



**Higher National and Vocational Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2012
Music**

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

In general, centres are adhering to national standards, and practice is, in the main, very good. However, there are still areas for further development and this report aims to highlight and help clarify these.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

From the sample of centres selected for verification it appears that, in general, assessors are familiar with Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification material. External Verifiers praised staff in some centres for their interpretation and materials. For example: *'the most challenging aspect is ensuring parity across and between the musical instruments taught. All instrumental tutors meet regularly to discuss repertoire and offer all instrumentalists equal challenge appropriate to their instrument'*.

Evidence Requirements

The sampled evidence would suggest that there is, overall, a clear understanding of the Evidence Requirements for the Units.

Administration of assessments

From the verification sample it seems that centre assessment is at the appropriate level, overall. Centres were, in the main, also praised for their innovative use of virtual learning environments (VLEs).

Candidates are given the opportunity to be assessed in a number of situations. For example, music candidates can perform in local venues and provide video evidence of the performances. The video footage of performances clearly demonstrates that candidates are working to the appropriate musical level. Assessment appears to give candidates a 'real life' experience.

External Verifiers commented on the fact that centres, in general, had very good, robust internal verification systems in place and that staff were adhering to these systems. One centre had, in effect, 'live' internal verification because of the way two assessors assess together therefore ensuring standards by double marking. As identified by the External Verifier in one centre: *'There is evidence of a well-structured and effective internal verification system which is operating well. There was evidence available of issues being identified and actioned through the internal verification process.'*

General feedback

Feedback to candidates was, generally, very good. There was varying practice, but in one case VLE evidence demonstrated a very high standard of feedback to

candidates and as the External Verifier noted: *'Use of VLE is to be applauded, with formative materials and resources being available for all Units.'*

Feedback from candidates was very positive with most candidates praising the support given by tutors, assessors and the college generally. The External Verifier noted that: *'They praised the amount of feedback they received on assessments, which was in most cases received quickly and was constructive. They also mentioned the culture of continuous verbal feedback which exists.'*

There was evidence of integration of delivery and assessment. Also, some centres were making very good use of e-assessment. This type of activity is likely to alleviate the assessment load.

Areas of good practice

Observed areas of good practice were:

- ◆ The use of college VLE was seen as being of great benefit to the students and has produced a high standard of work.
- ◆ The input of industry professionals visiting the college as guest lecturers.

In general, course teams are highly motivated and well informed about assessment and internal verification procedures. They are committed to producing high quality learning environments, learning and teaching materials, and producing rigorous and robust assessments. Teams are giving serious consideration to the planning of integrated approaches to assessment at both Unit level as well as integration across programmes, which is to be commended.

Centres are generally very well equipped and up to date and this affords candidates an excellent learning experience. Tutors/assessors are generally active themselves in the music industry; this is especially true in the case of part-time staff. This factor, coupled with visiting lectures from industry professionals, brings the industry into the classroom and ensures access to the latest information as well as access to these professionals.

Specific areas for improvement

Delivering lecturers, assessors, Internal Verifiers and college management are striving to ensure that there is a culture of continuous improvement in their centres. Therefore, in the main, there were only a few areas for improvement from this year's verification sample.

Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

Music Graded Unit 1 — F508 34 — (SCQF level 7)

Music Graded Unit 2 — DR33 35 — (SCQF level 8)

General comments

In general, centres are adhering to national standards, and practice is, in the main, very good. However, there are still areas for further development and this report aims to highlight and help clarify these.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Assessors are familiar with the Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials as well as the SQA online support material for this Graded Unit. The External Verifier noted assessor feedback such as: *'The assessment decisions I observed were appropriate, and useful feedback was being given.'*

Evidence Requirements

In this Graded Unit the candidate is required to produce a portfolio. They must plan, develop (put the portfolio together) and evaluate the portfolio. Evidence must meet the required criteria for all three stages.

There has been a tendency in the developing stage for some candidates to simply state what was studied in each mandatory Unit rather than selecting items for the portfolio and justifying their inclusion and the External Verifier noted that: *'There is some room for improvement in the justification for selection of evidence based on the requirements of the mandatory Units — the signposting of evidence is sometimes unclear, and students may find it beneficial if a proforma for each mandatory Unit is produced.'*

In Graded Unit 2, the Evidence Requirements are to plan, develop and evaluate. However, the central output for the developing stage is an oral presentation and interview where candidates pitch for a job or for a potential funding opportunity. Candidates must present themselves to a panel of potential employers or financial backers using materials to exemplify their skills. Audio or video recordings would be expected here. The television programme 'Dragon's Den' could be used to exemplify what is required in a pitch and show why making exaggerated claims or not being prepared would be questioned. It was noted that some presentations were considered to be too long.

Comments from the External Verifier were as follows: *'An oral presentation and interview are the central output for this Graded Unit and the assessment evidence reflected this requirement. Because of this, the main discussion centred on ensuring that the candidates present as a "real life" scenario and not a college mock presentation and interview. The assessor agreed that candidates could*

have started their presentations much more directly by saying, for example: “I am here today to ask for funds to start my business as [...]. and I think I have the necessary skills to undertake and make it successful. I studied [...] therefore I have a full insight into [...]. I built up a track record for success while at college highlighted by making £ [...] profit”. Many of the candidates however, omitted an opening statement.

Administration of assessments

There appear to be good, systematic verification procedures and assessment decisions are fair and consistent. There also appears to be good recording of mentoring interviews and a systematic internal verification process.

General feedback

Generally, feedback to candidates was good and access to assessment was fair as the following comments from the External Verifier support:

‘The records of student meetings were well organised and maintained, and showed constructive and useful feedback to students.’

‘There is evidence of effective internal verification procedures being carried out, and of a culture of quality in terms of procedures.’

‘The assessment decisions concerning the sampled evidence were consistent and conformed to the assessment brief and it was clear that candidates had worked very hard.’

Areas of good practice

Internal verification procedures are very effective.
Feedback to candidates is timely and constructive.

Specific areas for improvement

Advice for approach to the Graded Unit from the External Verifier:

‘It would be helpful, in several cases, if the “signposting” of the links between the mandatory Units and the evidence was clearer, and the justification for the choice of each piece of evidence was given more emphasis. Organisationally, it would be helpful if these statements were presented alongside the evidence — at the moment it is sometimes difficult to see why a particular piece of evidence is being presented.’

Logbook entries were not always as intended, ie as a mechanism to help candidates develop through reflection and help build a routine where they track progress and achievement — *‘Many of the mentoring records refer to a need to be more reflective in logbook comments; this is a sector-wide issue, and perhaps flags up a need for more development with students on reflective writing/self-evaluation’.*