



Higher National Qualifications Internal Assessment Report 2013 Childcare

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

The centres visited this year have mainly provided evidence of a good understanding of the national standards for HN Childcare Units. Work sampled across most centres indicated that candidates were working to a suitable standard and being assessed appropriately. However, centres should take care to ensure that candidates are working at the appropriate SCQF level (7 and 8). It is important for centres to make sure that they engage in appropriate dialogue with placement providers to help the placement mentors fully understand that centres must comply with SQA guidelines for assessment criteria.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Assessors in most centres appeared to be familiar with the Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials. Some centres had made good attempts to integrate Units where appropriate. This, in turn, helped reduce the burden of assessment for candidates. Assessors should then make sure a robust tracking system is in place to indicate where evidence can be located.

In one instance it would appear that assessors had not fully understood the requirements for the workplace practice Units and had relied too heavily on what they had been delivering in the past. It is important for centres to ensure appropriate internal verification takes place to allow assessors to clarify Evidence Requirements and check that assessments meet all criteria.

Evidence Requirements

Centre teams were mostly clear on the Evidence Requirements for the Units sampled and some had very good checklist tracking to ensure coverage of all Evidence Requirements, particularly where Units had been integrated. This was evident across level 7 and level 8. In almost all centres, assessors and internal verifiers worked hard to make sure that SCQF requirements for level 7 and level 8 were met. Assessor feedback indicated that candidates were being reminded of these requirements regularly throughout their course of study.

In one instance, assessors only just met the Evidence Requirements. It was clear that changes made to the assessment and a lack of appropriate recording made it difficult for assessors to track Evidence Requirements. When making changes to assessments, SQA's prior verification system is a valuable support and centres are reminded to use this.

Administration of assessments

Most centres appear to be working well with both the HNC EE&CC and the PDA Childhood Practice qualifications. Centres appear to be paying particular attention to the integration of assessments in order to reduce the assessment

burden for candidates. This seems to be working well and EV feedback suggests that there is some good practice particularly where Curriculum and Assessment and Language literacy and Numeracy have been integrated with the Working in EE&CC workplace Units.

Remediation of candidate work is clearly marked and appropriate recording of candidates' results appears to remain a priority for almost all centres.

Centres are also showing more and more use of Moodle to support candidates with assessment administration, provision of feedback, accessing of materials, and group support mechanisms.

Almost all centres visited had good, robust internal verification systems in place that allowed for a satisfactory degree of self-regulation across the qualifications verified.

However, it is important to point out that centres must comply with SQA's external verification visit requirements. All Units and assessments requested should be made available on the day. Replacement Units should be agreed in advance of the visit and assessors and internal verifiers should be available for discussion.

General feedback

Centres have again shown some highly developed feedback mechanisms for candidates, which have had a positive impact on students' learning experience and achievement levels. Feedback from candidates indicated that they were very satisfied with their experience and almost all felt they had learned a great deal from their course of study. They pointed out that they felt supported in the classroom and in their placement. Placement experience was considered invaluable to all candidates who were interviewed.

As previously reported, all External Verifiers found that while centres were a little daunted by the new quality assurance system they were still keen to raise issues and discuss new ways of working in an open and purposeful manner. All centres visited were keen to discuss the revision of the HNC EE&CC award. Some centres indicated that they felt that although the HNC EE&CC was working well, it needed to be updated and refreshed to take account of current thinking, new practices, and the wider role of the childhood studies practitioner.

Areas of good practice

The increased use of Moodle across the centres that were visited was considered an enhancement to the student experience. Online assessment, administration, provision of feedback, access to materials, and the provision of online group support mechanisms, were some of the benefits students reported when engaged with VLE systems.

Across all centres visited, assessors appeared to be paying particular attention to the integration of assessments in order to reduce the assessment burden for candidates. However, all centres should be reminded that in order to ensure

assessors have a clear understanding of Unit Evidence Requirements, centres should use SQA's prior verification system to support any changes to assessment.

Specific areas for improvement

All Units and assessments requested by External Verifiers should be made available on the day. Replacement Units should be agreed in advance of the visit and assessors and Internal Verifiers should be available for discussion.

Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

HNC EE&CC Graded Unit 1

PDA Childhood Practice Graded Unit 2

General comments

All centres visited this year appeared to have a good understanding of the national standards for HN Graded Units 1 and 2. Candidates across the centres visited were working to an appropriate standard and assessed appropriately. Although on some occasions, limited evidence was made available on the day of visit. It is important that centres comply with SQA's guideline for external verification visits. External Verifiers are required to examine at least two parts of the Graded Unit and all candidate work requested should be made available.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

In all cases, assessors appeared to be familiar with the Unit specifications and all centres produced appropriate instruments of assessment. Most centres provided candidates with support materials in the form of a guide booklet to help candidates develop their evidence-gathering skills.

Evidence Requirements

External Verifiers reported that the centres visited were comfortable with the Evidence Requirements for the Graded Units 1 and 2. Clear distinctions were made between the Graded Unit levels of 7 and 8. External Verifiers noted that centres offered candidates appropriate guidelines for each level. The topics selected this year were current and relevant for workplaces and to childhood practice.

Administration of assessments

All centres appeared to have a good understanding of where and when to best place the Graded Unit in the programme of study, ie after the mandatory Units have been studied and candidates have undertaken placement experience. External Verifiers found that assessments were generally marked promptly. Generally, feedback was supportive and informative and helped candidates progress to the next stage.

Almost all centres had robust internal verification procedures in place and standardisation of candidate work across assessors was undertaken.

One centre had clearly supported new assessors by engagement in standardisation meetings at each stage. Most centres appeared keen to ensure appropriate standardisation of the Graded Unit and often the internal verification

of the Unit was in excess of the requirements for SQA quality assurance; however, as this is often to support assessors, it is not considered an issue by the External Verifier team.

General feedback

External Verifiers reported that centres provided good levels of feedback for candidates, often with one-to-one meetings to ensure candidates were clear on how to move to the next stage. Overall, centres have again provided positive learning environments that allow candidates to engage in Graded Unit topics that interest and motivate them.

Areas of good practice

Very good use of detailed feedback is being used by some centres to support candidates through all stages of the Graded Units. Candidates can reflect on their learning and identify their strengths and areas for improvement. A few centres were praised for their work in encouraging candidates to choose topics that were current within the sector and fully analysing the data with up-to-date theory.

Specific areas for improvement

There remains an emphasis for all centres to ensure that when offering high marks to a candidate that there is evidence of sufficient analysis and interpretation of findings.