers' comments in relation to good practice are included below:

- ◆ The assessor monitored delivery of a unit by taking note of each learner's score on each question. This allowed them to identify any areas of difficulty for each learner. This was kept in a spreadsheet format. This also allowed the assessor to identify any questions causing unnecessary difficulty for learners in general, and to adjust teaching materials accordingly.
- ◆ Learners were sent the lecture material for the first week of the course before the summer to allow them to prepare for starting college.
- ◆ One centre had a policy whereby the quality department highlighted the recommendations of a report as well as the good practice. This was then circulated around the college to facilitate sharing of good practice and to help other assessors identify areas for improvement.
- ◆ For one centre, completed internal verification documents were loaded onto the centre's quality website, and closure of actions was monitored by the Curriculum and Quality Manager.

- ◆ One centre had produced a particularly well designed checklist to monitor learner achievement within a complex unit. A copy of this will be discussed at the next verification standardisation meeting.

Specific areas for improvement

No specific areas for improvement were identified during the external verification visits undertaken this session.

However, the Understanding Standards materials for the Laboratory Skills for Science Industries unit (H91V 34) was published midway through the session, and so was not available when centres commenced assessment. These materials give extensive guidance on standards for laboratory practicals and reporting for units across the HN science suite, and centres should ensure they meet the standards as set out in these materials in future sessions.