



**Higher National and Vocational Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2016
Learning and Development**

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

Assessor/Verifier units:

H290 35 Conduct the Assessment Process

H291 35 Conduct the Internal Verification Process

Learning and Development units:

F81Y 33 Planning and Delivering Learning Sessions to Groups

DN3H 34 Learning and Development: An Introduction

DN3E 34 Learning and Development: Evaluating Own Practice and Planning for Self Development

DN3G 34 Learning and Development: Identifying Learning Needs

External verification reports confirm that the Assessor/Verifier and Learning and Development units are well understood across centres. This is confirmed by virtue of all SQA quality assurance criteria being met on each external verification visit carried out this session.

The knowledge and skills for these units can be found on [SQA's Learning and Development web page](#). The evidence requirements and support notes can be found on SQA's secure site.

Almost all centres introduce candidates to the support notes as part of candidate inductions, and in a number of reports candidates make positive reference to using them throughout their assessment.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Centres ensure they match candidate job roles to the most appropriate Assessor/Verifier units, eg those assessing/verifying NQ/HN programmes are offered H290 35 instead of FD41 04. This checking process shows that centres have gained a clear understanding of the required assessment environment(s) — to ensure successful unit completion.

For all visits, external verification reports confirm that staff are appropriately experienced and/or qualified and maintain appropriate CPD in accordance with the assessment strategy for the H290/1 units.

Units H290 35 and H291 35 do not have associated exemplar materials. However, support notes are used extensively by centres.

The external verification reports for unit DN3H 34 confirmed that the SQA-devised instruments of assessment are used consistently.

One particular centre felt that the DN3H 34 unit should include e-learning or use of digital equipment in the unit and exemplar materials to give it more currency. This unit has since been updated to include references to e-learning.

Evidence requirements

Candidates undertaking the Assessor/Verifier units mainly work in colleges, at times in schools or with training provider organisations. On occasions, assessor–candidates report difficulties in using the required four instruments/methods of assessment because of their restricted assessment remit. This is usually resolved internally by assessor–candidates being allocated a different cohort of learners for a defined period of time. On a very small number of occasions, external verifiers have agreed special assessment requirements with centres for specific assessor–candidates to ensure access to assessment.

The F81Y unit was found to be delivered in a block whilst in other circumstances delivery comprised eg one-hour workshops over eight weeks. The evidence requirements allow for this level of flexibility which candidates/centres have embraced as programmes can be tailored around candidate availability or employment responsibilities.

Administration of assessments

Each centre's assessment and quality assurance procedures help support assessor/verifier–candidates in that by following procedures, evidence is naturally generated. This situation not only helps facilitate the assessment process, but provides checks for internal and external verifiers that approved centre requirements are being met.

Centres use a variety of methods to ensure assessment evidence is sufficient and at an appropriate level. This includes the use of dual-marking and the use of key-point checklists to support standardisation of assessment decisions. Standardisation meetings, as part of internal verification procedures, are commonly used to record agreement between assessors and verifiers in relation to evidence/completed assessments. Standardisation logs are also used in a number of centres to record assessor/verifier team agreement.

General feedback

Some candidates were informed, during external verification visits, that should they wish to convert their HN Assessor/Verifier units to the equivalent workplace SVQ units in the future, there are straightforward achieved prior learning (APL) arrangements to accommodate this on SQA's secure site.

On numerous occasions, external verifier reports comment on the satisfaction felt by candidates in relation to the advice and support they receive from their assessor.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ Standardisation logs in some centres used in staff inductions — informing new assessors/verifiers of past decisions.
- ◆ In one centre, all support and guidance took the form of taped discussions, used when support given over the phone, during video conferencing, and during face-to-face meetings — candidates accessed recordings on their mobile phones.
- ◆ Some centres offer assessor–candidates individual support sessions after standardisation meetings, helping make the most of available meeting opportunities.
- ◆ A number of assessors/verifiers identify their development needs with their line manager on an annual basis, aiding focused CPD planning.

Specific areas for improvement

The development of an evidence tracker for referencing evidence to unit requirements would be useful for the HN Assessor/Verifier units — similar to the Workplace Assessor/Verifier units.

SVQ awards

This report relates to SVQs in Learning and Development and the single-unit Professional Development Awards (PDAs)

The current Learning and Development (L&D) National Occupational Standards (NOS), encompass thirteen standards. These individual standards were used to develop two SVQs in Learning and Development

GA2C 24 SVQ Level 4 Learning and Development

GA29 23 SVQ Level 3 Learning and Development

There are four-single unit standalone Professional Development Awards:

FD40 04 Assess Workplace Competence Using Direct Methods

FD41 04 Assess Workplace Competence Using Direct and Indirect Methods

FD43 04 Internally Monitor and Maintain the Quality of Workplace Assessment

General comments

The Assessor/Verifier units are regulated, which means certain conditions apply. One particular condition requires all assessors and verifiers of regulated qualifications (namely SVQs) to achieve a recognised assessor/verifier qualification within 18 months of starting to practice (if no alternative timescale is stated in the subject-specific assessment strategy for the SVQs being assessed/verified).

Also, previously qualified assessors and verifiers of SVQs must show through their CPD that they are working in line with the current NOS in assessment and verification.

The above requirements, relating to both unqualified and qualified assessors/verifiers, means high numbers of SQA-approved centre staff gain exposure to the NOS in assessment and verification (and the qualifications on which they are based). By virtue of these conditions, the standards are generally well understood and widely applied by SQA-approved centres as the achievement and practice is monitored by all SQA groups externally verifying SVQs.

The Learning and Development SVQs have been in existence now for almost six years. The performance criteria and knowledge requirements are written in practical terms and in plain English, therefore the standards are generally well understood by centres.

Approved centres are required to hold periodic standardisation meetings where assessors and verifiers for L&D units come together to discuss the assessment approach and associated completed candidate evidence. It is evident through

external verifier reports that this type of meeting has become an essential quality assurance mechanism, providing assessors and verifiers with opportunities to compare and discuss assessments with a view to clarifying any 'grey areas' and confirming assessors/verifier have an accurate understanding of the national standards.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The unit specifications are generally well interpreted and understood.

External verification reports confirm that support and exemplification materials for assessors and internal verifiers — called Practical Guides (available on SQA's secure site) are being used widely by centres.

The guides are aimed at developing the reader's understanding of the skills and knowledge required to become a competent L&D practitioner. They are also used as reference materials, helping with the interpretation of key phrases and words contained in unit specifications.

Centres use the guides frequently for assessor/verifier/trainer–candidate inductions and for training new assessors/verifiers and trainers.

SQA has been running professional development workshops on the Workplace Assessor/Verifier units for over 10 years. These workshops are well attended by centres (an average of ten attendees per monthly workshop) and give L&D practitioners an opportunity to clarify any issues they may have, and share experiences/good practice. These workshops also provide new assessor/verifiers or assessor/verifier–candidates with opportunities to become familiar with specifications and methods of assessment via the use of sessions focusing on example personal accounts with supporting evidence.

External verification visit reports confirm that centres generally have no difficulties in accessing the L&D unit specifications from the [Learning and Development SVQ web page](#).

Evidence requirements

On a very small number of occasions, external verifiers find that centres taking assessor/verifier–candidates through their qualifications, work with the L&D NOS only, forgetting to access the evidence requirements on [SQA's secure site](#). The updating of the Learning and Development SVQ web pages has reduced these instances significantly.

External verification reports reflect a consistent understanding of the evidence requirements across all types of centre. Where there are queries, they tend to mainly relate to ensuring assessor/verifier–candidates select the most appropriate assessor/verifier qualifications for the role(s) they are performing. The following publication is used frequently by centres when discussing qualification options with potential assessor/verifier–candidates:

[Choosing appropriate Assessor and Verifier Qualifications.](#)

Administration of assessments

Recording of assessment and internal verification in relation to the L&D units is generally well maintained. Where recommendations are recorded in external verification reports, it tends to be in relation to the referencing of the evidence to all component parts of the unit (knowledge, performance, and evidence requirements). The referencing to the evidence requirements attracts the most number of recommendations. This has improved with the updating of exemplar referencing examples in the unit trackers and practical guides provided by SQA.

Centres offering a number of SVQs including L&D SVQs/PDAs/units at times overlook the L&D Assessment Strategy requirements to record the identification and planning of CPD. This is not required for any other occupational area. Centres quite rightly aim to use just one type of CPD recording template regardless of occupational area, and the most popular CPD template used by centres covers the recording of CPD activities only.

SQA provided an L&D update to centres in March 2016 on the Learning and Development SVQ web page. The update included reference to refreshed CPD guidance to help centres identify and use existing sources of evidence to fulfil L&D Assessment Strategy requirements without necessarily having to use alternative CPD recording templates.

External verification of L&D SVQs confirms that L&D SVQs tend to be sampled on a percentage basis, as per all other SVQs. The internal verification of the Assessor/Verifier units and single-unit PDAs tends to aptly remain at 100% due to a smaller and less frequent throughput of candidates being certificated. SQA's three-phase internal verification system is now being widely adopted by centres, fitting naturally well with the practice requirements to plan, do and review in L&D9 and L&D11. This synergy between the required SQA systems and L&D Assessor/Verifier qualifications has helped centres make important positive connections between qualifications and expected assessor/verifier practice.

General feedback

Feedback from candidates is encouraged during external verification visits in relation to frequency of contact, induction, support/guidance and communication of progress/achievement. In virtually all centres visited, candidates have provided positive feedback in relation to all of the above areas of feedback.

Assessors play a significant facilitation role when it comes to explaining unit requirements. This comes across strongly in candidate feedback, many reporting on access to advice and support out with office hours, and via a variety of communication channels such as virtual learning environments, e-portfolios, e-mail, text and tele-communications.

E-mails, texts and e-portfolios (and any combinations of these) are often the main sources of evidence reviewed on external verification visits when it comes to

assessment planning and progress reviews, and feedback from candidates suggest that these methods are user-friendly.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ Using the L&D Assessor/Verifier units to design procedures and promote good assessor/verifier practice
- ◆ Providing assessor/verifier–candidates with access to SQA Practical Guides at the commencement of and throughout their assessment
- ◆ Using existing systems such as standardisation meetings, performance review meetings and standardisation meetings to identify and plan CPD
- ◆ Using video recordings of, for example, assessment planning and feedback as part of training — this gives assessor/verifier–candidates an opportunity to ‘see’ good practice.

Specific areas for improvement

Centres can use any type of summary form/record to help candidates gather the appropriate evidence, but must continue to use the original standards when making assessor judgements and when referencing between candidate evidence and all parts of the unit specification. SQA evidence trackers, available on SQA’s secure site, facilitate this referencing process very well.

It would be beneficial if FAQs were to include the benefits of discussing the incorporation of L&D unit evidence requirements with the e-portfolio provider, before the assessment process commences.