



**Higher National Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2014
Music**

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

This report is based on 23 external verification visits. There were three full qualifications visits, 19 Graded Unit 1 visits and a single Graded Unit 2 visit. However, many of the Graded Unit 1 visits were in the context of either the Music Business or Sound Production frameworks.

Across the sector all centres visited had significant strengths with no action points recorded. Therefore, this would suggest that, from this external verification sample, centres have a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards for HN Music.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

From this external verification sample it appears that assessors have full familiarity with Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials, since all had significant strengths. Centre staff maintained up-to-date master packs containing Unit specifications, instruments of assessment, model answers and checklists, candidate achievement and internal verification forms and materials.

From the sample, assessments were valid, reliable, equitable and fair, and were constructed in accordance with Unit specification and SQA requirements. All evidence verified was deemed to be accurately and consistently marked in accordance with detailed and thorough marking schemes. There were, however, a few minor recommendations.

Team meetings were undertaken to ensure standardisation of Unit delivery and assessment — showing evidence of pre-delivery planning. Meeting minutes were also available.

Evidence Requirements

The sampled evidence would suggest that overall there is a clear understanding of the Evidence Requirements for Unit(s). Generally, for the Units verified there was evidence of pre-delivery checks and internal verification throughout the term, including sampling of student work.

Administration of assessments

From the sample it was clear that assessment is at the appropriate level.

In some centres, delivering staff used SQA exemplars, where available, and ensured that these, as well as their own instruments of assessment, matched all knowledge and skills for all Outcomes for each Unit.

There was, in this sample, very good, robust internal verification systems in place — although in the case of one centre this could be managed better, hence the recommendations.

Curriculum planning, self-evaluation and review were also generally evident, showing how learning, teaching and the assessment process would be implemented.

General feedback

Feedback to candidates was, in the main, very good, constructive and fair.

Feedback from candidates in these centres was also extremely positive. Where interviewed, candidates stated that they were enjoying their course and study and in one case candidates stated that they felt their tutors were very committed to the students. Candidates generally felt that they were well supported in all aspects of their course and, in the main, had access to excellent resources and excellent teaching.

Access to assessment was thought to be fair for all in the sampled lessons. Candidates were in one facility for their studies, therefore the process was easily managed.

It is clear that candidates across the sector are working conscientiously and very hard, producing exceptional work in some cases. They are supported throughout their studies by teaching teams that are committed and very experienced.

Areas of good practice

In general, course teams are highly motivated and well informed about the assessment and internal verification procedures. They are committed to producing high quality learning environments, learning and teaching materials, and rigorous and robust assessments. Teams are clearly giving serious consideration to the planning of integrated approaches to assessment at both Unit content level as well as across programmes — a factor that should be significant to the experience of every candidate.

Centres are generally very well equipped and up-to-date and this affords candidates an excellent learning experience. Tutors/assessors are generally active themselves in the music industry and this is especially true in the case of part-time staff. This factor, coupled with visiting lectures from industry professionals, brings the industry into the classroom and ensures access to the latest information as well as access to these professionals. Centres ensure candidates are actively involved in music making outwith the centre environment.

Many centres appear to be using 'Turnitin' to ensure that evidence from candidates is their own work.

Comments from External Verifiers (EVs) included:

- ◆ *In one centre the Learner Action Plan is a fabulous tool for plotting students' progress, skills, and identifying and recording any help they may need to pass the course.*
- ◆ *A pre-essay grid to gather all key areas and points for Outcome 1 in Music History 1 was thought to be extremely helpful for students early in their academic career, in mastering keeping to the points asked of them and avoiding superfluous content.*
- ◆ *Collaboration between two class groups in Session Skills was considered good practice.*
- ◆ *Lots of opportunities for live performance both internally and externally.*

Specific areas for improvement

Delivering lecturers, assessors, internal verifiers and college management are striving to ensure that there is a culture of continuous improvement in their centres. It is therefore anticipated that any recommendations highlighted in an EV report will be implemented to ensure that there is continuous improvement.

Higher National Graded Units

The following Graded Units were externally verified:

Graded Unit 1 (19 in total) and Graded Unit 2 (one in total)

Note that the following Units are allocated to Music (63):

F508 34 Music Graded Unit 1

F506 34 Sound Production Graded Unit 1

F507 34 Music Business Graded Unit

DR33 35 Music Graded Unit 2

General comments

Across the sector all centres visited had significant strengths with no action points recorded. Therefore, this would suggest that, from this external verification sample, centres have a reasonably clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards for HN Music Graded Unit 1 and 2.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Assessors are familiar with the Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials as well as the SQA online support material for these Graded Units.

From the sample, all assessments were valid, reliable, equitable and fair and were constructed in accordance with Unit specification and SQA requirements. All evidence verified was deemed to be accurately and consistently marked in accordance with marking schemes.

Team meetings were undertaken to ensure standardisation of Unit delivery and assessment — showing evidence of pre-delivery planning. Where appropriate, meeting minutes were also available.

Evidence Requirements

Because of the timing of EV visits for Graded Units, the key requirement for verification is that the planning and developing stages are complete with at least an indicative mark allocated. This generally means that the evaluation stage is not complete and so is rarely verified.

However, a common thread for Graded Unit 1 included:

1. In the planning stage, candidates should include clear aims and objectives that are SMART.

2. Candidates to include clear statements concerning resources and information sources.
3. Use of a front sheet to the portfolio to identify what is included in the portfolio, why it is included, and a statement of where the knowledge and skills were obtained, identifying mandatory Units.
4. Portfolios contents should not simply be a series of statements that repeat or outline mandatory Units or course material. Rather, candidates should apply knowledge and skills to produce or create items or artefacts, eg recordings, business card design outlines, press packs, lists of membership organisations, financial statements, etc.

Administration of assessments

Assessments in centres are administered well, are at the appropriate level, and decisions are fair and consistent. There appear to be robust systematic internal verification procedures in place. There is also good recording of mentoring interviews.

General feedback

Feedback to candidates was, in the main, very good, clear and consistent.

Feedback from candidates in the sampled centres was also very positive. Candidates generally felt that tutor support was very useful, timely and constructive. Candidates felt very supported and were usually very complimentary about the teaching teams and environments in which they were learning.

Access to assessment was thought to be fair for all. In the sampled centres, candidates were in one facility for their studies, therefore the process was easily managed.

It is clear that candidates across the sector are working conscientiously and very hard. The Graded Unit is an opportunity to pull together skills and to pitch and sell oneself. Some candidates excelled and produced high quality work and delivered exceptional presentations. Candidates are supported throughout their studies by teaching teams that are committed and very experienced.

Areas of good practice

In general, course teams are highly motivated and well informed about assessment and internal verification procedures. They are committed to ensuring their candidates gain high quality experiences. Teams are clearly giving serious consideration to the planning and delivery of these Graded Units.

Centres are generally very well equipped and up-to-date and this affords candidates an excellent learning experience, see previous comments.

EVs commented that:

- ◆ *Breaking down the marks in the marking scheme into the various evidence requirements helped with consistency and the accuracy of the grades allocated.*
- ◆ *Creating an EV master pack ensures relevant evidence can be checked quickly and easily.*
- ◆ *The calendar of events document is an excellent tool for ensuring the centre remains very proactive in dealing with SQA requirements on time.*

The tutor feedback being given via Mahara allows the candidate to see all the feedback their tutor has given them throughout the Graded Unit process, which helps them greatly when working on the next stages of the Unit.

Specific areas for improvement

Delivering lecturers, assessors, internal verifiers and college management are striving to ensure that there is a culture of continuous improvement in their centres. It is therefore anticipated that any recommendations highlighted in an EV report will be implemented to ensure that there is continuous improvement.

Discussion took place in some centres regarding assessment guidance for the developing stage and the requirements for this stage.