



National Qualifications 2014 Internal Assessment Report Practical Craft Skills

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

National Courses

Titles/levels of National Courses verified:

X035 Woodworking Skills (Intermediate 1 and 2)

X034 Engineering Craft Skills (Intermediate 1 and 2)

General comments

This year in excess of 79 external verification exercises were carried out, a reduction on previous years, but a reflection on the number of centres presenting. This reduction in centres presenting was due to the introduction of the new National 4 and National 5 qualifications.

All centres visited resulted in an Accepted outcome. On a couple of occasions this was after discussion and agreement with the visiting verifier, but, in the overwhelming majority of cases, centres had been consistent and in line with SQA standards.

This confirms that the vast majority of centres are comfortable with, and have a clear understanding of, the national standards required for assessment at Intermediate 1 and 2 for both Woodworking Skills and Engineering Craft Skills.

Over the years, the percentage of centres where internal assessment was deemed to be Accepted, with no discrepancies, during the verification process has been improving. Where there were any discrepancies between levels, the verifier addressed this and agreement was reached with the centre.

There has been a noted improvement in departmental internal verification procedures since last year. With a couple of exceptions, centres now have clear policy on internal verification, with records of policy into practice. The few centres that did not have robust policies in place have been advised by verifiers on how to address this issue and are actively putting in place the advice given.

Practical Craft Skills Courses consist of three Units and the Course Project. To achieve a Course Award, it is mandatory that all three Units and Course Project are completed.

Centres are well aware that to achieve a Course Award at a specific level, eg Intermediate 2, all Units and the Course Project for the Course must have been entered and passed at Intermediate 2.

The following are areas which could lead to a Not Accepted decision during a verification visit:

- ◆ insufficient evidence
- ◆ no evidence for specific Outcomes
- ◆ inconsistent marking/judgement

- ◆ more than 1/3 disagreement in the verification sample
- ◆ instrument of assessment not reliable or valid
- ◆ no internal verification process in place
- ◆ candidates presented at the wrong level

Course Arrangements, Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The vast majority of assessors, within centres, are very familiar with the Course Arrangements, and are clear on Unit content. They are competent in the use of appropriate instruments of assessment to assess prescribed Outcomes.

Most centres are using exemplar materials and NABs issued by SQA, thus ensuring consistency. Although some centres are choosing alternative projects, it should be noted that the majority of centres are using one of the SQA-devised instruments of assessment, an indication of their popularity among candidates and deliverers.

This move towards alternative models has been more obvious in Engineering Craft Skills, where centres are using a variety of instruments of assessment.

Where a centre has been using an instrument of assessment of their own design, they should ensure it has been prior verified and is consistent with exemplification materials.

Centres are advised to ensure any alterations they make to instruments of assessment do not invalidate them as valid assessment tools, eg do not reduce widths to an extent that they can no longer allow assessment of tolerances.

If centres wish to change the instrument of assessment being used then they are reminded to refer to the secure area of SQA's website, where a number of projects are available.

Evidence Requirements

For Course Project verification, centres are familiar with Evidence Requirements, namely: Course Project, Course Summary Assessment Sheet, Verification Sample Form and internal verification procedures.

There are no major concerns concerning evidence for the Course Project, other than on the odd occasion when centres do not have candidates at a sufficient stage of completion for verification to take place. The centre should ensure candidates are near completion before agreeing a date with the visiting verifier.

Although no centres were verified for Units in this session, it should be remembered that almost all of concerns with Unit verification are due to issues concerning retention of evidence by the centre.

All evidence for each Unit must be retained for three weeks after the submitted completion date.

It should be noted that no Unit Project or Course Project should be painted prior to verification. This applies to both Metal and Wood.

Thermal fusion joints should not be dressed with grinder prior to verification.

Administration of assessments

All centres must refer to the Grade Descriptors issued by SQA, these are available from the secure area of SQA's website. This ensures consistency and allows all centres to assess work, at the appropriate level, with regard to: processes undertaken, tolerances applied and quality of finish.

Although there has been improvement in the quality and reliability of internal verification procedures within a number of centres, there are a few centres that have yet to formalise their procedures to ensure that reliable, robust evidence of internal verification is available to a verifier.

Areas of good practice

Once again, it should be said that the quality of work produced by candidates has demonstrated improvement.

There is a growing trend within centres to issue individual student logbooks/handbooks which outline specific requirements of all aspects of the Course, Units and Course Project. These booklets specify the Outcomes and expectations within the Course, while encouraging self-, peer- and teacher assessment; in some centres this also incorporates target setting involving student, teacher and parent/carer. This is an initiative which should be commended and built upon.

The majority of centres have taken onboard the need to evidence all areas of individual student input and design. This is reflected in verifiers' reports.

Good internal verification procedures involve a clear policy statement, sampling and feedback with a detailed record kept (policy into practice). The internal verification procedures should reflect the procedures of visiting verifiers.

A few centres now work in partnership with other local centres to carry out internal verification. This is particularly beneficial for centres that have only one member of staff within the department and is a good method of sharing good practice and strengths between practitioners.

In many cases, Course Summary Assessment Sheets are being extended to give more individual candidate detail with reasons for grades applied. This assists greatly during external verification.

Specific areas for improvement

Although the general improvement in internal verification procedures is noteworthy there is still scope for improvement in a small number of centres.

Centres should be aware that if there is no internal verification then the result of future verification visits will be 'Not Accepted'.

Although cross-marking and collaborative marking form part of good quality assurance, they do not on their own constitute internal verification.

The policy for internal verification should reflect the exercise as being undertaken in a similar fashion to external verification, ie an appointed Internal Verifier sampling the assessments made by the teacher/lecturer at regular intervals with records of the exercise being retained.

In a few centres visited there were discrepancies between working drawings and the actual finished Project.

Any alterations to overall dimensions or dimensions of materials used in the construction of artefacts must be reflected in all working drawings.

Centres are reminded that widths of materials should not be reduced, as this compromises the effectiveness of the Project as an appropriate instrument of assessment for joint gap tolerances, etc.

One centre used a self-devised Project which had no evidence of prior verification. This is not recommended. To ensure a Project is a valid and robust instrument of assessment, centres should submit it for prior verification.

When welding, centres must ensure continuous runs, not tacking, are used. Centres should make certain that care is taken when setting up for welding to ensure square.

Centres should not undertake processes that they are poorly equipped to deliver.

Centres are reminded that the difference between a good grade and a very good grade is often determined by the finish.

Finish is an area where there is still some scope for improvement.

At times there is still evidence of pencil lines, poor finish to end-grain, lack of de-burring, rounded edges and poor filing.

If centres feel they are unsure of any aspects of the Course and require support then they should consider arranging a development visit through SQA.

Centres should take note that it is within their interest to ensure any project, of their own devising, is prior verified by SQA.