



**Higher National Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2014
Social Sciences**

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in Higher National Qualifications in this subject.

Higher National Units

FM66 34 Social Sciences: Research and Methodology

General comments

This Unit was verified by visiting verification.

Centres had a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards.

Candidates who were studying the Unit were positive about their experience of the Unit.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The correct Unit specification was being used and the national exemplar was used as a model for assessment.

Evidence Requirements

The requirements for the Unit were understood and the assessments met the Evidence Requirements. There was one issue in relation to setting a pass mark — the centre was advised to change this to a pass or fail against the Evidence Requirements rather than providing a threshold score.

Administration of assessments

Assessments were administered appropriately. Candidates confirmed their understanding of the requirements and actual assessment practice was appropriate.

General feedback

Centres were given advice regarding assessment and re-assessment for this Unit. Details can be found in the [Fact Sheet for Re-assessment and Remediation of Social Sciences Units](#) on SQA's website.

Areas of good practice

The minutes of meetings provided clear evidence of standardisation of assessment decisions. It was also clear who was sampled and cross-marked by an internal verifier. There was clear evidence of sampling.

The use of checklists for the assessment of Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 supported the process and made it easier to identify who had achieved.

Specific areas for improvement

There was one issue identified where a centre set a pass mark for Outcome 2 in the Research and Methodology Unit — eg 10 for section 1, etc with a pass being 7/10. This is not appropriate. Candidates should be judged as a pass or fail against the Evidence Requirements rather than being assigned a mark.

For Outcome 3, remediation would be used where the overall calculation is incorrect.

Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

FM6A 35 Social Sciences: Graded Unit 3 (Exam)
FM67 34 Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1 (Exam)
FM68 35 Social Sciences: Graded Unit 2 (Project)

General comments

All paperwork required for the verification process was produced appropriately by centres.

Centres had a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

All centres were using the correct version of the Unit Specification and assessment instruments met the Evidence Requirements.

Most centres were using SQA exemplar materials as the model for the Graded Unit exams.

Centres were familiar with the process and application of the Social Sciences Graded Units.

This was the first year of implementation for the new version of the SCQF level 8 Graded Units for most centres.

Evidence Requirements

The Graded Unit exams were often prior verified. The questions posed were appropriate to meet the Evidence Requirements.

For the Graded Unit Project, topics were changed each year, as is appropriate, and materials produced in centres met the requirements.

Administration of assessments

Assessments were administered in the correct way. Candidates were given a choice of topic in the project, covering a good range. Timing for the Graded Unit exams was as required by the Unit Specifications.

In visits to centres, External Verifiers discussed the way in which candidates selected a topic for their project and then the stages they went through and the support that was given. It is always difficult to draw the line between what is permissible support and when this goes too far. Staff seemed to have got the

balance right. We also considered the issues of remediation and re-assessment and again staff were fully aware of what was appropriate and when.

General feedback

Centres were complimented on the clear paperwork accompanying the submissions, especially where evidence of robust internal verification was given.

Where issues occurred (such as no marks in margin or global totals only), centres were given advice on how to show they were meeting the standards in a clearer way (see comments below under Specific Areas for Improvement).

Good practice was identified in feedback to candidates (see below under Areas of Good Practice).

Candidate responses were of a high standard overall, demonstrating good understanding of the social sciences.

Areas of good practice

The use of more than one marker for cross-marking is good practice, as is clear evidence of internal verification. In one centre, the standard procedure was for more than one member of staff to mark each script. The candidates' work was then discussed as a team and internally verified by all the staff involved in the delivery of the Unit. This ensured adherence to SQA standards across teaching groups. Those at the grade boundaries were critically evaluated to ensure no one missed a grade that was more appropriate.

Good practice was shown in centres that provided records of internal verification — indicating that robust quality checks had occurred. Also, having the instrument of assessment prior verified is good practice and should be continued. This shows that internal verification is used not just as a 'snapshot' but as a continuous process.

Giving positive detailed written feedback to candidates is good practice and was seen in almost all centres.

Specific areas for improvement

The role of external verification is to check the appropriateness of marking and not to re-mark work.

It is difficult to verify the marking when no marks are written in the margin.

It would be most helpful to the verification process if all centres would show Knowledge and Understanding marks and Evaluation and Conclusion marks for each subject, marked clearly in the margin at the point being credited, as it is important to see exactly which theories/research are being credited. It is strongly recommended that in future all scripts have clear mark allocations, relating to the

marks awarded on the marker's checklist. If marks are not clear, it does not allow external verification to identify the breakdown of marks awarded.

Half marks were used for a conclusion section of a project. Half marks should **never** be used as this may inflate a result unfairly. This guidance has been included in several past reports and all centres should note this to ensure equity.

Centres should use a checklist for each question in the Graded Unit exam, making it clear where marks are gained (as that was what was accepted in prior verification). This would also help support feedback to candidates, as it is important that candidates are given feedback.

Occasionally, there were arithmetic errors in scripts. Centres should double-check the addition in case it has an impact on grades.

Marks for 'additional marks' or 'credit any other suitable point' must not be fixed. For example, '2 marks have been allocated to this out of the 40 possible'. This means that some candidates may be disadvantaged if they do not provide this 'extra' information and 2 marks have been removed from the information they need to provide. In other words 'other suitable point' becomes a requirement rather than credit for **additional** information.