



Internal Assessment Report: Social Sciences

Sector Panel or SSC: Social Sciences

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

DP59 34 Social Sciences: Research and Methodology
DP3P 35 Social Sciences: Research Issues

Centres coped well with delivery of these Units but there were discussions about the difficulties candidates have, particularly in the Research Issues Unit. Centres said that it seems to be at a higher level than other level 8 Units in terms of assessment demand and complexity. A larger number of students than centres would like failed the Units first time.

One centre was planning to make use of SOLAR formative e-assessment in future. This will be an interesting development and worth watching.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development

There were minor issues over the amount of remediation allowed for both Units, as on a few occasions too much was allowed. The general principle is that remediation in the form of addition is acceptable if only a small change or addition is required. For example, this could be a short paragraph which can be written or oral (as long as it is recorded in some way). More than that requires a reassessment with a different assessment instrument (though some questions will be similar).

Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified

DX2L 35 Social Sciences Graded Unit 2 (Project)
DW90 34 Social Sciences Graded Unit 1 (Exam)
DX2M 35 Social Sciences Graded Unit 3 (Exam)

General comments

Centres found that the delivery of the Graded Unit project (DX2L 35) was more time consuming than they first realised, especially where the candidates had chosen different disciplines, as this required more co-ordination across the Social Sciences team. However, staff felt it was easier to deal with this than with the dual discipline of the previous integrative assessment.

Overall for DW90 34 (exam) candidates gave good responses, using a wide variety of different ways to answer the questions posed. There appeared to be a high incidence of candidates failing the Graded Unit exam on the first attempt.

It is **crucial** that centres recognise that Criminology is a general Unit and is not one of the Social Science areas that should be examined in Graded Unit 1 or 2. It is not listed in the

Graded Unit exam specification (see p.2, 'recommended prior knowledge and skills'). Therefore, there should be no question in the exam related to Criminology. A Graded Unit that uses a question based on Criminology will result in a 'not accepted' outcome.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development

In the majority of centres, one person led the process of supervising the Graded Unit project (DX2L 35), using subject specialists to support and mark the development section of the project, as appropriate. This appeared to work well. One centre had subject specialists marking all three sections of the report when their subject was chosen. In both models robust internal verification took place to ensure marking was to the same standard.

Good practice included encouraging candidates to fill in a research diary to log their activity in the research process. This helped the evaluation process, as it reminded candidates of whether they met deadlines set.

Other good practice was shown in centres that gave candidates a list with topics that varied each year. This made sure that each year candidates would be providing unique research, both primary and secondary. If a centre is giving a free choice, a note should be kept to ensure that a topic is not used again within a three-year period.

Further development in a few centres was required in providing evidence of in-depth personal interviews or extended discussions, eg log sheets or feedback forms with action points for the candidate. These can be placed in appendices or alongside the planning section and made available for verification. Centres often had this evidence, but in a few cases did not ask candidates to add it to the final project.

Providing positive feedback as well as negative would be helpful in all centres, as sometimes feedback was restricted to only developmental points.

Centres are reminded that all three sections of the project have to be achieved to be awarded the Graded Unit. On one occasion this was wrongly interpreted, with a centre assuming 50% overall to be credited with a pass.

It would be helpful if project markers would identify on candidates' work the knowledge and understanding, and conclusion and evaluation, marks separately, to show where these were being credited. It was not always easy to cross reference to checklists. This good practice was observed in many of the exam Graded Units, and helped the external verification process. Sometimes it was carried out across all disciplines in a centre, and sometimes in just a few. Centres were advised to carry this practice through all disciplines, as it is helpful and ensures consistency.

For the exam (DW90 34) good practice was seen in the use of prior-verified assessment instruments and checklists for each question. Not all centres arranged for prior verification of the exam questions and marking schemes. It is highly recommended that they do so.

Providing evidence of cross marking or internal verification was considered good practice. Also, it was very helpful to use a summary sheet that details marks for each question attempted, the total marks and Grade achieved. All centres should adopt this, in some form.