



# **Higher National Qualifications Internal Assessment Report 2013 Information Systems**

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

Within the centres seen there was sufficient knowledge of the national standard requirements.

Overall the assessors' judgement of candidates' performance was appropriate, and assessors' decisions recorded were in line with national standards across centres. The judgement of competence was accurately made in relation to the Units seen.

Assessors within this verification group have consistently demonstrated an interest in what is defining the national standard. Centres communicate with each other and to SQA in various ways, including through forums and the Qualification Support team.

## Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

There was familiarity with the Unit specifications. The highly knowledgeable centre staff in this award area showed a keen, focused interest in the content of individual Units and were happy to discuss these.

Availability and use of exemplars by centres was discussed and there is awareness of what is available.

Generally centres were using up-to-date and current assessment materials, and had correctly followed the assessment specifications from the Units. Assessment guidelines and the Evidence Requirements defined in Unit specifications were correctly implemented in assessments.

However there was a tendency shown in assessment task instructions (ATIs) to candidates, to merely copy the text directly from the Unit specification rather than interpret and rewrite the ATIs in user-friendly plain English.

## Evidence Requirements

The overall assessment procedures met the requirements of the Units undertaken and were of a good standard.

Evidence presented was generally well marked, with checklists maintained and records showing attainment to date.

## Administration of assessments

Centres were using a mix of centre-devised instruments of assessment and the available assessment exemplars. These had been internally verified, and in most instances were recorded on the appropriate internal verification form.

## **General feedback**

Feedback to candidates was usually carried out verbally although there were some instances of direct feedback on candidates' work folios, providing guidance on their performance and comments containing positive encouragement.

In a few centres there was also some evidence of feedback on candidates' progress checklists.

Feedback from candidates interviewed by External Verifiers with regard to awards, centre approaches to assessment and general relations with assessors, was very good. Most candidates were very happy with the support received from centre staff.

Access to assessment arrangements was well organised with firm procedures documented, eg personal learning plans. Details of candidates who have disabilities or additional support needs were identified and held centrally, and provision of resources such as accessibility software and hardware were made available.

Additional assessment opportunities are normally provided in tutorial slots and set remediation sessions.

## **Areas of good practice**

In one class, during the practical assignments for Bitmap and Vector graphics, use was made of screenshots together with candidate annotations to detail the steps taken when performing tasks. A few were well done, and incorporated in a PowerPoint presentation. This is to be encouraged across other classes and Units as it helps in ensuring coverage of Evidence Requirements.

Within picture editing evidence, a few candidates had clearly organised their pictures/graphics using a numbering and naming convention which followed the set task one, thereby making tracking of evidence and progress easier to follow. Good initiative was shown by the candidates involved.

Assessors were integrating assessments between Units where these Units involved similar tasks. This gave candidates a much better view of vocational practices that are rarely separated out in the workplace in the way they are in Units. It also provided a vehicle for candidates to explore more creative, individualised solutions that better reflect the candidate's skill level and the amount of effort put into the assessment exercise.

## **Specific areas for improvement**

Staff interviewed were clear about their roles in the quality assurance (QA) process and seemed to be carrying them out effectively. The names of assessors and Internal Verifiers should be clearly printed on all relevant forms for identification and tracking purposes.

Assessment task instructions to candidates should be written in plain English, not just copied directly from the Unit specification .This would help candidates' understand what they are actually required to do and produce. It may also help in improving assessors' familiarity with Unit specifications.

A simple matrix of Unit instances/occurrences with the names of the assessor and Internal Verifier against each would be useful for verification and other QA purposes.

# Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

F21G 34 Interactive Media: Graded Unit 1 (Exam)

F6V6 35 Interactive Media: Graded Unit 2

## General comments

The central verification event, which looked at the examination-based HN Graded Unit, was successful.

The judgement of candidate performance by assessors was mostly in line with the standard required and there were only a few candidates presented whose marks required adjustment and grades changed. Otherwise any disagreements were within acceptable boundaries.

The visiting verification took place mainly in May and June. Verification on projects can take place when the planning and developing stages have been completed and preliminary marks awarded.

The project-based Units seen, indicated in most cases that there was a clear and accurate understanding of the national standards.

## Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

In the examination-based Unit, the centres were using the SQA-published exemplars as their instruments of assessment.

In the project-based Graded Unit 2, centres should be commended on their interpretation of the requirements of the specification.

Prior verification activity had taken place on most instruments of assessment for the project-based Graded Units. This helped ensure familiarity and proved most useful when visits were taking place both for centre staff and the External Verifier.

## Evidence Requirements

In project-based Graded Units, once again, the technical content of the candidates' work was generally considered to be appropriate, acceptable and in most cases, well done.

It was found that overall, candidates were showing a good grasp of requirements and demonstrated skills at an appropriate level to potential grades awarded. This indicated that most assessors had a good understanding of the levels of complexity of tasks to be set and achieved.

## **Administration of assessments**

For the central verification event, presentation of materials was fairly good, although some centres had incorrectly completed submission forms.

Almost all centres were using the published SQA exemplars. Where a centre had used/constructed its own paper, these had been prior verified. It was also useful to note that any assumptions made about the exemplars had been included in the documentation supplied. This is most helpful when carrying out the process.

Overall within centres' submissions, there was clear and sufficient evidence of internal verification in a majority of submissions.

## **General feedback**

Interviews with candidates showed that a majority of centres were operating an effective induction process to the Graded Units and those candidates were aware of what they needed to do to achieve the different grades.

The Graded Unit candidate feedback was usually comprehensive and thorough. Access to assessment arrangements was very good, the same as for standard Units.

## **Areas of good practice**

In one centre visited, the F6V6 35 Interactive Media Graded Unit 2 had particularly good feedback to candidates (and therefore to verifiers) as to the rationale for awarding marks and therefore grades. This approach is to be encouraged; the feedback comments were concise and the marking on scripts was clear and systematic.

In general, the quality of the interactive media products, eg websites, demonstrated by candidates, was to a high level and in keeping with recognised commercial standards. In fact, many were real work activities for external small businesses or organisations.

## **Specific areas for improvement**

Within the Examination Graded Unit (F21G 34 Interactive Media: Graded Unit 1), a centre had used an SQA exemplar which had been amended and submitted but contained changes which had not been identified to the central verification event team. Centres are advised that such changes can affect the validity of individual questions and potentially the whole paper. All amended exemplars should be submitted to SQA for prior verification.

Names of assessors and Internal Verifiers were not always clearly stated either on candidate scripts or on supporting forms submitted. Sometimes initials were seen but not formally printed names. Identification is important for QA sampling and reporting purposes. Printed names should be supplied.

The Graded Unit should be an example of a standalone project. It should not cross reference evidence from other previously marked individual Units.

For all Graded Units, both examination and project-based, it is strongly recommended that centres take note and implement processes and procedures based on the SQA publication *Guidance for the Implementation of Graded Units* Publication code: CA4405.