



Higher National Qualifications

And

Scottish Vocational Qualifications

Internal Assessment Report

2008

Subject: Computing (357)
Information Systems (358)

Date: 15 August 2008

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification which has taken place within Higher National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications in this subject.

HIGHER NATIONAL UNITS

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

Verification activity statistics relating to **HN Units** for **Session 2007-08** are as follows:

Number of HN Verification Reports submitted for analysis (inc 2 COVE)	13
Number of Centres verified	13

Total number of individual HN Unit submissions verified	52
Number of HN Unit submissions accepted	52
Number of Units put on Hold	0
Number of Holds removed	0

General comments:

There was a significant reduction in external verification activity looking at individual HN units during the past year, from 32 reports to 13 and from 147 units sampled to 52. No holds were placed for any visit undertaken although there were development points made, which are summarised in the section on areas for further development below. It was also noted that there was a substantial number of points made in areas of good practice contained within the reports, many on common themes. All follow through actions from previous visit requirements had been undertaken satisfactorily.

Two centres were involved in a COVE (Co-ordinated Verification Event) exercise which provided both the centres and SQA with useful feedback on their quality systems.

From the reports it appears that the Internal Verification process within the centres sampled, is being carried out effectively. There were many favourable comments about sampling policies and plans being well thought out. The presentation of candidate materials and centre master packs were overall considered to be in very good order.

It was noted in a few reports that there was an uptake in the use of the SQA produced on-line learning materials for HN Computing Awards. Many centres were now utilising Assessment Exemplar packs but there was little mention of e-assessment activity, either through Solar or centres own VLE's. There were no indications within the reports of centre uptake of Unit Student Guides. For next session it would be a useful exercise for External Verifiers to make direct enquiries on these areas and include them in their feedback.

Conditions and arrangements for credit transfer appeared to be unclear in a few cases; these should be checked out with SQA by centres before application.

Overall comments on standards being implemented by centres were satisfactory however there were still some assessment issues identified. Included in this is the construction of Instruments of Assessment. In some cases these did not comply fully with the Unit Specifications. It is strongly recommended that the SQA Prior Verification service is used when centres are constructing their own assessments or making major modifications to the Assessment Exemplars.

It is worth noting that a significant number of centre devised assessments which had been submitted for Prior Verification were found not to be valid on their first submission. Also, many, particularly assignment based assessments, contained candidate instructions which were based too much on the language used in the Unit Specifications, rather than in plain English, for clarity as to what the candidate is actually required to perform in their tasks. This comment should not discourage centres from going through the Prior Verification Process as it should be considered developmental. The actual issues which have appeared suggest that there is a need for ongoing CPD training on construction of Instruments of Assessment, as well as the role of assessors in judgment of candidate performance.

HN Units

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

The following items were identified by External Verifiers and reported on as good practice:

- Centre has a good IV policy in place and clearly recorded evidence of IV activity on all units seen
- The Internal Verification sampling plans had a well thought out coverage of Assessors, Centres (Campuses) and Units.

- All units had standardised master packs well laid out and clear to follow
- Candidate material was clearly and comprehensively annotated by assessor(s) thus providing good, helpful feedback. (Comments and marks made on scripts).
- Some integration had taken place across unit outcomes
- Secondary marking is encouraged
- Clear evidence of high level of feedback to candidates
- A wide range of interesting project topics for developing multimedia was available to candidates
- Master folders were in very good order and contained a sufficient amount of information to help facilitate the External Verification process.

The following items were identified by External Verifiers and reported on as areas for further development:

- Access to electronic evidence should be ensured prior to an External Verification Visit
- Remediation evidence should be retained and presented for external verification to clearly show all marking decisions.

HIGHER NATIONAL GRADED UNITS

TITLES/LEVELS OF HN GRADED UNITS VERIFIED

Verification activity statistics relating to **HN Graded Units** for **Session 2007-08** are as follows:

Number of Graded Unit Reports submitted for analysis

Visiting	19
Central Verification Event	17

Number of Centres verified

Visiting	17
Central Verification Event	17

Units verified:

DP8G 34 Computer Games Development: Graded Unit 1	6
DG0H 35 Computer Networking and Internet Technology: Graded Unit 2	1
DG0J 34 Computer Networking: Graded Unit 1	1
DH36 34 Computing: Graded Unit 1	15
DN4N 35 Computing: Software Development: Graded Unit 2	3
DN4P 35 Computing: Technical Support: Graded Unit 2	8
DV6D 34 Information Technology: Graded Unit 1	2
F0NA 35 Information Technology: Graded Unit 2	3
F21G 34 Interactive Media: Graded Unit 1	0
DE36 34 Interactive Multimedia Creation: Graded Unit 1	0
DE37 35 Interactive Multimedia Creation: Graded Unit 2	6
DF6G 35 Multimedia Computing: Graded Unit 2	0
DF6E 34 Multimedia Computing: Web Development: Graded Unit 1	2
DF6F 35 Multimedia Computing: Web Development: Graded Unit 2	1

Total number of individual graded unit submissions verified	48
Number accepted at first verification attempt	46
Resubmissions required (ultimately accepted)	2

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

General comments:

The overall statistics show a drop in number of individual graded unit submissions verified from 67 last session.

The central verification event which looked at the examination based HN Graded Units, was overall successful, with none of the centres chosen for sampling being held. The judgment of candidate performance by Assessors was generally in line with the standard required and there were only a few candidates presented whose marks required adjustment and grades changed. Otherwise any disagreements were within acceptable boundaries. This showed a continuous improvement over the last 3 years. Presentation of materials has also improved. Almost all centres were using the published SQA Exemplars. Where a centre chooses to construct its own Paper e.g. from questions taken from a variety of the Exemplar papers, it should be noted that the balance and overall standard of the Paper may be lowered or raised resulting in a potentially invalid assessment. Therefore any alterations should be submitted for Prior Verification.

There was evidence of Internal Verification in the form of double marking taking place in a majority of submissions. This is to be encouraged. One major point to note is that in many of the submissions, there was a lack of clarity in identifying where and why marks were awarded on candidate responses by centres. It would be beneficial if training was given to Assessors and Internal Verifiers in standardising methodologies and marking techniques.

The visiting verification took place mainly in June and July. For this session the verification on projects could take place when the Planning and Developing Stages had been completed and preliminary marks awarded. This helped in arranging visits by extending the window for visits to a certain extent. However a few centres were not aware of this change and many Assessors had not seen the SQA Guideline on Assessing Graded Units Published in April 2008.

The project based units were almost all accepted, with only 2 holds being placed.

Interviews with candidates showed that a majority of centres were operating an effective induction process onto the graded units and that candidates were aware of what they needed to do to achieve the different grades.

As mentioned in last sessions Senior Verifiers Report, in general, the technical content of the graded units was considered to be appropriate, acceptable and in most cases well done. However there was still evidence of lack of clarity in marking candidates work with few annotations or comments to provide information and feedback as to where and why marks were awarded, in more than a few cases.

The evaluating stage also continues to be highlighted as an issue with candidates. There appears still to be some work needing done on providing candidates with appropriate resources and guidance, on the nature and methods of the evaluation process and what is needed to provide the evidence requirements.

In most cases, candidate reports seen in all stages, although particularly in the Evaluating and Planning stages were not to a suitable format and layout, particularly for SCQF Level 8 Units. It is felt that these could be improved through centres providing appropriate pro-forma and tuition and guidance on writing structured reports. It is worth noting that some centres visited already provide written guidelines and references to such materials.

Several development visits which took place during the session, were focused on the Graded Units and the feedback from participating centres was that these had proved most useful and had helped prepare staff for subsequent external verification visits.

There was also a fair amount of Prior Verification activity on instruments of assessment for the Project based Graded Units which again proved most useful when visits were taking place both for centre staff and the external verifier.

HN Graded Units

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

The following items were identified by External Verifiers and reported on as good practice:

- A group of candidates had kept individual diaries for their project recording activities and comments on a weekly basis- this can be extremely helpful for use in the evaluating stage.
- The centre has expanded the marking scheme to clearly identify where individual marks are allocated. Clear guidelines are given to assessors and internal verifiers for each section of the project.
- Verification group meetings are held on a regular basis and all actions identified followed up.
- Comments are applied by assessor to a weekly delivery schedule. These were candid and provided a good summary of how well candidates were coping with the graded unit. This will help plan unit more effectively for next delivery.
- There was a supportive and mentoring culture between assessors delivering the graded unit projects across the cognate area.
- All candidates were given individual project assignments based on real clients and businesses. This provides for good practical experience in information gathering and real life problem solving.
- Additional guidance on referencing and writing reports was contained within candidate instruction brief for HND Graded Units which require an extensive report.
- Candidates had completed their diaries as web logs. This proved very effective as candidates tended to provide more information than in a paper based log.
- Double marking was apparent across all candidates. (Examination). This is good evidence of internal verification activity.
- Candidates were very pleased with the clarity of induction into the graded unit given by the centre and the level of support provided throughout preceding units which allowed them to undertake the Graded Unit with minimum assistance from the assessor.

The following items were identified by External Verifiers and reported on as areas for further development:

- Assessors must clearly indicate in Candidate evidence where marks are awarded and how many for each section / element. This would also provide feedback for candidates and verifiers.
- There should be greater candidate feedback with comments written on candidate evidence and / or through a candidate feedback sheet.
- Candidates need more guidance on meeting a realistic schedule of deliverables. Especially in the early stages of their project.
- All marking should be double checked on all material and records before final grading submissions.
- The centre may wish to consider providing a report template in the candidate guide that is given to candidates at the start of the unit.
- Suggest greater use of pro – forma's for candidates, to elicit appropriate response at the point of requirement and standardise presentation of evidence.
- In general the candidates did not perform well in the Evaluating stage. It is recommended that some teaching / guidance be conducted as to how to evaluate projects and self in line with Graded Unit guidelines.
- Care must be taken to ensure that candidates meet all of the minimum evidence requirements of the unit specification.
- The centre should examine their marking practice to ensure that more consistent marking is achieved (Examination)
- There was lack of clarity regarding the allocation of marks by the assessor. The number of ticks did not match the allocated marks in some cases. In other cases numerical marks were used as well as ticks. Some assessors used crosses to show incorrect responses, others left a blank. Sometimes the whole response was blank and the mark awarded annotated. Methodologies should be standardized to assist consistency. (Examination)

SVQ AWARDS

TITLES/LEVELS OF SVQ AWARDS VERIFIED

Insert details below

Verification activity statistics relating to **SVQ Awards** for **Session 2007-08** are as follows:

Number of SVQ Reports submitted for analysis	10
Number of Centres verified	9
SVQ Awards verified:	
G7JF 21 IT User – level 1	1
G7JG 22 IT User – level 2	5
G7JH 23 IT User – level 3	3
G7P4 22 Computing: IT Practitioner – level 2	0
G7P5 23 Computing: IT Professional – level 3	2
Total number of individual SVQ Awards verified	11
Number accepted at first verification	11

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

General comments:

The number of visits undertaken is similar to last session. As outlined in the previous report, centres continue to demonstrate good practices and all awards and units sampled were to an acceptable level.

Centres continue to employ suitable robust assessment practices. The tasks based on real work were being set at appropriate levels of complexity and scope for the units undertaken. Internal verification systems and processes continue to develop and improve.

One area highlighted in several reports was the high level of assessment planning which was taking place.

The construction of portfolios continues to be more streamlined, there is greater use of on-line storage and links to evidence. Clear indexing is being applied within individual portfolios. Candidate evidence was in general well laid out and easy to follow. There is further evidence of increased use of electronic portfolio generation and recording software.

There was also clear evidence of the internal verification procedures taking place, suitably recorded and backed up by printed schedules of activity. Staff within centres were knowledgeable about the individual awards and kept up to date by reference to the e-skills SSC website.

Interviews with candidates showed that they were well supported and most had a choice in the component units of their individual award. They were overall very satisfied with the awards undertaken and were kept well aware of their progress and feedback received from assessors on their performance.

SVQ Awards

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

The following items were identified by External Verifiers and reported on as good practice:

- There were neat pertinent comments from Assessor annotated on scripts within portfolios to assist in judgment of candidate performance.
- Clear feedback and cross referencing on portfolio items to indicate components and criteria covered within and across units.
- There was clarity of feedback to candidates on their achievements and rationale for acceptance of evidence.
- Product evidence in the form of screenshots of fault finding and repair activities, with annotated comments in explanation of tasks undertaken.
- There was a good range of evidence types utilized
- Cross referencing of Skills and Techniques and Knowledge and Understanding by annotating on candidates reports and logs is shown clearly and reinforced by candidates.
- Good use of cross referencing of evidence against different units undertaken.

The following items were identified by External Verifiers and reported on as areas for further development:

- Centre should ensure that expert witness records are kept up to date in terms of witness qualifications and experience to gauge competence.

NATIONAL UNITS

(i.e. Freestanding units which contribute to NPAs or NCs etc.)

TITLES/LEVELS OF NATIONAL UNITS VERIFIED

Insert details below

No individual reports for National Units were submitted for analysis.

Only 1 visit which took place as part of a COVE, is recorded in which 5 individual PC Passport units were verified.

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

General comments:

As only 1 report was available any trends or other common themes cannot be identified. The centre material had provided showed that the candidate evidence verified was of an appropriate and acceptable standard. This was well presented and organized within the respective folders. There was suitable internal verification activity apparent in all units.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

N/A