



Higher National and Vocational Qualifications Internal Assessment Report 2012

Community

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

All of the centres visited were fully conversant with the requirements for the HNC Working with Communities.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

In all cases the current Unit specifications were being used and the assessors were all familiar with the instruments of assessment. Some centres were using SQA Assessment Exemplars.

Evidence Requirements

From the reports it was clear that the evidence available was authentic, sufficient and valid, and reflected the existence of good teaching and learning approaches underpinned by reliable guidance and support systems and opportunities for re-assessment when required.

Administration of assessments

Reports indicate that assessors had made judgements about the competence of candidates by reference to written standards for the award.

Judgements sampled were accurate, consistent and fair for all candidates and tasks, and consistent with the judgements of other assessors.

Extensive support systems are available to candidates from both teaching staff and college-wide supports.

Additional support arrangements are implemented where relevant.

In the main, the quality of candidates' work was good.

General feedback

The following feedback points were included in the reports.

- ◆ Candidates interviewed confirmed that feedback, both verbal and written, was fair, ample, helpful and supportive. Records of written feedback sampled also reflected this view.
- ◆ Written recommendations for non-achievers were presented in a sensitive and consistent manner, with clear indicators on how to improve performance to meet the standards required.
- ◆ The academic levelling of candidates' work met the minimum standard for this level of study.
- ◆ Integration of assessment could be used more to reduce the amount of assessments, particularly practical elements of other areas of the group award.

- ◆ Marking frames did not fully reflect the assessment criteria; clear marking frames allow candidates, assessors and Internal Verifiers to have clear feedback.
- ◆ Referencing was an issue for some of the Units; however, as previously highlighted, it is not an SQA requirement for these Units.
- ◆ Written feedback from assessors was extensive for some Units but minimal for others; however, this was picked up at internal verifications.
- ◆ National Community Learning and Development current priorities/strategies were reflected well in candidates' writing, for example Working and Learning Together; LEAP; National Standards Council.
- ◆ The team work closely and effectively together: their enthusiasm for the Course is reflected in the excellent feedback from candidates. They were well prepared for the visit and made me feel really welcome.

Areas of good practice

Areas of good practice identified were as follows.

- ◆ The support and access opportunities given to all candidates — effective support arrangements are good practice at teaching team and college-wide levels.
- ◆ The use of practical assessment for LO3 in Group Work integrated within cross-college projects — giving candidates opportunities to develop wider essential skills.
- ◆ Good teamwork existed.
- ◆ Staff considered the needs of candidates highly.
- ◆ The evidence on the scripts that the assessor, and as appropriate the IV, had read them. This was clear from the comments, ticks, etc on the candidates' work.
- ◆ The feedback to candidates was positive and supportive.
- ◆ The use of online assessments and feedback for the *Principles and Practices* Unit allows for a clear and easily tracked process — the feedback given is extensive and of high quality.
- ◆ The support and feedback given to all candidates — effective support arrangements at both at teaching team and college-wide levels.
- ◆ The internal verification procedure has been implemented effectively.

Specific areas for improvement

There were no major areas for improvement, but the following advice was given.

- ◆ Assessments to be marked in pen and signed and dated, particularly following remediation. This also includes recording additional feedback following remediation.
- ◆ Marking frames to reflect current assessment criteria, particularly for group work.
- ◆ Record ongoing standardisation of assessment decisions and internal verification feedback formally.
- ◆ Internal verification feedback should be actioned as date-specific — this particularly relates to assessors' commentary for the *Working with Young People* Unit.
- ◆ Record ongoing standardisation/cross marking of assessment decisions formally to reflect the good practice being undertaken.

Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

Working with Communities, Graded Unit D16 34

General comments

The centres visited were using the most up-to-date and current assessment specifications. All parts of the assessment specification were being followed correctly and the Evidence Requirements defined in the Unit were correctly specified.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

All of the assessors interviewed were familiar with the Unit specifications and the Evidence Requirements. This was fully reflected in the assessment materials available for inspection.

Evidence Requirements

The Graded Unit requirements were fully understood by all the assessors and Internal Verifiers.

Administration of assessments

In all centres visited, a professional approach was taken to the administration of assessments. This was verified during discussions with candidates, assessors and Internal Verifiers, and by the assessment documentation.

General feedback

The following points were made during feedback.

- ◆ All assessment decisions sampled were fair and were supported by the evidence in the scripts.
- ◆ All the stages of the Graded Unit were clear.
- ◆ In most cases, the reflection in the evaluation was good.
- ◆ All Graded Units were well structured, with evidence of assessment clearly highlighted.
- ◆ Level of evidence accurately reflected the grades awarded.
- ◆ All the Units examined showed the combination of other Units delivered in the Course.
- ◆ Assessment process is well structured.
- ◆ All the Units sampled highlighted a high standard of understanding and commitment from students in their Graded Unit.
- ◆ All evidence sampled was found to be valid, authentic, reliable, current and sufficient.
- ◆ Assessment judgements were sound.

- ◆ It was obvious from candidates' performance that good teaching/learning was taking place, underpinned by effective 'pocket' guidance in the form of the student guide and workbook.
- ◆ More explicit guidance for candidates on the completion of appendices/resource lists could be included in the above document.
- ◆ Assessment decisions were fair and consistent.
- ◆ Candidates undertook a wide range of activities.
- ◆ All stages were clearly structured.
- ◆ Candidates sampled showed good evidence of integrating Community Learning and Development values and principles.

The above was confirmed during candidate interviews. See below.

All candidates indicated they had thoroughly enjoyed the learning experience and felt they had been challenged enough without it becoming too much, and able to push themselves that little bit more. All candidates highlighted that they had been very well supported (in one-to-one sessions, group sessions and the use of social media, ie Facebook) and engaged in good teaching styles which made them look at themselves in terms of a learning student and a professional worker in the field.

The candidates were able to articulate the key learning points from all Units, and many said the most enjoyable and relevant was the *Social Science* Unit. The candidates spoke highly of all tutors and felt, from the stages of interview to get on the Course through to the delivery of Units and assessments, that the tutors and assessors were buddies and mentors in helping them through the year.

All candidates were motivated and very enthusiastic and passionate about community work and their continuing learning journey. All the candidates in the group were moving onto positive destinations through universities, further education or secured work.

The support and guidance provided by the centre was invaluable, referring specifically to the induction programme, the regular contact with assessors and the student guide and workbook. The Unit had been a big challenge in terms of time management and confidence but they had progressed well and enjoyed all three strands of the Unit: planning, developing and evaluating a practical placement. The evidence judgements made by assessors were fair and always accompanied by helpful feedback.

One of the candidates had already been offered a second-year place on the University of Glasgow Community Development degree course, and the other was considering a similar post-exit route.

Candidates were asked about the Graded Unit and said that the project integrated knowledge and understanding from their whole Course. They also felt that the Graded Unit allows them to take responsibility for their own learning and practice. Candidates said that they felt supported within the stages of their Graded Units.

Areas of good practice

The following good practices were identified and conveyed on the day.

- ◆ Good paperwork to cover assessment and verification.
- ◆ Good feedback to candidates by the assessor who explained why, if appropriate, marks had been deducted.
- ◆ Good feedback to the assessor by the IV.
- ◆ Despite many difficulties the standard of the evidence produced by candidates was good. This reflected the advice and support they had received.
- ◆ The assessor gives very positive and supportive feedback to all students, which is individual and tailored to the stage of development of the student.
- ◆ Marking sheets used were effective in that candidates were able to receive positive and supportive feedback.
- ◆ The close working and positive relationships between assessors and Internal Verifiers ensures a high level of consistency throughout the Unit, which results in a high quality of delivery of the award to the students.
- ◆ All candidates had a very strong social science aspect in the Graded Unit.

The centre had produced:

- ◆ a marking/results record which provided a general overview of progress of all candidates at all stages
- ◆ a candidate discussion log for the project, outlining assessment progress and feedback
- ◆ a well-structured student guide and workbook, which was subject to regular review and contained useful information for candidates in a user-friendly manner — contents included topics such as 'Course outline', 'Finding information' and 'Assessment and marking procedures'

Candidates interviewed during this visit had highlighted this document as a great source of support to them when out on placement.

All stages of the Graded Unit are double marked blindly.

Feedback given to candidates is constructive and supportive.

Candidates have undertaken a range of activities that meet the needs of the groups they are working with.

Specific areas for improvement

The following areas for improvement were identified.

- ◆ It would be beneficial for the IV to use sheets of individual candidates' feedback to the Assessor when sampling candidates' Units.
- ◆ Assessors may find it helpful to write up the informal meetings they have with students as a form of feedback, and to highlight to the student the progress they are making and/or challenges they need to address.

- ◆ Evidence sampled suggested that some candidates appeared unclear about how to complete the appendix or resource list aspect of their written assessment. Given that the student guide and workbook was so well received by candidates, it was suggested that clearer guidelines on this specific area, with definitions of terminology and exemplars, could be included in the document when it is next due for review.
- ◆ Marking frames to be signed and dated by second marker also.

SVQ awards

General comments

All of the centres visited demonstrated a clear and accurate understanding of what is required to successfully support candidates through this award.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

It was clear from the reports that assessors are fully aware of the requirements of the Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials.

Evidence Requirements

It was evident from the reports compiled by the team that the Evidence Requirements were fully understood. The comments below fully support this view.

- ◆ The centre fully complies with the assessment strategies of the qualification award. They reflect the nature of the occupational standard and the centre has prepared a good deal of supplementary materials for candidates to assist them in the full completion of their award.
- ◆ In line with the assessment strategy for youth work, all performance evidence produced was holistic and therefore came from real, naturally occurring workplace practice in youth work and was gathered across elements and Units that naturally linked together in terms of whole jobs.
- ◆ In line with the assessment strategy for community development, all performance evidence produced was holistic and therefore came from real, naturally occurring workplace practice in community development work and was gathered across elements and Units that naturally linked together in terms of whole jobs.
- ◆ The assessment strategies were fully complied with. Good quality reflective accounts were often backed by witness testimony.
- ◆ The assessment approach taken complies with the award requirements and is easily understood by the candidates. In particular, the planning of assessments and the evidence needed was well worked through with candidates.

Administration of assessments

The administration of assessments was appropriate in all of the centres visited, and this is reflected in the comments below.

- ◆ The standard of the evidence was good. A range of evidence gathering methods were used by the candidates to suit their needs and situation. This is good practice.
- ◆ On the advice of the assessor, the candidate had adopted a project-based approach to assessment materials, in line with the assessment strategy recommendations, and had consistently and successfully weaved in evidence of knowledge of values and principles of community development work with that of practical ability.
- ◆ All evidence sampled was sufficient in relation to the assessment decisions made.

- ◆ Some of the evidence, however, had not been signed off by the assessor and the assessment plan was incomplete and had not been updated.
- ◆ Feedback from the assessor on work produced that was relevant and supportive had been recorded but not consistently. Additionally, there was no evidence of structures in place to allow candidates to comment on feedback from the assessor.

General feedback

From the evidence provided in the reports, it is clear that feedback between assessor/candidate and verifier/assessor is important and generally undertaken well in the centres visited. This supported by the comments below.

- ◆ Verification is clearly documented and the feedback to candidates and assessors is presented in a positive and supportive manner, often with good reminders and advice.
- ◆ It was clearly evidenced that feedback to assessors was concise, supportive and appropriate to the decisions. Where necessary, additional support is provided to assessors where amendments are required.
- ◆ The Internal Verifier had adopted a 24-hour turnaround policy in relation to feedback to assessors on assessment decisions. All written feedback, which had been formally recorded and signed, was accurate and constructive.
- ◆ The standard of internal verifying was good, with clear and constructive feedback to assessors. Evidence was also available from standardisation minute meetings.
- ◆ From the evidence available and from discussions with the assessor, it was clear that feedback was good, timely and well appreciated.
- ◆ The assessment strategies comply with the requirements of the award. Evidence was available from the documentation and the portfolios.
- ◆ Good variety of assessment methods used. The candidates' evidence sampled was well presented and of a good standard.
- ◆ All portfolios viewed contained good evidence in well-structured portfolios.
- ◆ The centre had clearly promoted a project-based approach to assessment, in line with the assessment strategy recommendations. Accordingly, all work sampled focused on real work-based situations and was valid, authentic, reliable, current and sufficient, in line with quality assurance principles for assessment of this particular qualification.
- ◆ The evidence sampled during this visit was a combination of the same Units for two assessors over four Units. The assessment decisions were appropriate and in line with the national youth work standards and consistent throughout all samples.

Areas of good practice

The following areas of good practice were identified.

- ◆ The centre continues to have excellent systems in place for administration, assessment and monitoring of all candidates.
- ◆ All assessment decision evidence was to a consistently high standard, which has not faulted in the past two years. It is noted that this is especially relevant when assessors have candidates with varying abilities.

- ◆ Planning and feedback sheets to both candidates and assessors allowed comprehensive details to be written in a supportive and guiding manner, and allowed comments from the candidate to be fed back up the system.
- ◆ The introduction of an 'assessor challenge' by the IV encouraged assessors to research assessment developments in other centres.
- ◆ The establishment of weekly peer group support meetings for candidates allowed them to discuss among themselves progress in relation to the award and offer each other support.
- ◆ The existence of a simple pro forma for candidate assessment encouraged them to become reflective practitioners and link their hands-on project work to the standards associated with the award.
- ◆ Good documentation, which clearly shows all the stages of the assessment.
- ◆ Well-structured portfolios, which make evidence easy to locate.
- ◆ Good use of cross-referencing by candidates.
- ◆ Training event organised to support and update assessors.
- ◆ Assessment plans comprehensive.
- ◆ Good supportive feedback to candidates.
- ◆ Support available to candidates via telephone contact, text, and e-mail.
- ◆ IV in regular contact with candidates and assessor.
- ◆ A variety of assessment methods used to gather evidence.
- ◆ Placements selected and varied to the needs of candidates and of the award.
- ◆ Use of an online e-portfolio enables regular monitoring of the award progress.
- ◆ Good range of assessments used to gather evidence. The methods were clearly selected to meet the needs of the candidates.
- ◆ Good, clear and positive feedback to the assessors by the IV, with good advice and reminders included.
- ◆ Good use of supplementary evidence to gather additional evidence and to authenticate evidence.
- ◆ The team was enthusiastic about the award and about their role in supporting candidates.

Specific areas for improvement

The following areas for improvement were noted.

- ◆ The feedback from the assessor was not always recorded. This should become a necessary part of the assessment process for the assessor.
- ◆ The centre manager agreed that the centre would benefit from an SQA development visit involving someone who was familiar with the delivery of this particular qualification and who could offer advice on matters such as access to learning resources, candidate/assessor support mechanisms, assessment planning, recording and authenticating evidence, portfolio construction and maintenance, and standardisation/IV procedures.
- ◆ Greater consideration of the assessment strategy for Community Development, in particular the recommendations in relation to requirements for internal verification.

- ◆ Updating information in centres' quality assurance systems to reflect current procedures and staff associated with these.
- ◆ It may be useful for the assessor to write more in their written feedback to candidates that truly captures the extent of the verbal feedback that they give.