



Higher National Qualifications

And

Scottish Vocational Qualifications

Senior Verifier Report

2007

Subject: **Accounting & Finance**

Sector Panel or SSC: **Group 266**

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

General comments:

It is clear from the external verification activity carried out over the year that the overall standard of assessment work reviewed by the team was consistent with that of previous years, although centre feedback given to candidates on assessment varied in both quality and quantity.

Many centres were offering the new HND framework for the first time and sought guidance, from SQA, on the delivery and assessment of the Graded Units. As a result, 2 development visits were undertaken by the team.

A training event, covering the assessment of Graded Units 2 and 3 was held at the Stirling Management Centre in November. This was well attended and resulted in positive delegate feedback.

It was evident that many centres do not carry out Internal Verification until the end of the session; it is important for these centres to ensure that, for those candidates requiring re-assessment, the time lapse between first and subsequent assessment attempts is not over-long.

There have been fairly significant changes to legislation and standards, in the accounting field, over the last three years and it has been noted that many staff are not fully conversant with these changes. This has been evidenced in materials which have not been updated accordingly. Advice has been given by EVs during visits about sources of additional information and training.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

Many centres have produced assessment booklets to be given to candidates at each assessment event. However, some of these did not show the assessment conditions, time allowed or the marks required to achieve the Outcome/Unit. Centres are encouraged to revise these to include all appropriate information.

The majority of centres visited had Master Folders containing all documentation relating to individual Units to ensure consistency in the delivery and assessment of Units. Centres, in the main, carried out assessment using the SQA assessment exemplars. In a few instances the latest version of the exemplar was not being utilised.

Development Issues:

Centres should ensure that staff keep up-to-date with current accounting standards; the most up-to-date assessment instruments are used; and that, where necessary, existing assessment instruments are revised in line with current standards.

Good Practice:

One centre has developed a selection of questions relating to each Unit. At the end of each Unit, candidates were asked a number of these questions at random in an oral assessment situation to ensure that they had progressed in their understanding of the topic.

Most centres visited had developed detailed induction materials for candidates undertaking the qualifications from which it is clear that there is fair access to assessment and support for those with additional support needs.

Most centres visited had provided additional support to candidates as and when required.

Units Verified in Session 2006/2007:

Preparing Final Accounts (DE5C 34)

Management Accounting using Information Technology (DE9G 34)

Using Financial Accounting Software (DE59 34)

Recording Financial Information (DE59 34)

Centres commented that the delivery of this Unit often requires time to be 'borrowed' from other subsequent Units in order to prepare candidates for assessment. This Unit is core to the HNC/HND and it forms much of the foundation for the other Units of the award(s) including Graded Unit 1.

Cost Accounting (DE5F 34)

Centres commented on the heavy assessment burden for this Unit.

Business Accounting (DE39 34)

Centres are advised to keep the pro forma updated for Outcome 1 to take account of changes in standards.

Financial Reporting and Analysis (DE5G 35)

Centres are advised to keep the pro forma updated for Outcome 1 to take account of changes in standards.

HIGHER NATIONAL GRADED UNITS

TITLES/LEVELS OF HN GRADED UNITS VERIFIED

HN Accounting Graded Unit 1 – SCQF Level 7 – DE64 34

HN Accounting Graded Unit 2 – SCQF Level 8 – DE65 35

HN Accounting Graded Unit 3 – SCQF Level 8 – DE66 35

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

General comments:

Graded Unit 1 (DE64 34)

Generally, centres adhered to the standards required by the Unit.

Most centres marked Part 1 of the assessment taking consequential errors into account; however, some centres still penalised candidates for errors which carried through the tasks.

There is still evidence that centres mark Part 2 of the assessment more leniently than necessary. Assessors should ensure that candidate responses reflect SCQF level 7.

Graded Unit 2 – (DE65 35)

Overall, centres have risen to the challenge presented by the project-based Graded Unit and assessed appropriately.

The main difficulty highlighted was around the concept of candidates having to meet minimum requirements for each of the three sections (Planning, Developing and Evaluating) in order to achieve the Unit. The grades are awarded on an overall holistic basis, and not according to the numerical score that the candidate achieved for the Unit. For example, one centre had a candidate who had been awarded a mark in the high 60s, which would normally equate to a Grade B; however the centre appropriately awarded a Grade C as the piece of work did not merit a Grade B in line with the criteria in the unit specification.

It is recommended that centres ensure that each candidate signs a declaration that the work for this project is their own – this did not happen in some cases.

Graded Unit 3 – (DE66 35)

This exam-based Graded Unit is based on the 3 units: Financial Reporting and Analysis, Business Taxation and Accounting for Specialised Transactions. The changing nature of legislation and standards, which affect these subject areas, require changes to assessments to ensure that assessment reflects current practice. Whilst the original SQA Graded Unit assessment exemplar provides guidance to centres on the required standard for assessment; centres using this for assessment purposes should ensure it is amended to reflect these changes.

The Graded Unit specification allows candidates to refer to a recognised text book (recommended by centres) – it was anticipated that the appropriate text would also have been used in the Business Taxation unit. Under present assessment conditions for this Unit, candidates are not allowed to take any other material into the assessment.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

Generally, centres had worked hard to prepare candidates and to meet the demanding deadlines for marking and internally verifying candidate work.

Many centres have adhered to the advice in the Unit specification in awarding appropriate grades for Graded Unit 2.

Further development

The comments in the previous section may suggest possible actions that centres should take, ie

- ◆ do not penalise consequential errors
- ◆ ensure minimum requirements in each of the 3 sections of Graded Unit 2 are met
- ◆ Conditions of Assessment in Graded Unit 3 are adhered to

SVQ AWARDS

TITLES/LEVELS OF SVQ AWARDS VERIFIED

SVQ Accounting Level 2

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

General comments:

The SQA continues to work in partnership with the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) in awarding this SVQ.

In general, centres were well organised with good systems of assessment and internal verification of candidate evidence. No major issues were highlighted during EV visits.

To ease the external verification burden on centres, wherever possible, EV visits took place in conjunction with the appropriate AAT EV. This procedure worked well.

A number of centres have commented that the inclusion of an examination in what is a work-based award may have discouraged some candidates from enrolling on this award. It would appear that this cohort of candidates may have taken an alternative non-examinable award.

External Training Providers (ETPs) appear to have more success with this award as candidates are encouraged to provide much of the evidence for their portfolio from their own work place. In some College based centres simulation is used which may take the form of additional examination type case study scenarios, thereby adding to the assessment burden.

Centres are reminded that material gathered from previous studies is not always appropriate as Approved Prior Learning (APL). For example, material covered in HN or other non-work based units is not generally appropriate for this award.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

One centre had developed a complete bank of in-house assessments covering all areas of the award which could be used in the absence of work based evidence – this appeared to work well.

It would appear that some centres are still not encouraging candidates to date and sign evidence included in portfolios - this has been noted in reports back to the centres.

The recording of assessor/IV Continuous Professional Development (CPD) could be improved. Some assessors and IVs appear to find it hard to relate any CPD event to their roles.