Higher National Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2016
Surveying

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

It is quite clear, from the external verification reports received this session, that all centres have a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of national standards relating to the HN units in Land Surveying.

Most centres have now embraced and are now delivering the updated HN qualifications that became 'live' in August 2014. Despite the obvious challenge of familiarisation and delivery of these 'new' programmes, there has been no perceived impact on quality or of observing national standards.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The suite of HN Surveying units in its current format, has been delivered successfully for the past ten years. Most staff in centres are thoroughly familiar with the structure and content of unit specifications, instruments of assessment and assessment support packs (ASPs) and earlier SQA-derived exemplar materials. Over this time, the staff in centres have produced a considerable catalogue of alternative instruments of assessment and exemplar materials that comprehensively meet the requirements of the unit specifications. This wealth of knowledge is being applied to the development of new assessment instruments to satisfy the requirements of the updated HN programmes.

Evidence requirements

It is quite obvious from external verification reports this session, that the staff in centres have clear and comprehensive understanding of the evidence requirements as defined in the unit specifications. This is confirmed in the quality of the centre-devised instruments of assessment which have been designed by staff to make use of local development opportunities to enhance delivery.

Administration of assessments

Since 'regionalisation', most of our centres have now successfully integrated the variety of quality systems that used to exist in their constituent campuses. For a very small minority, systems review is ongoing. However, all centres have demonstrated robust systems that comprehensively support delivery of HN programmes.

Without exception this session, external verifiers have commended centres for the quality of their documentation that supports the assessment and internal verification processes within these centres. Special mention was made of centres' master folders for their structure and content.

Significant developments in IT portals have been observed in many centres. Not only do these portals support the administration of quality elements of the HN programmes, they also support all aspects of the delivery of the qualifications.

These portals include areas accessible to learners where course information, learner progress, assessment planning and assessor feedback may be reviewed. It was also noted that a number of assessors were using e-mail and elements of social media to ensure learners were kept informed of progress and assessment opportunities.

Access to elements of these portals is offered to external verifiers where all records of assessment activity, learner progress, quality assurance and internal verification policies and procedures can be reviewed.

General feedback

Once again, it was observed that feedback to candidates was excellent. Many centres are using IT portals such as Moodle to update learners on all elements of assessment and progress. However, it was found that this facility, in many instances, supplemented oral and written feedback which was given at assessment review.

Feedback generally from all candidates who were interviewed, commended the support, guidance and professionalism demonstrated by tutors/assessors throughout the delivery of the various Surveying programmes. The accessibility of staff was praised, especially outwith programmed contact times. There was considerable support for e-mail and social media communications combined with the developing IT portals.

No barriers to assessment were observed, but, once again, assessment burden was mentioned. There was further praise for those centres using an IT portal. Clear assessment plans were widely published on the portals which had obviously been reviewed to reduce conflict and overburden. Integration of some of the elements of assessment was also observed in some of the centres.

Areas of good practice

The most significant elements of good practice highlighted this session were the further development and operation of IT learning portals in most centres. These portals not only considerably enhance the management and delivery of the HN suite of programmes, but also enhance the learning experience and encourage learner engagement with the process.

Many other examples of good practice were recorded as follows:

♦ Regular curriculum reviews with staff and student representatives
♦ Feedback to learners that was valid, relevant and informative
♦ The use of 'drones' to enhance delivery of certain surveying, drawing, technology and conservation elements of HN provision
♦ Considerable investment in state of the art GPS Total Stations and associated software

Much of the good practice that has been observed in past reviews is almost considered now as normal practice, but still features in external verification reports when it is observed. However, special mention must be made of the initiatives noted this session concerning the use of 'drones' to enhance the delivery of appropriate elements of the HN Built Environment programme. The commercial opportunities of this initiative to the industry are being investigated by the specific centre.

Specific areas for improvement

It is significant that no specific areas were identified that required improvement during external verification this session.

Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

There is no delivery of HN Graded Units within this Verification Group.

General comments

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Evidence Requirements

Administration of assessments

General feedback

Areas of good practice

Specific areas for improvement

SVQ awards

General comments

There is no delivery of SVQ Awards within this Verification Group.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

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General feedback

Areas of good practice

Specific areas for improvement

Senior Verifier questionnaire

The following section will not be shared on the SQA website. It will contribute to intelligence gathering for the Qualifications Development team and the Approval and Verification team.

1   Please specify the cause of any problem (including issues with EV resource). In your opinion, what would be the solution?

I think the issues that have been experienced by SEVs this session were fully explored in the SEV meetings held earlier this year. Hopefully, there will be resolution of those issues for the coming session.

2   Are there any areas where training and/or further support from SQA could support you or your team?

Again I would suggest that it would be beneficial to standardisation and EV development if there was an end of session Verification Group Meeting in addition to the annual Group Meeting in October. The events and outcomes of the verification visits could be widely reviewed and the consensus would inform these reports more effectively. I believe a Verification Group held only once a year is inadequate for proper management and development of the Verification Teams.

3   Do you have any other comments (eg new IAR report format, timings)?

I have no real criticism of the timing or format of the IAR Reports. Inevitably, because of the integrated nature of my External Verifier Team, and the participating centres, there is much duplication of content in my reports.

However, I would recommend a few tweaks to the format of the QAMS system that would simplify and improve accessibility to the information required in the compilation of the IARs. This would speed up the research and, as a result, the production of the Reports.