



Higher National Qualifications

And

Scottish Vocational Qualifications

Senior Verifier Report

2008

Subject: Social Sciences

Sector Panel or SSC: Social Sciences

Date: 21/8/08

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

Insert details relating to specific guidance which should be offered to centres based on the verification of centres.

Include:

- *General comments*
- *Areas of good practice*
- *Areas for further development*

General comments:

Social Sciences: Research and Methodology (DP59 34)

Social Sciences: Research Issues (D81P 35)

Centres were all using the correct version of the Research and Methodology Unit for the new award. The Research Issues Unit was from the previous version of the framework. All centres will move to the new version from this session.

Centres were familiar with the underpinning knowledge and skills and worked well with these Units. Appropriate paperwork was provided, which was easy to work through. Centres met the national standard in their assessment decisions. Most Centres used the exemplar assessments provided by SQA.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

It was good to see evidence of robust Internal Verification procedures in place in nearly all Centres.

Good practice was evident in a number of Centres giving detailed positive written feedback with suggestions for improvement as well as identifying strengths. This was the case last session also. The use of checklists detailing knowledge and skills to be covered were available in most centres. This was helpful for verification purposes.

Some good quality responses were noted in the research Units, although there were substantial numbers in most Centres who had achieved on reassessment, rather than at first attempt, even where some parts of answers were of high quality.

HIGHER NATIONAL GRADED UNITS

TITLES/LEVELS OF HN GRADED UNITS VERIFIED

Insert details below

Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1 DW90 34 (exam) (central)
Social Sciences: Graded Unit 2 DX2L 35 (project) (visiting)
Social Sciences: Graded Unit 3 DX2M 35 (exam) (central)
Social Sciences: Graded Unit 2 D88N 35 (project) (visiting)
One development visit for DW90 34.

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

Insert details relating to specific guidance which should be offered to centres based on the verification of centres.

Include:

- *General comment*
- *Areas of good practice*
- *Areas for further development*

General comments:

All Centres were using the revised Graded Unit 1 (exam) for the new Awards. Some Centres were using the new HND project and exam, and some were finishing off the older HND awards.

Generally, Centres provided paperwork that was clear, easy to read and work through. It was clear that Centres understood the requirements of the Units, especially the Graded Unit exam (HNC and HND yr 1), as papers were laid out in an appropriate manner, with clear marking guidelines provided. Most questions came from exemplar questions provided at last year's update event. This certainly helped in verification. A high number had got exam papers prior verified. Good preparation of candidates was evident in their responses.

There were 3 holds from Central Verification, mainly due to centres not providing suitable marking instructions. In the main, overall totals were given for questions but no indication of breakdown of marks. Centres should give clear breakdowns of each question.

The development visit focused on construction of the exam paper.

There was a general concern expressed in visits that the Graded Units were highly demanding for candidates.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

Most Centres provided good written feedback for each question in the exams or for the 3 sections in the project. This generally commented both on strengths as well as weaknesses. It was usually more detailed for those who failed to achieve a pass in the Graded Unit.

It was good to see second marking/double marking or evidence of robust Internal Verification procedures in place in Centres.

Some Centres gave a breakdown of Knowledge & Understanding and Conclusion & Evaluation marks on candidates' work. This was good practice and should be adopted by all Centres, as it makes it clear to candidates, internal and external verifiers how marks are gained. This usually took the form of noting in the margin 'k&u' or 'c&e' alongside how many marks a point or paragraph had gained. This usually matched up to a checklist.

It is important that Centres adhere to the division between 'k&u' and 'c&e' marks in the exams, noting the difference between yr 1 (HNC) exam and yr 2. In a few occasions, the divisions were wrong.

In a few Centres, there was a lack of a standardized approach to marking checklists, which resulted in some questions being easier to verify than others. In such Centres, usually most disciplines used a similar style that worked well, with one or two being less clear and more difficult to check standard was met. Centres should consider adopting a similar style in terms of checklists across disciplines to help candidates and verifiers to see where marks have been given.

On one occasion ½ marks were awarded in the Graded Unit 1 exam. This is unacceptable and has been mentioned previously as an inappropriate practice (in last year's report).

In the project (yr 2 HND) there was evidence of good planning processes, with appropriate proformas for candidates to follow and internal verification of the planning stage to check progress of candidates. Good practice was shown in providing a record of interviews with candidates throughout the process. The project was incomplete in the majority of Centres, and so for those only the planning process was fully available with drafts of the development section.

One Centre chose to combine the development of the topic for the Graded Unit with the Psychology D Project, as the criteria for Psychology D were overtaken by the work done for the Graded Unit. Psychology was used as the discipline for the Graded Unit project. The 'planning' and 'evaluation' stages, which were done as part of the Graded Unit, did not count towards the criteria for Psychology D. However, the development section of the Graded Unit lent itself to the achievement of the criteria for Psychology D, in that the research carried out was written up as a lab report. The development section (the work that contributed to achievement of Psychology D) of the Graded Unit was marked according to the criteria and marking instructions for the Graded Unit 'development' section. It was then compared to the criteria and marking instructions for the Psychology D Unit separately (students handed in two copies of the lab report – one for the Graded Unit and a version for the Psychology D assessment). This works very well and should be considered good practice. It is possible to consider whether work done for the Graded Unit project would also meet the criteria for another D Unit from a different discipline, e.g. Sociology (if the topic related to Social Policy). Again the 'development' part of the Graded Unit may be used as the body of the report/essay required for the D Unit but it would be marked against different criteria. Planning and evaluation would be done as per any other Graded Unit and marked accordingly. This approach works **only** if the Graded Unit is the focus for the work being produced.

SVQ AWARDS

TITLES/LEVELS OF SVQ AWARDS VERIFIED

Insert details below

N/A

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

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Include:

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General comments:

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

NATIONAL UNITS

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

TITLES/LEVELS OF NATIONAL UNITS VERIFIED

Insert details below

N/A

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