



Higher National Qualifications

And

Scottish Vocational Qualifications

Internal Assessment Report

2008

Subject: Management Skills (VG 243)

Date: 30 July 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

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:

HN Units were externally verified through visits to a centre. There were only a small number of visits in this verification group during the session and all involved management Units delivered as part of awards covering particular occupational areas such as Contracting Operations and Hospitality Management. Most were in the old format and will soon be replaced.

The small number of visits and the fact that the Units have been in existence for some time makes it difficult to make many general comments. However, external verification did highlight the importance for centres of making sure that current Unit specifications are being used. This is especially so as new Units become available and old Units become no longer current.

Overall, however, the visits demonstrated that centres continue to deliver Units in the moderation group well. All centres now have well-established procedures for delivering and assessing HN Units, often based on exemplar assessment packs, and, in most cases, these result in effective assessment patterns and appropriate assessment judgements.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

Good practice

Good practice which has been apparent in previous years was again evident during verification visits. The main aspects of it have been mentioned in previous reports but they are worth repeating:

- Clear and well documented delivery systems – usually based on a master folder for each Unit
- Assessment instruments which make use of contexts familiar to students – this helps students to see the relevance of the Units to the award that they are following; assessment often made good use of practical work also
- Feedback to candidates on performance – many centres use a specially prepared front sheet for this. It is time consuming but can be motivating to candidates who have done well. It also ensures that detailed guidance and comment is given to candidates requiring re-assessment.
- Commitment of centre staff and the conscientious approach to delivery and assessment.

It is encouraging that these elements of good practice are now the norm.

Further development

All the Units verified during this session are, as already noted, due for replacement in the near future. Further development of the delivery and assessment of them is not entirely appropriate. However, there is every reason to suppose that centres will be able to transfer the good practice referred to above to the delivery and assessment of replacement Units. There are some ways in which good practice could be further enhanced. They include:

1. Developing the guidance used to assess candidate work – for many Units this is now contained in an exemplar assessment pack. However, the guidance cannot be (and is usually not intended to be) fully comprehensive. Through standardisation meetings and internal verification centres develop ways of

interpreting the guidelines. There is a danger that this experience and knowledge will not be retained. This problem can be avoided by making notes on the marking guidelines. This helps to ensure consistency over time and between assessors and IVs for a current cohort. It also makes the marking guidelines a working document which can be used to inform and develop methods of delivery and assessment.

2. Recognising the importance of the SCQF level of a Unit – this is linked to the point above in that the SCQF generic level descriptors can help to decide what is a suitable standard for a Unit. They can also help assessors and internal verifiers distinguish between the different level of responses required by candidates – e.g. between a Unit at SCQF Level 8 and one at SCQF Level 7. They can also assist in giving feedback to candidates who can, as a result, become more aware of the demands of different levels. This can be particularly helpful to candidates who progress to awards at higher levels.
3. Emphasising the importance of internal verification – this underpins both the above points. There can sometimes be a danger that internal verification becomes a rubber stamping process of confirmation of assessor judgments. It is a vital element of quality assurance and can play a key role in making sure that assessment judgments are consistent and made at the appropriate level.

Overall, however, external verification has confirmed that Units in this verification group are being assessed in an appropriate manner. There is no doubt that the main reason for this is the professionalism of staff at centres.

HIGHER NATIONAL GRADED UNITS

TITLES/LEVELS OF HN GRADED UNITS VERIFIED

Insert details below

DW2X 34: HNC Management Graded Unit

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:

This is the first occasion that this Graded Unit has been externally verified. Verification consisted of a central event supplemented by postal verification and a visit. The Graded Unit resembles The Managerial Effectiveness Unit in the old HNC Management, but it is important to remember that delivering a Graded Unit is new as far as centres are concerned. It is reasonable, therefore, to expect that centres will need time to learn how best to tackle the Graded Unit for HNC Management. The external verification of the Graded Unit confirmed that in most cases this is the case, although some centres were able to make good use of experience accumulated in the delivery of Graded Units in other awards.

Most of the external verification was confined to the planning and implementation stages of the Graded Unit, although, in fact, much of the work available had not gone beyond the planning stage. Despite this relatively restricted range of work, there were some general trends. Overall candidates had chosen suitable topics for the activity required for the practical assignment in the Graded Unit. This is encouraging and suggests that centres are well aware that this is a crucial aspect of a Graded Unit such as this.

The work available for external verification was incomplete and some candidates had not fully completed the planning stage. On the positive side, though, this illustrates that centres recognise the importance of the planning stage for the Graded Unit and that it is worth spending time to make sure that candidates do get this right as this will both save time later on and make it much easier for candidates to successfully complete all 3 stages of the Graded Unit.

Overall, verification indicates that in general terms centres understand what is required in this Graded Unit. There are, however, some points which arose at verification and which are significant in ensuring that suitable standards are applied to the Graded Unit. In some cases where a stage (e.g. planning) did seem to have been finished, candidates had not always covered all parts of the Unit specification. In particular, setting criteria to judge managerial effectiveness was not fully developed. This will have knock-on effects for subsequent stages of the Graded Unit and the evaluation stage in particular. The situation was complicated by the fact that sometimes the layout of the work did not always make it easy for external verifiers to determine precisely whether all parts of the Graded Unit specification had been covered. Also, work which had been assessed tended to be leniently marked. The Graded Unit is at SCQF Level 7 and to gain marks candidates should make sure that they provide reasons (e.g. perhaps based on suitable theory) and evidence (e.g. information gathered by the candidate) to support what they say. The link between the Graded Unit and other Units in the HNC Management was not always as clear as it might be and centres may wish to firm this up. Among other things it can help candidates devise suitable criteria for their practical assignment and help them provide reasons to back up the points they make in their report for the Graded Unit.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

Good practice

As already noted this Graded Unit is a new experience for centres. However, external verification highlighted that candidates had in general been given good advice on the choice of topics for the Graded Unit. They had also been given careful and detailed feedback on the work that they had done.

There was also evidence of good practice in assessment, particularly in centres where candidates had made most progress. This included:

- Double marking of candidate work
- The use of detailed individual marking sheets for each candidates (which helps to ensure that all aspects of the marking guidelines in the Unit specification are followed)
- Careful internal verification with useful comments from the IV.

Further development

Further development can come from extending the good practice mentioned above and from addressing some of the issues noted in the general comments section above. Past experience suggests also that the delivery of this Graded Unit will develop and progress as centres gain experience of the specific requirements of this Graded Unit and the particular challenges that it poses for candidates. It is important also to stress that the development will vary between centres.

The following points are ones which may help centres to identify key aspects of the assessment of the Graded Unit for HNC Management. Centres may be able to make use of them to identify specific development needs which can be addressed.

1. Making sure that candidates provide support for points which they make in their reports for the Graded Unit – this can take the form of reasons to back up points in the report but also covers supporting documentary evidence such as development plans which could be presented in appendices.
2. Considering the most effective way for candidates to present their work – one way to do this is to encourage candidates to use headings which correspond to the various sections in each stage of the Graded Unit. This can make candidate work easier to mark as well as helping candidates to produce a more formal report. It can also highlight the importance of including information gathered by the candidate which can often be incorporated as appendices.
3. Make sure that candidates are aware that they must cover all parts of the Unit specification – mention has already been made that in the planning stage there was a danger that candidates did not identify criteria for their investigation. In addition, the Unit specification requires an individual interview with the assessor at each of the 3 stages of the assignment. Evidence that this has taken place should be included with the final report submitted by the candidate.
4. Encourage candidates to make use of work that they have done in other Units e.g. Management: Developing Self Management Skills
5. Make use of individual marking sheets which allow for comments by assessors to justify and explain why marks have been awarded. The exemplar assessment pack for the Graded Unit has a table on p33 which could be used for this purpose. Individual marking sheets are time consuming but they do help in double marking (as well as in internal verification) and contribute substantially to the development of a common standard. They also help to avoid half marks which should not be awarded.

Overall, the signs for the Graded Unit are promising. There is still work to do but it is clear that there is a willingness among those involved to build on the foundations which have been laid. It is not always easy to deliver and assess a new Unit like this and centres deserve credit for the work they have done.