



Higher National Qualifications

And

Scottish Vocational Qualifications

Senior Moderator Report

2006

Subject: HN Business Graded Unit (MG 390)

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.

HIGHER NATIONAL UNITS

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

General comments:

This report covers all the Graded Units in the HN Business. They are:

DE3T 34 Graded Unit 1
DE3V 35 Graded Unit 2
DE3W 35 Graded Unit 3

This was the first time that Graded Units 2 and 3 had been moderated. Graded Unit 1 was moderated in session 2004 – 2005 but on this occasion there was a substantial increase in the number of centres involved. The Graded Unit remains, therefore, a new experience for most centres.

In the light of the above, it is encouraging that most centres were able to meet the requirements of the various Graded Units in HN Business. The most significant of these is ensuring that work is marked in accordance with the requirements of SCQF Level 7 for Graded Unit 1 and SCQF Level 8 for Graded Units 2 and 3. There is no doubt that candidates find the Graded Units, particularly those based on an examination, a significant challenge. The main lesson from this year's moderation is that candidates are able to rise to the challenge. It is very creditable that most centres have been able to make candidates aware of what is expected of them and to prepare them properly. It was particularly encouraging that centres which had successfully delivered Graded Units last year were able to maintain the standards they had set.

Nevertheless, there were examples of centres which applied a standard below that expected in a Graded Unit. It is not easy to gauge the standard especially for the first cohort. However, it is important to ensure that marks are awarded only when they can be justified – for example, when a point is supported by a valid reason.

Despite this, moderation demonstrated that the Graded Unit is beginning to 'bed down'. As centres gain more experience there is every reason to suppose that The Graded Units will fulfill their purposes of bringing the various parts of the HNC/D Business together and of enhancing the credibility of the awards.

It was also very clear that centres had worked hard to prepare candidates and to meet demanding deadlines for marking and internally moderating candidate work. Many centres have developed strong procedures e.g. for recording and commenting on marks. From a moderation point of view, these are excellent and it does help the process. However, they are very time consuming. All those involved at centres should be congratulated for the work and effort which they have put in to the HN Business Graded Units.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

Good practice

Some of the good practice applied to all three Graded Units. It included:

- Cross marking of student work
- The use of individual marking sheets for each candidate – these often contained space for comments where markers could indicate the reasons why marks had (or had not) been awarded
- Evidence of the rigorous application of the centre's own internal moderation process – completed internal moderation sheets were included in the material submitted for moderation

The above are closely related to each other. The main advantage of them is that they help a centre to apply a consistent standard to student work. The involvement of several members of staff helps to ensure that this is agreed between those involved and that it is disseminated among several people.

Other examples of good practice applied more specifically to the different types of Graded Unit.

Graded Units 1 and 3 (Examination)

Good practice here covers the way scripts are marked and how the marks are recorded. It includes:

- Using individual marking sheets to identify differences between different markers and how they had been resolved
- Clearly indicating on student scripts where marks had been awarded e.g. the number of ticks matched the number of marks given; indicating on scripts where repetition occurred [some centres also included a note to explain the marking conventions used]
- Providing a separate, detailed analysis by the marker of each candidate's answer to each question.
- Relating comments specifically to the marking guidelines to indicate the reasoning behind the award of marks
- Making notes on the marking guidelines to explain how they had been interpreted by the centre

Graded Unit 2 (Investigation)

Again good practice here related to procedures adopted for recording marks. It included:

- Marking sheets for each of the three stages of the Investigation which were completed for each student – these can show clearly where marks were awarded and also be used to indicate how the additional marks in the marking scheme have been allocated.
- Comments on why marks had been awarded – these can be incorporated into the marking sheets.

Further development

There are two aspects of this. The first is about adopting good practice. The comments in the previous section may suggest possible actions that centres could take. It was clear from centres which had presented in session 2004 – 2005 that good practice did help to maintain standards. This applies to all three Graded Units.

The second relates to the way in which scripts are marked. This applies to Graded Unit 1 and Graded Unit 3, the examination Units.

Graded Unit 1 will be taken first. The general comments referred to the fact that some marking tended to be lenient. The main reasons for this are listed below. Centres may wish to review their marking practice to make sure that, as far as possible, they do mark according to the standard set at SCQF Level 7.

- Candidates were awarded marks for not answering the question asked – even points which are sensible cannot gain marks unless they are relevant to the question.
- Marks were awarded for statements which were vague or imprecise – as a result, it was not clear whether they were valid or not
- Candidates were given marks for prescriptive answers which suggested what the company should do. This is acceptable if the question asks for it but, in fact, very few actually do ask this. Generally, prescriptive answers lead to candidates not explaining points in the case study and, unless they do this, it is hard for them to get marks.
- Marks were awarded for general points about topics from HNC Business which were not related to the question or the case study. There are cases where the marking guidelines indicate that marks can be awarded for general points but generally the number given in these cases is small.

- Marks were given for repetition – this is not always easy to spot but it is important to ensure that marks are not given twice for what amounts to the same point.
- Marks were given when a point was stated but no further explanation was given - candidates at this level should offer some explanation in order to gain a mark.
- Marks were awarded for points which could not be realistically anticipated based on the evidence provided – there are only a few questions where there is an opportunity to consider what might happen in the future, and where this is the case, suggestions should be firmly grounded in the evidence available to candidates in the case study.

In **Graded Unit 3**, the main issue is ensuring that a standard appropriate to SCQF Level 8 is applied. This means that the standard expected of candidates is higher than that for Graded Unit 1. To a considerable extent the points made above for Graded Unit 1 apply here also but with more force. For example:

- Development marks can only be awarded when there is a clear development of a point and it is apparent that the candidate understands what s/he is saying
- Marks should be awarded for valid reasons – at Level 8 these reasons should be explicit and clear.
- Candidates at this level can be expected to tailor the case study material to the demands of the question.

Overall, however, the Graded Unit for HN Business seems to be working well. It is to be expected that it will take a little time for all centres to become fully conversant with the requirements of the Units. It is, however, good to report that much progress has been made. It is good also that the attitude of all centres has been positive. This bodes well indeed for session 2006 -2007.