



**Higher National and Vocational Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2016
Complementary Therapy**

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 HNC and HND Complementary Therapies awards were validated in October 2006. These awards were developed due to the specialised nature of complementary therapies and the national interest in this emerging occupational area. While designing these awards the Qualifications Design Team sought to ensure that these qualifications contained relevant technical and transferable skills to enable immediate entry to employment while simultaneously facilitating the opportunity to progress to higher education.

A limited number of centres deliver the Complementary Therapy awards. A few units however within the Complementary Therapy structure are also contained within the HNC and HND Beauty Therapy awards, eg F9T5 34 Human Anatomy and Physiology for Beauty and Complementary Therapies, D4EJ 34 Aromatherapy, F1B7 34 Aromatherapy, D4EK 34 Reflexology, and F1BD 34 Reflexology.

Centres that deliver the current HNC and HND Complementary Therapies qualifications have done so since award validation. One centre delivers Complementary Therapies on both a full-time and part-time basis giving access to this course in a flexible manner. Discussions with centre staff confirmed that assessors and internal verifiers had a clear understanding of the national standard.

Four SQA-approved centres were selected for external verification activity in academic session 2015–16, with five visits carried out. One full qualification, one unit F9T5 34, one F81T 34 Complementary Therapies: Graded Unit 1, and two for F1D0 35 Complementary Therapies: Graded Unit 2. All external verification visits were successful.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The external verification activity undertaken confirmed that assessors and internal verifiers use current unit specifications and have a clear understanding of the unit specifications and their evidence requirements. There was evidence of discussion and standardisation on unit content. In instances where clarity is required, this is sought from SQA. During one visit centre staff discussed, and sought clarification from the external verifier on, the evidence requirements relating to the required number of performances for unit F1BJ 35 Aromatherapy: Advanced.

Evidence requirements

Discussions with assessors and internal verifiers during external verification visits, standardisation meeting minutes, internal verification sampling and

assessment decisions viewed during visit sampling confirmed that centre staff have a clear understanding of the unit evidence requirements.

The SQA exemplar material, where available, indicates the expected standard of learner response, facilitating standardised, reliable assessment decisions.

Administration of assessments

The external verification sample indicated that assessment is at the appropriate level. Centres use the SQA assessment exemplars where these are available and devise their own instruments of assessment to meet unit requirements where exemplar material is not available. These are subject to internal verification but not always sent to SQA for prior verification. While this is not mandatory it is recommended that all centre-devised instruments of assessment be sent to SQA for prior verification to confirm they are valid, reliable, equitable and fair.

There was evidence of internal verification planning, pre-delivery, and ongoing and post-delivery internal verification. Documentation viewed demonstrated that feedback on internal verification is given to assessors; actions as/when identified are recorded, implemented and followed up on completion.

Learners in the majority of centres receive an assessment schedule which enables them to establish a self-study pattern.

Evidence is generated via written assessment, observation supported by client consultation records, assignment/reports and case studies. Written assessments are carried out in a supervised controlled environment in line with SQA requirements. Learners complete a 'plagiarism statement' and submit with assignments/reports in almost all centres. Some centres use anti-plagiarism software Turnitin.

General feedback

Written feedback to candidates was constructive and supportive. In instances where remediation was required, clear guidance was evident.

Verbal feedback from learners interviewed during external verification activity confirmed they receive sufficient feedback and that there were support mechanisms in place where additional help could be accessed, both academic and pastoral. Learners commented that they had found their programmes both enjoyable and challenging.

One group of learners indicated that having completed the HNC they were well aware of the assessment demands of the HND and would have preferred to complete more assessment in semester 1. This group had already had the opportunity to give feedback to centre staff on assessment scheduling. Centre staff advised that they will consider this feedback while reviewing the assessment schedule for the next academic session.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ The use of a social media page to enable learners to interact with each other and the assessor.
- ◆ Submitting centre-devised instruments of assessment to SQA for prior verification.
- ◆ Learners being given the opportunity to work with the local hospice and other external agencies, enhancing their employment prospects.
- ◆ The breadth of knowledge demonstrated in learner research projects for units HF7M 34 Complementary Therapies: Professional Issues and Practice and DN6W 35 Lifestyle Advice for Clients.
- ◆ The use of assessment overview sheets giving learners a clear understanding of which areas of assessment are still to be completed.

Specific areas for improvement

F9T5 34 Human Anatomy and Physiology for Beauty and Complementary Therapy

- ◆ Centres should make a minimum of one change to the optional body systems selected for assessment (sampled) each academic session.
- ◆ Where delivery and assessment of this unit falls at different times within the academic session, alternative optional body systems should be sampled to maintain the integrity of assessment.

Higher National graded units

Titles/levels of HN graded units verified:

F81T 34 Complementary Therapies: Graded Unit 1

F1D0 35 Complementary Therapies: Graded Unit 2

General comments

External verification activity enabled assessment decisions to be made from three SQA-approved centres; one for F81T 34 Complementary Therapies: Graded Unit 1 and two for F1D0 35 Complementary Therapies: Graded Unit 2. All verification visits were successful.

Discussions with centre staff, assessors and internal verifiers confirmed an accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards for these graded units.

All centres use the SQA exemplar material; material was subject to review following centre procedures as well as internal verification.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

All centres were using the current unit specifications and SQA exemplar material. The marking guides within the SQA exemplar were being used effectively in almost all centres. In one instance the application of marks above the minimum had been slightly generous; discussion and agreement with centre staff resulted in the reduction of overall grade for two learners from grade B to grade C.

Evidence of standardisation, internal verification and comprehensive feedback given to learners on each stage of graded unit submission confirmed that assessors and internal verifiers are familiar with both the requirements of the unit specification and the application of the marking guide contained within the SQA exemplar.

Evidence requirements

The SQA exemplar provides marking guidelines which clearly demonstrate the minimum evidence requirements for each stage of the graded unit — planning, developing and evaluation. The exemplar also provides guidelines on where additional marks could be applied. Learners must meet all minimum requirements to achieve a grade C. Expanded feedback was evident on almost all candidate submissions giving a clear justification that the minimum requirements had been met and where additional marked had been awarded. This clearly demonstrated therefore that assessors and internal verifiers have a good understanding of unit requirements.

Administration of assessments

The external verification sample indicated that assessment is at the appropriate level. Centres use the SQA assessment exemplars which contain marking guides. These are subject to centre review processes and standardisation. The instruments of assessment used by centres for both unit F81T 34 Complementary Therapies: Graded Unit 1 and F1D0 35 Complementary Therapies: Graded Unit 2 are current, valid, reliable, equitable and fair.

Marks allocated in almost all instances were a true reflection for learner submissions sampled. In line with the requirement of the graded unit, mentor meetings are held between assessor and learner after the submission of each stage of the graded unit. The level of feedback given to learners following submission of each stage enables learners to improve submissions as they progress through the graded unit.

In one centre a checklist is used while marking the presentation for the Developing Stage of F1D0 35 Complementary Therapies: Graded Unit 2. The possibility of recording presentations was discussed as a mechanism to enable these to be viewed by the internal and external verifier to confirm assessment decisions and mark allocation. In addition, this would give learners the opportunity to reflect on their performance.

There was evidence of robust internal verification systems. Ongoing internal verification was evident for each stage of the graded unit submission in some instances. Double-marking of learner submission had taken place in centres, facilitating consistent, reliable and standardised assessment decisions being made in almost all instances.

Learner submissions are supported by a plagiarism statement. Some centres use anti-plagiarism software Turnitin; although this is rarely used for graded unit submissions.

General feedback

There are clear mechanisms in place which support learners in all centres. Learners have scheduled contact with their assessor to review progress. Verbal feedback from learners interviewed during external verification activity confirmed that learners felt well supported.

Learners interviewed in one centre commented that they had found the graded unit challenging, but felt it prepared them well for taking their next steps to employment.

Submissions sampled were presented well, were of a good standard, showed the use of good research skills and demonstrated the appropriate SCQF level. Limited evidence of referencing was viewed in one centre. This had been identified during internal verification and was discussed with centre staff.

Learners are encouraged to take part in a number of external events which facilitate enrichment and enhancement of the course requirements. The external

events in which learners participate also extended learner skills due to diverse client groups.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ Candidate submissions demonstrated good research skills.
- ◆ The level of feedback given to learners supports progress throughout the graded unit.
- ◆ The use of a centre-devised checklist during the presentation within the evaluating stage of F1D0 35 Complementary Therapies: Graded Unit 2 which demonstrates clear marking guidelines.
- ◆ Double-marking of learner submissions supports and facilitates consistent, reliable assessment decisions.
- ◆ Expanded internal verification feedback to assessors shows a robust internal verification system in place which is constructive and supportive.
- ◆ Learner participation in numerous community projects gives them opportunities to develop and enhance skills.

Specific areas for improvement

- ◆ Consider depth of content against minimum criteria and broad level-related descriptions for a project when adding and justifying additional marks.
- ◆ Consider recording the evaluating stage presentations to enable these to be viewed by the internal and external verifier to confirm assessment decisions and mark allocation. In addition this would give learners the opportunity to reflect on their performance.
- ◆ Encourage the use of referencing throughout.