



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

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 terms of understanding and applying national assessment standards, there is slight variation across the sector but, on the whole, there was praise for the way staff in the various centres delivered and worked to the national standard. For example, one External Verifier said that, *'the centre is to be commended on the maturity of the assessment strategy across the HND Sound Production and the extensive use of an integrated approach to assessment. In addition, the staff at the centre are to be commended for their commitment to the use of electronic delivery and assessment, and should continue to develop this as their experience grows'*.

In general, assessment practice is very good.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

From the sample of centres selected for verification it appears that assessors are familiar with Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification material. External Verifiers commended staff in some centres for their interpretation and materials. For example: *'extensive and appropriate use of inter and cross-Unit integration.'*

Evidence requirements

The sampled evidence would suggest that there is, overall, a clear understanding of the evidence requirements for the Units. As stated in one External Verifier's report: *'Judgement of candidate performance was appropriate and in accordance with the evidence requirements.'*

Administration of assessments

Centre assessment overall is at the appropriate level.

Innovative use of virtual learning environments (VLEs) for assessment purposes was noted.

Candidates are given the opportunity to be assessed in a number of situations. For example, candidates are assessed on a range of audio/sound production equipment in both live sound and recording studio environments. Assessments appear to give candidates a 'real life' experience.

External Verifiers commented on the fact that centres, generally, had very good, robust systems for internal verification in place and that staff were adhering to these systems.

One centre had extensive support for candidates, the External Verifier reported: *'Extra time and/or learning support made available. Some candidates were provided with access to materials/assessments online; others had assessments*

enlarged, or printed on appropriately coloured paper, or were (in one specific case) offered oral remediation due to a vision impairment.'

General feedback

Feedback to candidates was generally very good. There was some variation but in one case VLE evidence demonstrated a very high standard of feedback to candidates. The External Verifier said: *'DJ2734 is assessed via the VLE (Moodle) and so marked electronically. VLE assessment is internally verified prior to "going live", therefore results are robust. Feedback is offered to candidates for remediation. DR1K35 is double-marked.'*

Although candidate feedback was generally positive, some candidates had difficulty with the amount of written work. *'They all said that the project had helped them see routes to employment, but that the amount of writing had been a challenge'*, the External Verifier reported.

There was evidence of integration of delivery and assessment, and centres were making very good use of e-assessment. These types of activity are 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.

In general, course teams are highly motivated and well informed about the 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 content 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.

Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

Sound Production: Graded Unit 1 — F506 34 — (SCQF level 7)

Sound Production: Graded Unit 2 — DR2R 35 — (SCQF level 8)

General comments

This section of the report is based on a small verification sample.

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 these Graded Units — *'The specifications in use were the latest and most appropriate versions,'* one External Verifier said.

Evidence Requirements

In Graded Unit 1 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. One External Verifier had this to say: *'Although the nature of the student projects clearly involved knowledge and skills from the whole course, the evidence derived and synthesised from the mandatory Units of the programme was, in most cases, not signposted clearly. In some cases it was difficult to tell what evidence was being presented from the mandatory Units.'*

In Graded Unit 2 the Evidence Requirements again 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 and they should use 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 will be questioned. It was also noted that some presentations were considered to be too long.

There is room for improvement concerning the detail in checklists used and more detail could be added for candidate feedback.

Logbook use and mentoring was thought to be effective, overall. Additional action points could be useful but this has not affected achievement.

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 effective as the following comments from the External Verifier support:

'Students were very enthusiastic about their experience in the Graded Unit 2. They were particularly complimentary regarding the staff and were well informed on what they had to do with regard to assessment. In addition, they commented on the flexibility of staff in accommodating the particular requirements of students.'

'There was evidence of a systematic approach to grading which is appropriate.'

Areas of good practice

Internal verification procedures are very effective.

Centres are also commended for their use of new media as noted by the External Verifier: *'Centre is to be commended on encouraging the use of new media to disseminate and log their work and in their enthusiasm in reviewing and updating the delivery of the Unit in order to improve the student experience.'*

Specific areas for improvement

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

'Although the nature of the student projects clearly involved knowledge and skills from the whole course, the evidence derived and synthesised from the mandatory Units of the programme was, in most cases, not signposted clearly, and in some cases it was difficult to tell what evidence was being presented from the mandatory Units. I recommend that the pro forma on page 32/33 of the SQA support pack is used in all portfolios. This will support the students in making sure they have covered all the parameters of the Unit. (ref. descriptor p.8 — '...state how they have integrated (used) knowledge and/or skills from the mandatory Units).'

'Records of feedback and action points from mentoring meetings are very brief — recommend keeping fuller records of feedback given, especially in the case of students who are not performing well. It may also be possible to record mentoring interviews or keep a fuller written record.'