



**Higher National Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2013
Beauty Therapy**

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

Centres generally have a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards. The centres have delivered the current HNC/HND Beauty qualification framework over the last seven years. There has been an increase in the variety of optional Units the centres choose, especially in the second year of the HND programme. The massage-related and spa treatment Units appear to be often selected as optional Unit choices for delivery.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Centre assessors are familiar with the Unit specifications and have developed instruments of assessment which have often been sent to SQA for prior verification. The majority of centres use the SQA assessment exemplars for the mandatory Units within the HNC and HND framework.

Centres do not often use the HN online candidate support packs for Body Massage, Facial Treatments, and Face and Body Electrotherapy which are available from the SQA secure website and can be downloaded to a college intranet/VLE.

As part of centres' internal verification systems, the HN Unit specification should be checked to ensure it is current as part of the pre-delivery internal verification process.

Evidence Requirements

Centres generally have a clear understanding of Evidence Requirements for the HN Units being delivered. Assessors need to ensure the Unit evidence is at the appropriate SCQF level. This is often more difficult with the SCQF level 8 Units. In some centres which received external verification visits, over-assessment for the candidate was highlighted and centres were advised to look at streamlining written assessments to avoid over-assessing. Also centres were advised to consider further integration of Unit assessments and clearly indicate where this integration takes place on the instruments of assessment.

The SQA assessment exemplars for the mandatory Units give clear guidance on what Evidence Requirements are required.

Centres who are delivering new optional Units were advised to send their centre-devised instrument of assessment to SQA for prior verification.

Administration of assessments

Many centres are making the transition from storing their Unit assessment material as paper-based master files, to electronic files. Generally the instruments of assessment clearly indicate the assessment conditions.

Centres are increasingly using a variety of methods to monitor plagiarism. Some centres use plagiarism software on their computers for written assignments and others require a plagiarism candidate statement.

Formative assessment can be used by assessors to allow constructive feedback to be given to candidates prior to summative assessments.

Oral recording of assessor feedback to candidates was noted during an external verification visit to reduce the volume of written assessment.

The majority of centres provide additional learning support to HN candidates, either formally through learner services and/or in some instances informally, by providing drop-in sessions which candidates can access.

Centres with centre-devised instruments of assessment often have the instrument of assessment prior verified by SQA as well as going through their own internal verification process. Pre-delivery internal verification of instruments of assessment is carried out by centre assessors. The majority of centres are storing internal verification material on their centre intranet which can be viewed by staff and External Verifiers. The staff intranet often contains the centre quality policy and procedures which allows easier access for assessors.

General feedback

Feedback to candidates was generally good and this was evidenced by verbal feedback recorded from candidates interviewed and from written feedback on assessor feedback forms attached to candidate assessment evidence. Assessor feedback needs to continue to be clear, constructive and supportive to candidates.

Centres are continuing to use their VLEs to provide Unit Coursework and formative and summative assessment opportunities.

Candidates interviewed during external verification visits were very positive regarding their Coursework, and felt they had good access to tutors who gave them very good support and guidance. One centre, where candidates had progressed through the SVQ routes, felt parts of their HNC/HND Course had been repetitive.

In one centre, HN candidates had taken on a role as mentors to other NQ candidates through a team-building day for new candidates.

Many candidates had enjoyed the opportunity to participate in additional work experience and other commercial activities (including working closely with industry stakeholders) as part of their Course.

Centres are providing additional enrichment activities from industry/commercial representatives in order to enhance their candidates' experience, provide a greater skills base, and enhance employment opportunities.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ Use of video of practical treatments downloaded on centre VLEs to allow candidates to practice their treatments outwith the college environment.
- ◆ Remediation requirements indicated on assessment feedback form.
- ◆ Cross-curricular activity with other centre departments, eg involvement with fashion candidates on a joint activity.
- ◆ HN candidates taking on the role of mentors to other candidates in order to build their self-confidence and promote citizenship.
- ◆ Centre-devised induction pack information for new assessors to provide additional support.
- ◆ Use of integrated instruments of assessment across Units which can then be cross referenced.
- ◆ Professional affiliation between a centre and a global professional skincare company brand which will enhance the employment opportunities for the candidates nationally and internationally.
- ◆ 'Employability Salon' sessions for candidates to allow them time to consolidate their technical skills and promote awareness of the need to contribute to the financial effectiveness of a business.
- ◆ Department-devised yearly quality enhancement action plan which the team are encouraged to adhere to and consider.
- ◆ Evidence sources map where the knowledge/skills sections within Units have been considered and the map guides what evidence is needed to cover each section.

Specific areas for improvement

- ◆ Assessors need to ensure they have a robust system in place to authenticate case study treatments carried out within the centre environment.
- ◆ There needs to be consistency in the methodology used for recording assessor feedback to candidates.
- ◆ Assessors should be encouraged to give clear, constructive and supportive feedback to candidates.
- ◆ It is important to ensure that written evidence is, where appropriate, referenced and meets the requirements of SCQF level 7/8.
- ◆ It is important to ensure that candidates, when completing Units at SCQF level 7/8, are providing specific, detailed aftercare and homecare advice and include appropriate product advice for the individual client.
- ◆ It would be helpful to reduce the large numbers of assessments being carried out at the end of the academic year. Developing a cross-Course assessment schedule/calendar may aid an even spread of assessment to reduce the burden of end-loaded assessments for candidates and assessors.

Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

Beauty Therapy: Graded Unit 1 F3SA 34

Beauty Therapy: Graded Unit 2 DP60 35

General comments

Centres have a clear understanding of the requirements of the Higher National Graded Unit standards. When there are new assessors delivering the Unit, usually the centres ensure an experienced assessor mentors the new assessor on the process and necessary assessment evidence required from candidates.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Experienced assessors are familiar with the Unit specifications and instruments of assessment. The Graded Unit 2 specification has not changed since it was first developed for the HND framework. The Graded Unit 1 specification did change several years ago and a new assessment exemplar was developed to meet the Unit requirements.

The centres generally use the assessment exemplars and the marking guides contained within the exemplar. Some centres have developed their own marking guide to ensure standardisation and consistency for assessors when awarding candidates additional marks/grades. The Graded Unit 1 exemplar encourages the recommended holistic approach to marking rather than mechanistic marking. The assessment exemplar for Graded Unit 2 does not give a mentoring record pro-forma for recording meetings with candidates however there is an example in the Graded Unit 1 assessment exemplar which some centres use or have adapted to suit their needs.

Evidence Requirements

The assessment exemplar marking guides give an indication of what the assessor can accept as the minimum evidence required for each stage of the project. This minimum evidence does not justify full marks for that stage. Centres do not always appreciate the sections on the marking guide checklist are the minimum evidence required from the candidates. The assessor can justify giving more marks if the candidate evidence has included more depth and breadth and meets the guideline from SQA in the Unit specification on awarding an A, B or C grade.

Though the Graded Unit 2 specification does not specify an exact number of treatments the candidates has to complete in order for the investigation to be credible, the candidate should be ideally following the equipment manufacturers' recommended number of treatments to get the best results to aid their

investigation. This will then allow the candidate a greater opportunity to complete a comprehensive evaluation.

The diary sheet within the Graded Unit 1 assessment exemplar could be used by the candidate to provide more evidence of logging their personal planning activities rather than just being used to record dates.

Administration of assessments

To deliver the Graded Units, experienced assessors are normally drawn from a team. Teams of assessors and Internal Verifiers work closely together and it is common practice to cross-assess by double marking the candidate evidence for each stage. The candidate may be anonymous to the second assessor doing the marking to ensure the marking is fair and there is no bias shown to an individual candidate.

Some centres have developed a practical observation checklist for Graded Unit 1 which they use to mark the candidate performance management for the development stage.

Assessors use the mentoring sessions with candidates after each stage to allow the candidate time to reflect and take forward the assessor feedback to the next stage.

Centres will ensure their centre internal verification procedures have been completed for Graded Units in order to standardise the marking and grades awarded by the assessor. The assessor and Internal Verifier will generally meet regularly to discuss the Graded Unit process. The Internal Verifier is normally an experienced assessor of Graded Units so can also mentor any new assessors.

General feedback

The assessment exemplar for Graded Unit 1 has a template to use for recording mentoring sessions with candidates and most centres have adopted this recording mechanism for feedback.

Written feedback from assessors to candidates is at times limited and doesn't reflect the marks awarded to the candidate. Assessors need to ensure that if additional guidance is given to candidates then this is reflected by a reduction in the marks awarded. Candidates need to work autonomously if they are receiving a high grade.

Although candidates have fed back that the Graded Units are hard work, most have enjoyed the experience and see the relevance to their studies. Candidates for Graded Unit 1 take great pride in preparing their treatment area and enjoy putting together innovative treatment packages. Most candidates feel the Graded Unit 1 helps prepare them for Graded Unit 2 the following year.

The length of time given to candidates to complete the development stage for Graded Unit 2 can be very limited. This can disadvantage candidates when it

comes to the evaluation stage as it reduces the information and statistics they have in order to compare and contrast their pieces of equipment and draw their final conclusions.

Within the investigation for Graded Unit 2, particularly the development stage, candidates submit written evidence which is not relevant, not client specific and can have repetition of information. At the Unit induction, assessors need to ensure they advise candidates against this and that the quality of evidence does not ensure better marks.

There is some difficulty when assessors use mechanistic marking and produce high marks/award A-grades when the candidate evidence does not reflect this grade. When using a holistic approach to marking, assessors should be required to provide feedback to justify the higher grade awarded. Additional guidance on marking is often given by External Verifiers during the course of their external verification visit.

Some assessors are unsure of remediation procedures for Graded Units and seek advice during external verification. There is an SQA guide, *The Guide to the Implementation of Higher National Graded Units*, which is beneficial for a team of assessors to use as a reference.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ Cross-marking each stage of individual candidates by different assessors.
- ◆ Assessor feedback form includes a selection of different levels of support the candidate has received from very little support to regular additional guidance. This helps the assessor reflect marks awarded to each candidate.
- ◆ The Unit induction for Graded Unit 1 — the assessor ensures that during the planning stage, candidates consider a contingency plan to include considerations of industry constraints and compliance within their evidence.
- ◆ Using an observation report/checklist on the candidates' performance management when observing the development stage for Graded Unit 2.
- ◆ Using the centre online facility to store and manage candidate Graded Unit evidence and provide feedback on assessment decision.

Specific areas for improvement

- ◆ Encourage candidates to reference throughout their text as well as provide a bibliography.
- ◆ Ensure there is a standardisation mechanism between assessors on what they require in order to award a higher mark/grade to a candidate.
- ◆ Avoid using mechanistic marking for Graded Units to reduce the prospect of awarding unjustified high marks.
- ◆ Assessors to use the 'Guide to marking' within the Graded Unit specifications.
- ◆ Ensure candidates perform a substantial number of practical treatments using their chosen pieces of electrical equipment to ensure they have adequate information gathered for their final conclusions for Graded Unit 2.

- ◆ Encourage candidates to achieve a higher mark/grade for Graded Unit 1 by considering producing creative treatment packages which contain a variety of treatments.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to consider the core mandatory Units they have successfully completed and transfer the skills/knowledge gained to their Graded Units.