



Higher National Qualifications Internal Assessment Report 2012 Care

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

Higher National (HN) Units

Titles/levels of HN Units verified:

HN Care

General comments

The main focus for this year's visits was to examine the new Professional Development Award Units which have proved very popular both in colleges and across the Care sector through employers and training providers.

The team also took this opportunity to look at the Option Units in the HNC Social Care to ascertain the level of demand for the current Units and to seek the views of the sector on the future revision of the HNC programme. A sample of mandatory units was also examined to ensure consistency.

It was apparent from the external verification reports that centres are positive about the new Professional Development Awards and they have developed their training in line with the Units. Overall, this has been completed to a commendable standard.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Reports show that centre tutors/assessors and Internal Verifiers are familiar with the Unit specifications and are using the exemplification materials produced by SQA to support the delivery and assessment of the Units in each of the new awards. The Open Learning Packs for the HN option Units continue to be the most used materials to support candidate learning.

Verifier reports noted that centres using the support materials provided by SQA are also developing robust additional materials to support the teaching sessions. Reports also noted that feedback from centres on the PDA workbooks was positive. For example, it was noted:

- ◆ Centre delivers several teaching sessions which allow candidates to discuss issues and undertake a class presentation.
- ◆ Feedback showed staff and candidates were positive about the course.
- ◆ Centre thought the workbooks were excellent.
- ◆ Candidates liked the two weekly taught sessions.

Evidence Requirements

Overall, the Evidence Requirements were met at the required standard for the Units examined in the majority of centres. There was one centre where issues were raised by the External Verifier. These were related to lack of experience in the delivery of HN Units; advice and guidance were provided.

The reports noted, for example:

- ◆ It was obvious from reading the case studies that these were real examples from the candidates' own work setting, as required by the Evidence Requirements for both Units of the PDA award.
- ◆ Candidates had all answered the question sections and reflections in the workbooks (formative assessment) as well as producing case studies meeting the Evidence Requirements.

It was noted that centres were integrating assessment of the HN option Units and mandatory Units and also making good use of case material to inform the knowledge evidence in the mandatory SVQ Units. There has been a marked increase in the integration of assessment in the HNC and this is welcomed.

Administration of assessments

The majority of centres are now familiar with the new online administrative arrangements: these are viewed as clear and easy to complete.

Internal assessment and verification procedures were, in the majority of centres, to a high standard and many of the reports noted good practice in these areas.

Some excellent practice was identified. For example:

- ◆ Evaluations are held at the end of each course and these produced good relevant comments and covered all areas of learning.
- ◆ Centre has a qualification tracking form and an internal verification summary sheet which are valuable aids to verification, as is the sampling strategy.
- ◆ The process and procedures are sound, the records are detailed and the final verification by the practice panel is very good practice.
- ◆ Very good candidate records identifying ongoing progress are presented to the employer on a monthly basis.
- ◆ Class folders and all marking information were kept in separate files: these were easy to follow and enabled everyone to check the processes from enrolment through to results.
- ◆ Where remediation was required I was able to see a robust process in place for the marking and verifying of candidates' work.

General feedback

Feedback to candidates

Centres have clearly become more aware of the importance of providing feedback to candidates and many have developed formalised procedures for this as part of their ongoing quality reviews.

The following examples from the reports identify the range of methods used to achieve this:

- ◆ The feedback sheets provided to candidates were extremely detailed and helpful.
- ◆ Remediation was clearly documented and this helps candidates to see exactly what is required of them.
- ◆ The VLE allowed me to see live feedback to candidates: this was very interactive.
- ◆ The pre-assessment guidance record used as an integral part of assessment planning was useful as it detailed the dates and content of each meeting with the assessor.

Feedback from candidates

Throughout all the reports it was noted that the vast majority of centres had arranged for their verifier to meet with candidates and receive first-hand feedback.

Samples of the comments on reports include:

- ◆ One candidate spoke with great enthusiasm about the learning experience and how this had changed her practice. It was clear that she appreciated the opportunity to develop her skills and had loved learning. She was honest in her description of the process, which had been difficult and challenging at first as it was a long time since she had engaged in formal study, but she was full of praise for the tutor and the support she had received.
- ◆ Candidate spoke highly of her time at the college. She had completed her NC the year before the HN and felt that this had been of great benefit to her.
- ◆ Candidate felt well supported by the staff team and described her experience as class representative as positive: students' queries were dealt with fairly and quickly.
- ◆ Candidate told me how undertaking the award had enhanced his practice and his supervision skills.
- ◆ Candidates spoke enthusiastically about learning and seemed keen to continue to develop their practice through reading and, hopefully, further training.
- ◆ Felt he had benefited from the training inputs which took place over two full days; felt supported by the tutor and appreciated the detailed guidance given by the centre.
- ◆ Candidates were enthusiastic about the course; they talked about their learning to date and the challenge of preparing for assessment.
- ◆ Candidates recognised the importance of completing the exercises in the workbooks and how helpful this would be in preparing their essay.
- ◆ Candidates were given good handouts, with direction to other materials including books to support their studies.
- ◆ Candidates had benefited from the award being delivered through group work support.

Access to assessments

As many of the PDA awards are delivered by employers and training providers the commitment to access and equality of opportunity was notable.

The reports from centres showed, for example:

- ◆ One candidate was given work experience at weekends in order to meet her child care commitments: this was a good example of fair access.
- ◆ Candidates are clearly well supported and any additional assistance required is provided through student support.
- ◆ Candidates were given time to complete and had been released from their shifts to undertake the training required.
- ◆ Taught input began with how to write an essay and the learning from this was evident in candidates' work.
- ◆ Deadlines were set but there was evidence of appropriate flexibility for candidates to request extensions.
- ◆ Clear evidence of equal opportunities in selection and throughout the programme: I could see where and how this is monitored.

Points for consideration

The reports identified two issues of plagiarism and two instances of candidates submitting assignments that were clearly not their own work – in all cases centres had dealt with the issues appropriately.

- ◆ Consider inserting a plagiarism statement on each assessment.

Verifiers agreed that inhouse training makes it challenging if a candidate who is also an employee fails to complete or fails to achieve. They agreed that the rules regarding time allowed at each stage must be clear and specific and then adhered to unless in exceptional circumstances.

- ◆ Consider a clear contract of assessment, including submission date.

One centre asked whether candidates need to be in a workplace, or whether the PDA qualification could be used to prepare candidates for supervisory roles. As things stand it is the former but centre asked that the latter be presented to SQA for future development.

- ◆ Consider an additional option Unit for inclusion in the HNC Social Care.

Use of English legislation has been noted in a few reports. In one example, the verifier did suggest that the centre add the statement (current Scottish legislation) to some of the instruments of assessment, as some candidates had made reference to English-based legislation only. For example, child/adult protection committees are responsible for investigating all allegations of abuse in Scotland. GIRFEC (Getting it Right For Every Child) is the cornerstone of the

Scottish Government's child care strategy. Candidates are required to use the appropriate legislation and national guidance. This is particularly relevant to the Protection of Harm and Abuse Unit DH3P.

- ◆ Centres should note that candidates must use current Scottish
- ◆ legislation and national guidance when they live and work in Scotland.

Areas of good practice

From the examples of good practice recorded in the reports this year many related to specific candidates. Some of those examples are identified here in order to recognise their achievements.

Developments in the use of technology, especially the growth of virtual learning environments to support teaching and learning, featured strongly in the good practice identified by verifiers.

Examples included:

- ◆ Candidates' learning wall, where new learning is identified and questions are posted, is innovative and I can see how this must generate lively discussions.
- ◆ Detailed guidance to candidates and the tutor contact recording process are excellent.
- ◆ Assessors blind marking scripts is very good practice as it allows an objective view of candidates' work.
- ◆ I was very impressed by candidate's ability to recognise her leadership role with her staff. She spoke of the need to motivate and inspire staff without having to push or coerce them. It was clear from our discussion and from her writing that she is committed to, and practices, this approach.
- ◆ Good use of role plays to apply theories was clearly beneficial.
- ◆ The candidate felt strongly that the course had confirmed that some of her supervisory strategies were effective and had learned some more strategies. She has grown in confidence in her role since undertaking this qualification.

Specific areas for improvement

As this report focuses on the first full year of new PDA awards, with many centres delivering HN units for the first time, it could be expected that areas for improvement would be identified. However, scrutiny of all the verification visit reports identified only the following areas:

- ◆ Discourage candidates from listing whole theories/policies and encourage key areas to be discussed as prose within the assessment.
- ◆ Strengthen critical evaluation and analysis areas of the assessment.

These are areas for quality improvement and should not be viewed as detracting from the overall impressive results achieved this year.

Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

F92E 36 Leadership and Management for Care Services

F291 34 HN Social Care Graded Unit 2

General comments

This year the External Verification team looked at both the HNC Social Care and the PDA Leadership and Management for Care Services awards. In the PDA the Graded Unit is a project where candidates choose a topic which will bring about change and development in the workplace. The overall standard in both was high and it was clear that centres have a sound understanding of the standards and are marking and verifying candidates' work appropriately.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The verification reports show that the assessors and Internal Verifiers were all familiar with the Unit specifications and assessments were in line with the requirements. It was noted on the reports that up-to-date copies of the assessment specifications were contained in the main teaching pack and, in some cases, were also available for computer access.

Evidence Requirements

In both Graded Units it was noted on the verification reports that centres have a clear understanding of the Evidence Requirements and that candidates are also provided with substantial information on what is expected from them.

The HN Graded Unit reports identified that all assessments in use are valid.

Examples of comments from verification reports are:

- ◆ It was clear that planning has taken place and that the candidates are well prepared for the development stage of their Graded Unit.
- ◆ Assignments are double marked as some of the team have only recently been involved in the Graded Unit.
- ◆ Double marking is used to ensure standardisation.
- ◆ Judgement of the planning phase was clear: agreed with the marking and decisions made.
- ◆ PDA Graded Unit reports provided evidence that planning had taken place and that the candidates were well prepared for the Graded Unit.

Reports also identified that centres had followed the advice to bring the PDA Graded Unit in at an early stage in the programme and this was proving very successful.

Administration of assessments

The team reported that there is evidence of more candidates having gained the required statement from their placements or employers which confirms their participation in the assessment process. This is an important improvement as candidates are marked on this aspect of the HNC Graded Unit.

Reports identified that:

- ◆ Cross-marking provides the focus for internal verification and takes place at each stage of the Graded Unit.
- ◆ The evaluation part of the project was carried out in class under closed-book conditions: this showed the authenticity of candidates' work.
- ◆ A list of set dates for internal verification was provided in the folder along with the college IV policy.
- ◆ Evidence of ongoing internal verification available and checklist was completed and signed.
- ◆ Signatures and dates on candidates' scripts to show evidence of individual candidates sampled.
- ◆ A list of set dates for internal verification was provided in the folder, along with the college internal verification policy.
- ◆ Evidence of ongoing internal verification is available; extensive comments/feedback were completed and signed.
- ◆ Candidates' scripts show evidence of being sampled. Internal verification of assessment decisions was appropriate and action planning identified.
- ◆ Comments offered to candidates highlighted appropriate work and clearly explained what was required in order to improve particular areas.
- ◆ Documentation was well maintained in master folders with appropriate checklists which made it easy for the External Verifier to navigate through them.

General feedback

Centres are doing a very effective job in delivering the Graded Units and supporting candidates throughout the process. There is clear evidence that centres are completing the individual meetings required for each candidate.

The reports show no concerns regarding the delivery and assessment of the Graded Unit or the marking of scripts. The team felt on the whole that the marks gained reflected the level of difficulty of the Unit and the challenges for candidates in relating the stages to their own workplaces.

The assessment decisions made were sound. The work sampled came from the top, middle, bottom or fail range of the class groups. There were clear differences between the work of candidates and good justification of grades was given, accompanied by constructive feedback to candidates. The full range of grades was used.

It was noted that where documentation was well maintained in master folders with appropriate checklists, it was easy for the External Verifiers to navigate through it.

The timescales set for candidates gave enough time between assessments. In one case, different dates had been set to meet the needs of the classes — for example, day class and evening group.

One centre provided an Equalities Scheme, updated in January 2012 to meet the needs of the Equalities Act 2010, to provide flexibility of learning for candidates.

Feedback from candidates noted:

- ◆ Although it is a challenging piece of work, they felt they have been supported throughout the process by their assessor.
- ◆ Candidates confirmed that they were introduced to the Graded Unit early in the course and reminded of it and key points throughout.
- ◆ They felt they were directed and supported well by their tutors and kept to task with appropriate dates for handing in work.
- ◆ They felt they were involved in the discussion of where they should go on placement and felt their tutors matched them well to their placement.
- ◆ There was good placement support from their tutors and their workplace supervisors.
- ◆ They felt the placement helped them to make sense of matching theory to practice; they were able to integrate their knowledge better and understand why things happened in terms of individual behaviours.
- ◆ They found class discussion helped prepare them for placement by discussing case study material.
- ◆ Candidates currently completing the Graded Unit for the HNC spoke very enthusiastically about their experience on the HNC and three have gained places on social work courses at university.

Feedback to candidates noted:

- ◆ They had individual interviews as well as class time with tutors to discuss the Graded Unit in general and their own individual progress.
- ◆ They were given an information book on the Graded Unit with support notes and guidance on how to complete which they found very helpful.
- ◆ It is evident that tutors regularly informally discuss delivery of the Graded Unit within the context of the group award. Meetings also consider assessment criteria, the marking schedule and support for candidates.
- ◆ Candidates were clearly well supported and any additional assistance required was provided at the start of the programme.

Areas of good practice

As part of the workbook for candidates to prepare them for the placement, one centre had prepared an exercise on 'How well do you know the service user?'. This asked questions about the service user they would be supporting and gave examples of what the candidate should know in order to build relationships effectively. This sheet of questions is completed by the candidate before starting the activity selected for the Graded Unit.

In general, the reports identified that attention to detail in all stages of the Graded Unit was of a very high standard. Reports show:

- ◆ Evidence of thoroughness within the standardisation process with high amounts of cross-marking undertaken.
- ◆ One centre provided three hours of extra tutorial support for struggling candidates.
- ◆ Candidates were given a session on critical reflection and this was very valuable in helping them understand the level of the award.
- ◆ The team produced an excellent support pack for candidates.
- ◆ Support pack is a very clear outline of how to approach the Graded Unit project. It has activities which support the candidates to achieve, and a PowerPoint presentation that tells candidates how to use the pack and what support to expect.
- ◆ The use of social media for catching up on notes from missed tutorials and the support sessions for all candidates is proving successful, as is providing references to YouTube for some learning.
- ◆ The review of every taught session by the whole delivery team is a good vehicle to identify issues and any concerns individual students may have.
- ◆ The use of the learning development team to support individual students is an invaluable resource that is run in the college.
- ◆ The quality of activities chosen by candidates for the Graded Unit reflected a wide range of working environments which provided ample scope for opportunities to gather evidence.

Specific areas for improvement

HNC GRADED UNIT F291 34

Only one centre was advised of a specific area for improvement. This related to marking. The centre was asked to note that if a minimal evidence requirement or part of one is missing, then some remediation should be given. This is clear in the GU specification.

PDA GRADED UNIT F92E 36

No specific areas for improvement were identified.