



**Higher National and Vocational Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2016
Oil Related Studies**

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

Three centres were verified in 2015–16. All offered a range of HN units which are part of the Group Award G964 16 HND Petroleum Engineering. The units that were available for external verification this session were:

F52X 34; F52Y 34; F530 34; F533 34; F531 35; F532 35; F52T 35; F52W 35

From information obtained from the external verification reports it is apparent that staff in all three centres have a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the units for this award. Lesson plans and marking schemes produced ensure that all learning outcomes are achievable.

There were no non-compliances with the Quality Assurance Management System QAMS criteria, however a few recommendations were made by external verifiers to enhance delivery and administration and these were accepted willingly by all three centres.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

All three centres have several assessors assigned to teaching and assessment for the units and all appear to be familiar with the guidance and requirements of the unit specifications. An appropriate range of assessment instruments and methods are used by all three centres to ensure that assessment of evidence for learning outcomes is standardised and consistent. Marking schemes and assessor guidance notes are extensively employed by the three centres.

Evidence requirements

There is a clear understanding of the evidence requirements for the units. Evidence requirements are clearly aligned to the unit learning outcomes and in all cases are appropriate and adequate. A range of evidence methods are used by the centres including case studies, project reporting, and extended and short response questions.

Administration of assessments

The centres employed similar processes in administering assessments. Marking schemes and exemplar responses are used by assessors marking exam papers. All exams are closed book and invigilated closely by centre staff. The external verifier was able to monitor an assessment examination taking place during his visit to one of the colleges.

Case studies and project work are used in line with unit specification requirements and assessors in all three centres use standardised marking schemes, exemplar reports and guidance notes to assist them achieve consistent assessment judgements.

Internal verification was fairly consistent across the centres with internal verifier reviews of assessment instruments conducted prior to the courses commencing

and then internal verification on a unit-by-unit basis following assessments. One centre received a recommendation that the internal verifiers should record more formative feedback in their reports. Procedures and documentation were very similar across all centres.

General feedback

In general, feedback to candidates is very good. Candidates are college students, and in regular contact with their tutor/assessor, therefore much of the feedback is verbal and not formally recorded. Formal written feedback is provided following assessments and the quality of this feedback varies across the three centres. One centre received a recommendation from the external verifier to advise assessors to insert comments when assessing case studies to help clarify the rationale for marks awarded.

Three candidates were interviewed in one of the centres and feedback from them was very positive and they all agreed that the level of evidence required to achieve learning outcomes was appropriate and manageable.

As all assessments are conducted in the college environment, access to assessment was not an issue. One of the colleges had four candidates who were in full-time work and this made the setting of exam dates challenging; however, they did address the issue satisfactorily by setting dates when all four candidates were available.

Areas of good practice

The following areas of good practice were identified against the indicated criteria:

Criterion 2.4 — An exemplar quality assurance checklist has been produced by the centre as guidance for internal verifiers to assist with standardisation of internal verifier reports.

Criterion 4.4 — The process of continuous assessment review, feedback and reiteration provided by assessors is particularly beneficial to candidates who require additional support and guidance.

Criterion 4.6 — All assessors have, or are working towards, formal internal verifier qualifications. This allows the centre to utilise staff as assessors for some units and internal verifiers for other units. This process also contributes to the consistency and standardisation of assessment judgements.

Criterion 4.9 — The action logs used to record, assign and track progress of all actions/recommendations raised ensures that actions are addressed in a timely manner.

Specific areas for improvement

There were not many recommendations for improvement made by the external verifiers. However, general feedback suggests that documentation reviews, general administration and reporting processes were a bit 'static' and would

benefit from more frequent reviews. There appears to be a reliance on the 'tried and tested' processes with the established colleges. Two centres have also come through some college merger challenges in recent years and have had to standardise their procedures and documentation as part of that exercise. One of the colleges was a little bit more progressive as they were a fairly new SQA centre and keen to respond to external verification feedback on areas for improvement.

Higher National graded units

F546 34 Petroleum Engineering: Graded Unit 1

F547 34 Petroleum Engineering: Graded Unit 2

General comments

The two graded units are run as part of the HND course in the two centres that were verified. The comments in this section of the report are similar to those stated for the HN units.

From information obtained from external verification reports it is apparent that staff in both centres have a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the graded unit standards for this award. Lesson plans and marking schemes produced by both centres ensure that all learning outcomes are achievable.

There were no non-compliances with QAMS criteria, however a few recommendations were made by external verifiers to enhance delivery and administration and these were accepted willingly by both centres.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Both centres have several assessors assigned to teaching and assessment for the graded units and all appear to be familiar with the guidance and requirements of the unit specifications. Assessment instruments and methods used by both centres to ensure that assessment of evidence for learning outcomes is standardised and consistent. Marking schemes and assessor guidance notes are extensively employed by both centres.

Evidence requirements

It is apparent from content of external verification reports that there is a clear understanding of the evidence requirements for the graded units by both centres. Evidence requirements are clearly aligned to the unit learning outcomes and are in all cases appropriate and adequate. The main piece of evidence used by both centres is a candidate project assignment (case study).

Administration of assessments

The graded units are assessed by the use of a case study. The developed case study provides candidates with the opportunity to produce evidence that demonstrates that they have met the aims of the graded units.

Both centres employ similar processes in administering assessments. Case studies are used in line with unit specification requirements and assessors in both centres use standardised marking schemes, exemplar reports and guidance notes to assist them achieve consistent assessment judgements.

Internal verification is aligned to the relevant centre's internal verification procedures which generally meet SQA requirements. Both centres carried out

prior moderation of the graded units by internal verifiers. Their reviews were conducted at interim and final stages of the assessment process. Both centres utilised standard checklists to assist internal verifiers in their reviews.

General feedback

In general, feedback to candidates is very good. Candidates are college students, and in regular contact with their tutor/assessor, therefore much of the feedback is verbal and not formally recorded. Formal written feedback is provided following assessments and the quality of this feedback varies across both centres. One centre received a recommendation from the external verifier to advise assessors to insert comments when assessing case studies to help clarify the rationale for marks awarded.

Three candidates were interviewed in one of the centres and feedback from them was very positive and they all agreed that the level of evidence required to achieve learning outcomes was appropriate and manageable.

Assessments are generally conducted in the college environment where access to assessment was not an issue. As the evidence requirement was case studies, candidates were able to progress their project in their own time and using their own PCs. One of the colleges had four candidates who were in full-time work and required assessors to provide one-to-one support to suit work patterns of candidates.

Areas of good practice

The following areas of good practice were identified against the indicated criteria:

Criterion 2.4 — An exemplar IQA Checklist has been produced by the centre as guidance for internal verifiers to assist with standardisation of internal verification reports.

Criterion 4.9 — The action logs used to record, assign and track progress of all actions/recommendations raised ensures that actions are addressed in a timely manner.

Specific areas for improvement

There were not many recommendations for improvement made by the external verifiers, however general feedback suggests that documentation reviews, general administration and reporting processes were a bit 'static' and would benefit from more frequent reviews. There appears to be a reliance on the 'tried and tested' processes with the established college. One of the centres has also come through some college merger challenges in recent years and has had to standardise their procedures and documentation as part of that exercise. The other centre was a little bit more progressive as they were a fairly new SQA centre and keen to respond to external verification feedback on areas for improvement.

SVQ awards

General comments

Two centres were verified for SVQs in this verification group. The awards verified were GC3E 23 Downstream Field Operations, and GG3A 23 Downstream Control Room Operations.

It is apparent that staff in both centres have a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the SVQ standards for these awards. Assessment materials and documentation produced by both centres ensure that all performance criteria are achievable.

There were two non-compliances with Quality Assurance Management System (QAMS) criteria applied to one centre. A few recommendations were also made by the external verifier to enhance delivery and administration and these were accepted willingly by both centres.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Both centres have several assessors assigned to assess the SVQ awards and all appear to be familiar with the guidance and requirements of the standards. Assessment instruments and methods used by the centres ensure that assessment of evidence is standardised and consistent. Detailed procedures and assessor guidance notes are extensively employed by the centres.

Standard portfolios are issued to all candidates and this assists greatly in ensuring consistency in the assessment process.

Centres utilise CPD and standardisation activities to contribute to ensuring assessors achieve a common understanding of the assessment and verification requirements.

The centres have experienced challenges of staff movements and resignations which have impacted on assessor and internal verifier resources. Consequently there are several assessors who are 'in training' and working towards their assessor qualification. One centre outsourced internal verification to a third party organisation as an interim measure.

Evidence requirements

There is a clear understanding of the evidence requirements for the SVQ awards. Evidence requirements are clearly aligned to the standards and are in all cases appropriate and adequate. A range of evidence including observation, witness testimonies and candidate personal statements; products of work and Q&A are utilised. Simulation is also used, in line with the appropriate assessment strategy, for units covering responses to emergency situations.

Administration of assessments

All assessments are conducted in the workplace in a petrochemical/refinery plant. Assessors are assigned to candidates who work similar shift patterns to ensure maximum contact between candidates and assessors is maintained.

Assessments are planned in line with operational activities to ensure that 'naturally occurring' assessment opportunities are utilised as much as possible.

One centre outsourced internal verification to a third party and this led to a non-compliance being identified as there was no evidence of internal verifier involvement in any of the assessments completed up to the date of the external verifier's visit. This was a non-compliance with the centre's own procedures, the assessment strategy and SQA requirements. The quality of the assessment decisions and candidate evidence in portfolios sampled during the visit was very good and met the relevant standards.

The other centre carries out internal verification using their own qualified internal verifiers aligned to their internal verification procedures which meet SQA requirements. Internal verification is conducted on completion of each unit. There were no issues of note arising from the visit regarding internal verification for this centre.

General feedback

There was evidence of candidates receiving regular feedback from their assessors although it was not always formally documented within one centre. Recommendations are regularly made to centres by external verifiers to improve the transparency of much of what they do by formally recording it.

Discussion sessions involving candidates, assessors and internal verifiers were carried out during visits with discussion topics including, but not limited to, the following:

- ◆ candidate induction process (which candidates felt could be improved)
- ◆ evidence gathering for units requiring candidate involvement in emergency response situations
- ◆ challenges of gathering evidence for some of the optional units — this led to the recommendation that where evidence was difficult to obtain, candidates should choose other optional units where evidence gathering would be less difficult
- ◆ discussion on clarifying the actual assessment process
- ◆ value and 'transferability' of SVQs within the oil & gas and petrochemical industries
- ◆ impact of SQA systems verifier visit on centre's policies and procedures
- ◆ impact of SQA L&D QV visit on content of CPD records
- ◆ Cogent & OPITO Assessment strategies and confirmation that only the Cogent strategy applies to the awards currently run by the centres
- ◆ the importance of formal written internal verifier and assessor feedback — discussions on the informal feedback provided by assessors to candidates

but not necessarily documented suggested that such feedback should be summarised and recorded in the assessor's final feedback for each unit

Access to assessment is not an issue as all assessments in both centres are conducted in the workplace in petrochemical/refinery plant utilising naturally occurring assessment opportunities.

Both centres have implemented additional documents to aid assessment and/or verification, however these are not referenced in the centres' applicable procedures. This is a fairly common occurrence in centres where assessors and internal verifiers strive to improve standardisation of assessment and verification documentation but omit to update the relevant procedures accordingly.

There were some other general areas for improvement and these are detailed later in this report.

Areas of good practice

The following are examples of areas of good practice that were identified against the indicated criteria:

Criterion 2.4 — One centre has provision for access to the latest version of all documentation by all candidates, assessors and internal verifiers through an intranet system.

Criterion 3.2 — One centre requires assessors to maintain formal records of assessor/candidate planning and review meetings.

Both centres have implemented a quarterly candidate progress review process that covers a range of relevant matters including training and assessment progress and candidate welfare.

Specific areas for improvement

A few recommendations on areas for improvement were made to both centres and these were mainly in the area of administration. Some examples are:

- ◆ Formally documenting any new processes or documentation introduced
- ◆ Missing signatures on various assessment and verification documents
- ◆ Marking of Q&A papers not very clear as responses to individual questions not marked or initialled by assessors
- ◆ Implementing a more formal process for assigning, recording and tracking actions arising from audits. Some centres tend to have informal processes that rely on the SQA co-ordinator manually tracking progress and following-up
- ◆ Using ticks for updating unit achievement records instead of inserting relevant evidence references