



**Higher National Qualifications**

**And**

**Scottish Vocational Qualifications**

**Senior Moderator Report**

**2006**

**Subject: Applied Sciences (392)**

**Sector Panel: Engineering, Science and Mathematics**

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

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## HIGHER NATIONAL GRADED UNITS

### TITLES/LEVELS OF HN GRADED UNITS MODERATED

#### HN Applied Sciences – DJ89 34

### FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

#### General comments:

Five colleges offered the new HNC Applied Sciences course this academic session 2005-2006. The Graded Unit was centrally moderated by SQA and was a very successful event which highlighted a number of unit delivery, assessment and moderation issues that indicated there is room for improvement in the assessment process in future. The moderator team was drawn from chemistry, physics, biology and environmental science.

A good standard of candidate achievement was noted in most of the participating colleges. Candidate choice of material was on a wide range of subject topics and was generally well presented.

It was pleasing to see that candidates had obviously chosen topics in which they had a specific interest or which they found to be relevant to their future career aspirations. It would appear that they had also benefited greatly from the project experience.

Overall, candidates met the required standards and consequently all centres were approved for certification.

Development visits were offered to centres during the session but not all centres took advantage of these.

#### Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

##### Good Practice

- \* Internal moderation undertaken and records kept which were available from most centres.
- \* Detailed remits provided for candidates.
- \* Prompt feedback given to candidates at some centres but not others.
- \* Marking schemes provided if those in the exemplar were not used.
- \* Accurate and detailed assessment records kept by some centres
- \* Double marking carried out by one centre to ensure consistent judgment in assessment.

##### Areas for Further Development

Centres are advised to introduce the Graded Unit requirements early in the academic session to give candidates time to consider a project topic. The moderators felt that there was insufficient research carried out by candidates prior to the planning stage.

Nearly all centres provided internal moderation records and double marking was carried out by one.

College staff appear to have provided varied amounts of help and guidance prior to the start of the planning and development stages whilst others appear to have had weaknesses in providing sufficient support. The Graded Unit should have a timetable slot where candidates have access to the assigned member of staff for this guidance. It is essential that staff provide continuous support and feedback during these processes and a candidate feedback sheet should be used if possible for guidance.

Timescales given in many cases were too brief and could be more accurate.

Progress to the next stage in the project should not be undertaken until **ALL** the points of the current stage have been achieved, as for example, from the “planning stage” to the “development stage”.

In order to ensure national standards are maintained, a common marking scheme and a common checklist should ideally be used by all centres. The moderator team found that centres were using different marking schemes which resulted in differences in standards across the award. One centre had weighted the questions in a way that the moderators considered to be biased and this resulted in higher marks being awarded than should have been. It was therefore agreed that a common marking scheme should be developed for use by all colleges.

Where centres used the exemplar marking scheme provided, an allocation of marks was given to the evaluation of problems arising during the development stage. It was noted, however, that a candidate may not experience any problem areas and hence if this was not mentioned they failed to gain the marks allocated through no fault of their own. Candidates should therefore be advised to state whether or not they experienced any difficulties during development in their project reports.

Common checklists for each candidate should be used to record achievement of the criteria in the planning and development stages. This will allow centres to record achievement and view the progress of a candidate but also allow the moderators to follow candidate achievement in each stage more easily. This signposting of each point was not provided by any of the centres and made the external moderation process far more laborious.

Many Graded Unit reports contained paragraphs that were undoubtedly not the candidates’ own words. There is a need for candidates to be informed that the material provided must be in their own words and that they need to reference their reports to the bibliography. This may help to prevent candidates uplifting vast amounts of information from reference sources sometimes without understanding the statements made. Candidates should be informed that they may be questioned orally to determine understanding of their project material.

Some candidates provided a better structure than others to their evaluation stage and received no credit for this from the marking scheme which lacked a mark allocation for this.

As a result of these various issues highlighted during the central moderation event, the team has recommended some minor changes to be made to the unit descriptor and also to the marking scheme in the exemplar assessment. The revised unit and assessment exemplar will be available for use in session 2006 to 2007.