

## Moderation Feedback — Visiting 2004

**Assessment Panel:**

**Sociology**

**Qualification area**

**Subject(s) and Level(s)  
Included in this report**

**Higher National Certificate and Higher  
National Diploma in Social Sciences —  
Sociology**

## Visiting Moderation

### General comments on visiting moderation activity

In general, the moderation activity went fairly smoothly this year, with one or two exceptions where it took longer than anticipated to get visits organised. However, this proved to be advantageous as it meant that the external moderation was fairly well spread out, ensuring that most HN Sociology units at different stages of delivery were moderated this year.

### Specific issues identified

The majority of Centres visited demonstrated that the staff approached the HN Sociology and Research Methods units in a structured and methodical manner, clearly meeting the SQA requirements. With one exception, the majority of Centres were able to demonstrate the operation of sound quality assurance systems and systems for internal moderation. One Centre operated a system of selective moderation, prioritising the internal moderation of inexperienced staff. This had led to inconsistencies on a number of issues across sites in relation to the ways in which candidate work was assessed, as well as variations in the allocation of merits across sites and lack of consistency in topics considered. However, in discussion with the Centre it was recommended that the internal moderation process and topics being delivered be reviewed to ensure consistency.

Overall candidate work was marked fairly, to the standards set out (with one exception) and the candidate performance revealed a range, from very good pieces of work to borderline. There was one situation in relation to Sociology A (D7J2 34), where it seemed that the demands being made of the candidates were slightly more than was expected according to the outcomes. In general, the assessments and the candidate responses tended to be strong on the family and weak on education. However, when it did come to discussing the family candidates tended to be fairly weak at addressing the cross-cultural aspects. These issues were raised with the Centre.

In the case of a small minority of Centres, where there had been more than one lecturer delivering the same Units, there were at times inconsistencies in depth of feedback given and systems for using feedback varied, often with different feedback forms being used within the same Centre. There were wide variations in practice between Centres with regard to providing feedback, with some staff providing in depth good quality written and/or oral feedback and others providing minimal feedback with little record keeping. In general systems for recording oral feedback, especially used in remediation cases, seemed inconsistent and poor. Thus, highlighting the need for Centres to develop consistent policies for giving and recording written and oral candidate feedback. There were a wide range of feedback forms being used across the Centres and it would seem the Centres might benefit from some sharing of experience and practice of giving and recording feedback.

## Specific issues identified (cont)

Although the majority of Centres do communicate to candidates information about the units and the requirements, the practice of how this is done varies. With some Centres having structured candidate handbooks which provide information on the units and what they cover, assessments and schedule covering teaching and assessments. One Centre had produced a handbook for candidates which did not merely replicate SQA Unit descriptors, but made an attempt to produce the information in language that candidates could relate to.

There were a number of examples of good practice. For example in relation to D7J4 35 — Sociology C, a Centre had successfully encouraged candidates to apply sociological thinking to local issues and had handled the integration of sociological concepts to local issues very well and there were one or two examples of excellent candidate feedback.

The issue of getting candidates to reference appropriately continues to be an issue, despite the guidance provided by some Centres. The latter is, however, not consistently provided across the sector.

With the exception of one Centre, the majority provided some guidance to candidates on presentation of work such as essays.

There was an issue of staff isolation and lack of a vehicle for benchmarking levels where staff numbers in social science disciplines were too small. This was particularly relevant to small rural colleges.

In general there was some uncertainty surrounding to delivery of HN units given the ongoing review, this was at times unsettling for staff delivering units.

## Feedback to centres

In general, the majority of Centres demonstrated that the staff approached the HN Sociology and Research Methods units in a structured and methodical manner, clearly meeting the SQA requirements. With one exception (where there were inconsistencies across sites and lecturers in assessment and feedback), the majority of Centres were able to demonstrate the operation of sound quality assurance systems and systems for internal moderation.

Overall candidate work was marked fairly, to the standard set out (with one exception) and the candidate performance revealed a range, from very good pieces of work to borderline. There was one situation in relation to Sociology A (D7J2 34), where it seemed that the demands being made of the candidates were slightly more than was expected in relation to the outcomes.

In a small minority of Centres, where there had been more than one lecturer delivering the same units, there were at times inconsistencies in depth of feedback given and systems for using feedback varied often with different feedback forms being used within the same Centre. There were wide variations in practice between Centres with regards to providing feedback, with some staff providing in depth good quality written and/or oral feedback and others providing minimal feedback with little record keeping. Thus, highlighting the need for Centres to develop consistent policies for giving and recording written and oral candidate feedback. There were a wide range of feedback forms being used across the Centres and it would seem that staff might benefit from some sharing of experience and practice of giving and recording feedback across the sector.

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There was an issue of staff isolation and lack of a vehicle for benchmarking levels where staff numbers in social science disciplines were too small. This is particularly relevant to small rural colleges. Opportunities could be provided by the Centres for staff in the smaller more rural colleges to collaborate with other educational providers in the local area (for example schools) to share experiences as well as to work collaboratively on internal moderation as a way of helping such staff to overcome isolation as well as to help benchmarking of standards.

Despite guidance provided by Centres, the issue of getting candidates to reference appropriately continues to be an issue.

There are not many opportunities for staff to share experiences and explore common issues across the sector and it would seem that the staff and the sector would benefit from coming together, from time to time to share experiences and good practice on issues such as candidate feedback, delivery issues and so on.