



Higher National and Vocational Qualifications Internal Assessment Report 2016 Communities

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

This session, 14 external verification visits were carried out by the team. The standard observed on the visits was very good.

The centres visited had a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards.

The external verification reports produced identified:

- ◆ There was sufficient evidence to fully meet all the requirements stated within the units.
- ◆ There are enthusiastic assessors and internal verifiers who provide excellent support for candidates and who are all keen to give a positive learning experience to candidates.

One comment that exemplifies the general standard is:

'These units are being delivered to a high standard with systems and policies in place to ensure a high standard of assessment and internal verification processes.'

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

There were clear marking schemes in use, and evidence was seen of fair and consistent marking.

The assessment judgements by assessors and internal verifiers were confirmed by external verification to be accurate.

The external verification reports reflect that delivery staff are familiar with unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials, and that the assessment support packs developed by SQA are in use.

Evidence requirements

Reports produced of the visits demonstrate that there is a clear understanding within centres of the evidence requirements for the units.

The following comment from an external verification report reflects the overall standard:

'Candidate evidence viewed during the visit demonstrated that it was accurately and consistently judged by their assessors to meet the requirements of the units.'

Administration of assessments

From the reports produced it is clear that assessments are at the appropriate level. There was clear evidence of centre staff taking part in meetings to ensure standardisation of the assessment process.

General feedback

Delivery of units at the centres visited was appropriate. Assessment materials and assessment decisions were equitable, valid, reliable and fair.

External verifiers were in agreement with the assessment and internal verification decisions made.

Candidates who were interviewed confirmed that they receive feedback, guidance and support. For example, it was noted on one visit that the candidates responded 'enthusiastically and positively about the course and the support they had received from tutors'.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ Staff participation in regular standardisation meetings
- ◆ Use of detailed internal verification checklists
- ◆ Robust and fair entry requirements were observed in some centres
- ◆ Use of simple and concise candidate handbook (centre developed)
- ◆ Flexible and learner centred assessment arrangements
- ◆ Partnership working with external agencies

Specific areas for improvement

Recommendations were made that:

- ◆ If particular methods of assessment are being used by centres, they should be applied consistently across relevant units to ensure a standardised approach.
- ◆ Where centres develop their own assessment guidance for candidates, care should be taken that these reflect SQA requirements.
- ◆ Prospective candidates should be given full information about the course to ensure they are aware of the commitment required by them.
- ◆ Centres delivering the Volunteer Awards should record discussions concerning reviews undertaken and retain as evidence of standardisation.
- ◆ Centre staff should be encouraged to look at methods of integrating evidence from candidates.

Higher National graded units

DK16 34 HNC Working with Communities Graded Unit 1

General comments

Four graded unit verification visits took place.

The external verification reports produced demonstrated in general that delivering centres had a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the graded unit and that external verifiers agreed with the assessment and internal verification decisions made.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

All documents being used are current and valid. Centres are making use of the exemplification/assessment support pack produced by SQA.

Evidence requirements

External verifiers were satisfied that evidence submitted by candidates was sufficient and of the correct standard.

Administration of assessments

It was noted that some centre delivery staff participated in standardisation meetings to discuss assessment decisions and highlight possible issues. This is excellent practice.

Comprehensive evidence of robust internal verification of assessment decisions was seen during visits. External verifiers agreed with the decisions made by centre staff.

It was also noted that the allocation of marks in the different stages of the graded unit was accurately and consistently applied.

General feedback

Candidates who were interviewed confirmed that they were given clear guidance for the graded unit and, for some, further support was put in place where required. Candidates expressed satisfaction with the course delivery and felt supported.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ It was noted that teaching teams also include experienced community learning and development practitioners.
- ◆ A learner-centred approach from the teaching team was evident with learning and development tutors allocated to each group.

- ◆ There is constructive and supportive feedback to candidates designed to improve candidate performance.
- ◆ Student satisfaction surveys are completed at the end of each unit to inform the development of learning and teaching approaches.

Specific areas for improvement

It was recommended that copies of tutorial planning documents be retained and also that candidates should be clearly informed where they have met the minimum evidence requirements stated.

SVQ awards

General comments

Nine centres were visited.

The external verification reports produced demonstrated in general that centres visited had a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national occupational standards, for example:

'Candidate evidence sampled had been accurately assessed and all additional evidence required for external visit purposes was available and met SQA standards.'

Overall, the quality of work was of a very high standard and the external verifiers agreed with the assessment decisions made.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

External verification reports demonstrated that assessors are familiar with, and are accurately adhering to, assessment procedures. This observation is supported by the following comments seen in the reports:

'Concise checking systems, equality policy and assessment strategy are being applied.'

'All quality assurance documents met SQA standards such as: internal verification policy; assessment strategy; staff CPD records; candidate, assessor and internal verifier induction documents; verification checklists and minutes of standardisation meetings.'

Evidence requirements

Candidate evidence viewed was deemed to be sufficient and valid to prove competence. The evidence was accompanied by assessment checklists based on the unit specifications; these give a clear indication of the amount and types of evidence gathered for each unit.

Administration of assessments

The external verification reports produced confirmed that assessment instruments and assessment methods used were based on the current SQA assessor guidelines for this award.

It was noted that a good range of assessment methods was being used and that from the standardisation minutes and the internal verification reports it was clear that assessment methods had been discussed to ensure their appropriateness.

General feedback

It was noted that, overall, good support mechanisms are in place to support candidates through the evidence gathering and assessment process.

Candidates who were interviewed felt well supported by their assessors and other staff involved.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ Some centre staff have been involved in the discussions and work of the steering group for the new SVQ, providing insight to the steering group whilst contributing to their own CPD.
- ◆ Feedback from internal verifiers and assessors was excellent as it was detailed, supportive and gave encouragement.
- ◆ Internal verification reports were detailed and highlighted specific areas for assessors to address.

Specific areas for improvement

- ◆ In some cases assessment planning sessions should be recorded in a more structured manner and used for guiding candidates towards the identification of work-based situations/products where the gathering of evidence can be maximised.
- ◆ It is important to assess product evidence and witness testimony holistically, using them towards different competences within and across units. This reduces the assessment burden on the candidate and ensures that centres do avoid unnecessary over-assessment.