



Internal Assessment Report: Travel and Tourism

Sector Panel or SSC: Travel and Tourism

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

Titles/levels of HN Units verified

The following Higher National Units were verified during visits to nine further education colleges in session 2008–09:

DK00 35	Retail Travel Operations (three centres verified)
DJ9Y 34	Retail Travel Practice (three centres verified)
DK07 33	International Tourist Destinations (five centres verified)
DJ9P 35	Tour Operations (two centres verified)
DK0G 34	Air Travel: Reservations, Fares and Ticketing (four centres verified)
DK05 35	Air Travel Advanced
DG0M 04	Countryside Visitor Management
DJ9W 34	Structure of the Travel and Tourism Industry (five centres verified)
DJ42 34	Creating a Culture of Customer Care (two centres verified)
DK0E 34	Applying Marketing Principles in Travel and Tourism
DK02 35	Planning and Sustainable Development in Travel and Tourism
DK03 34	Providing Information on the Scottish Tourism Product
DK04 34	Marketing Planning in Travel and Tourism

General comments

Verifiers generally reported favourably on assessment practices in the colleges visited. In most cases, centres were using SQA-approved HN assessment exemplar packs, with some adaptations where appropriate. Instruments of assessment were generally valid and reliable. Judgement of candidate performance was appropriate, and records were usually accurate. It was also clear that candidates had fair access to assessment in all centres.

Internal verification is improving all the time, with several centres now recording the process using electronic means. In most cases internal verification was robust and fully shown. Most centres now have comprehensive master folders for each Unit, which include summary forms, learning plans, learning and teaching approaches, assessment procedures, internal verification plans, and internal audit feedback.

Only one hold on certification was necessary.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development

Verifiers reported that assessors are generally giving better feedback to candidates on assessments, clearly indicating where remediation/reassessment is required. Where reassessment is necessary, feedback could be improved further by giving candidates advice on what they have to do next, ie set targets. Candidates should also be advised on the quality of their work, including on how to present business documents to a standard expected in industry.

The following examples of good practice were observed by External Verifiers.

DK00 35 — Retail Travel Operations

In one centre, coverage of contemporary issues (eg the credit crunch and terrorism) in the Unit was identified as good practice. The same centre is also developing a Moodle website for students, which will provide a database of international tourist destinations.

Some centres have invested in specialist accommodation. All centres presenting travel-related Units should do this. Providing specialist accommodation such as model travel agency, airline cabin, and reservation (call centre) facilities would help learning and teaching. This would enhance delivery in a number of areas including Customer Care, Air Travel (including Galileo Airline Reservations, or similar) and all aspects of Retail Travel Practice.

In one centre, lecturers were timetabled on a full-day basis and given a group of Units to cover. The practice of giving lecturers Unit clusters enabled successful integration where such possibilities existed.

The same centre also produces a Travel and Tourism newsletter which is aimed at both students and their families. Articles within include a who's who, advice on educational maintenance allowances, information about forthcoming visits and speakers, feedback from course committees, and students' own pages.

Areas for further development

Centres should ensure appropriate reassessment materials are available where appropriate. In this context centres are encouraged to use the SQA prior verification service. As in previous years there were very few requests for prior verification.

DK0G 34 — Air Travel: Reservations, Fares and Ticketing

Presenting centres are encouraged to invest in a teaching set of OAG timetables. This allows candidates to gain experience in using the timetables.

DJ9P 35 — Tour Operations

It was reported by one centre that candidates find it difficult to apply the theory when drawing up a proposal for a tour. They often concentrate their research on the destination and not the target market. An External Verifier suggested that candidates could present their ideas to the class and get feedback before they start to write the report.

Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified

The following Higher National Graded Units were externally verified during visits to nine FE colleges in May and June 2009:

DK0D34	Tourism: Graded Unit 1 (two centres verified)
DK0C34	Travel: Graded Unit 1 (seven centres verified)
DK0A35	Tourism: Graded Unit 2 (one centre verified)
DK0935	Travel and Tourism: Graded Unit 2 (one centre verified)

There were no holds, and certification was recommended in all cases.

General comments

Verifiers are pleased to report that centres now appear to have overcome the early teething problems with Graded Units. For the first time there were no holds, and candidates appear to have been well inducted and guided through the projects. Verifiers sampled candidates from each centre across the three grades, A, B and C. Many projects were well presented and worthy of the grades attained.

However, it has become clear that several centres do not have policies on late submissions or marking in line with the level of support given. Marking is still not consistent and there were again several cases of leniency. Feedback was provided to the centres concerned.

Evaluation has undoubtedly improved, with candidates providing credible statements with self-criticism and praise where appropriate. Plagiarism was once again identified as an issue in several centres.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development

Centres are encouraged to think about a policy on late submission or any request for an extension. Arguably, candidates who have submitted beyond deadlines are at an advantage because they have had more time to complete the project. Where this occurs, the centre's policy should be applied consistently.

Centres should also review marking procedures and ensure that there is a scale of deductions which reflects the level of support given to the candidate.

Assessors are again encouraged to discuss grades with candidates rather than marks. SQA discourages assessors from focusing on marks — especially marks that are divided too finely (one mark for this, one mark for that) as this can distort grades. The best approach is to ensure candidates have met the minimum evidence, and judge how well they have done so, based on the Grading Criteria. However, it is clear that marking sheets are useful to both internal and External Verifiers, especially where comments have been provided to indicate why marks have been allocated. Assessors should not consider overall grades until the entire submission, including evaluation, is complete.

For further guidance, the following guides are available from SQA:

Guidance on Graded Units: Using the design principles for Higher National Certificates and Diplomas

Guidance for the Implementation of Graded Units in Higher Certificates and Diplomas

With reference to specific Units:

DK0D 34 — Tourism Graded Unit 1

Three exemplars are now available for this Unit. Centres are reminded that the balance of knowledge and skills is different in each of the exemplars, so they will have to adapt timetables to suit. Centres should continue to encourage candidates to create programmes which include a mix of both centre-based and linear itineraries which are feasible and include evidence covering the whole of Scotland.

DK0C 34 — Travel Graded Unit 1

Three exemplars are now available for this Unit.

The following guidance is offered for interpretation of the brief in the 'wedding' package and the 'golf' package specifications. (This will be further considered by the Qualification Support team in due course.)

Wedding package — the wedding information pack should equate to the formal business report for the travel agency manager and include full details of each of the destinations considered. The information document for the clients should focus on the chosen destination.

Golf package — again the formal business report should be written for the travel agency manager, with full details of three destinations for consideration, conclusions and recommendations. The information pack on the chosen destination should be designed for the client.

Good practice was noted as follows:

- ◆ In one centre candidates had prepared illustrated PowerPoint presentations.
- ◆ The centre delivering the golf package had invited a professional golfer to speak to students about golfing destinations, pro-am tournaments and associated travel requirements.
- ◆ In another centre candidates had produced superb quality bound wedding package presentations using high-quality paper and colour printing.
- ◆ One centre had issued students with log books outlining the requirements of the Unit, submission dates, records of all meetings with assessors, topics discussed and students' personal log.

Centres presenting this Unit should discourage candidates from making direct contact with suppliers, as one of the key aspects of the project involves the candidate taking on the role of the travel agent or tour operator.

Centres are also reminded that the Travel GUs should provide candidates with an opportunity to research air travel, and that presentation of flight information should be standardised in line with industry practice.

Centres should remind candidates that presentations should be sales-orientated.

DK0A35 — Tourism Graded Unit 2

Good practice in one centre involved scheduling candidates in an IT facility with access to various relevant programmes to aid research.

DK0935 — Travel and Tourism Graded Unit 2

Good practice in one centre involved the use of Blackboard to support delivery, and students had created a blog to record their logs.

This project is quite narrowly focused. Tutors must continue to give clear guidance on the appropriateness of topics selected to ensure their viability and relevance to the award. The candidate should also be able to access relevant sources of data and research when further investigating the identified issue.

Finally the following points highlighted in previous years are reiterated:

- ◆ Centres should cross or double mark all candidate submissions to ensure consistency of marking. Where there are several presenting lecturers within a centre, an internal verification mechanism should be set up to ensure marking is standardised.
- ◆ In the HNC Graded Units, candidate responses relating to marketing and customer care are still generally weak. Tutors should continue to stress the importance of these subject areas to the overall project. Centres should also explain to candidates that this information has to be in context and relevant to the specifics of the project. Simply restating general theory from lecture notes is not acceptable.
- ◆ In all GUs, candidates must use a recognised referencing system to acknowledge sources of information used in the project. This is essential to avoid the possibility of being disqualified for plagiarism.
- ◆ Candidates must not include web pages as attachments. This is clearly stated. Instead all relevant information used in the development stage should be listed as sources in the bibliography.

Centres should also encourage candidates to keep appendices to a minimum. Evidence submitted for verification should not include any draft versions of the candidate's script.