



Higher National Qualifications Internal Assessment Report 2014 Childcare

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in Higher National and Scottish Vocational 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 Units. Work sampled across most centres indicated that candidates were working to a suitable standard and being assessed appropriately.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Assessors 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. When integrating Units, assessors and internal verifiers should make sure a robust tracking system is in place in order to ensure all Performance Criteria are met.

Evidence Requirements

Centre teams were 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 SCQF levels 7 and 8. In all centres visited assessors and internal verifiers worked hard to make sure that SCQF requirements for levels 7 and 8 were met. Assessor feedback indicated that candidates were being reminded of these requirements regularly throughout their course of study.

Administration of assessments

Most centres appear to be working well with the HNC Early Education and Childcare (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 external verification feedback suggests that there is some good practice particularly where Units have been integrated with the Working in Early Education and Childcare workplace Units. This has provided candidates with clear links between theory and practice.

Remediation of candidate work is usually clearly marked and appropriate recording of candidates' results appears to remain a priority for almost all centres. Centres are also increasingly using VLEs (virtual learning environments), to support candidates with assessment administration, provision of feedback, accessing of materials, and as a group support mechanism.

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

All centres complied with SQA external visit requirements. All Units and assessments requested were made available on the day. However, it is important to point out that any replacement Units should be agreed in advance of the visit.

General feedback

Centres have again shown some highly developed feedback mechanisms for candidates, which have had a positive impact on the student 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. As expected, placement experience was considered invaluable to all candidates interviewed.

Assessors, however, raised concerns about the inclusion of SVQ Units in the revised HNC and stated that they were worried about how this would be received by placement providers. Some reassurance was given that continuing professional development training for assessors would be accessible via SQA. Centres were also advised to work with providers as early as possible in order to support their understanding of the requirements of the qualification.

EVs found that the new quality assurance system was welcomed and centres were keen to raise issues and discuss new ways of working in an open and purposeful manner.

Areas of good practice

The increased use of VLEs across the centres that were visited was considered to be 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 and have a robust tracking system in place to ensure coverage of all related Performance Criteria.

Specific areas for improvement

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 Early Education and Childcare 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 were assessed appropriately. 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 SCQF levels of 7 and 8. External Verifiers noted that centres offered candidates appropriate guidelines for each level. The topics selected 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 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.

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

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 reflect current practice.

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.

Specific areas for improvement

Centres should ensure that when offering high marks to a candidate there is evidence of sufficient analysis and interpretation of findings.