



**Higher National Qualifications**  
**and**  
**Scottish Vocational Qualifications**  
**Senior Verifier Report**  
**2007**

**Subject: Environment and Environmental Conservation**

**Sector Panel or SSC: LANTRA**

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:**

- ◆ Two centres were visited and a total of 2 HN Units verified
- ◆ Generally there was a high or very high standard of candidate achievement
- ◆ No serious issues were identified at either centre
- ◆ Both centres had a good understanding of the standard of candidate achievement required at this level
- ◆ Both centres provided good evidence of effective internal verification and other QA systems

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

- ◆ Centres provided candidates with a comprehensive range of candidate learning materials. The use of course notes in Arabic (this was the candidates first language) was particularly to be commended at one
- ◆ There is a need for centres to keep course notes and other materials up to date as the knowledge base in the topic 'Environment' is developing very rapidly outstripping the periodic revision of courses.
- ◆ In more practical based coursework, centres made good use of photographic evidence
- ◆ At one centre good use was made of work-based assessment
- ◆ Both centres displayed an innovative approach to assessment
- ◆ Centres provided effective and timely candidate feedback

## HIGHER NATIONAL GRADED UNITS

### TITLES/LEVELS OF HN GRADED UNITS VERIFIED

#### HNC Applied Science: Graded Unit 1

### FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

#### General comments:

I took part in the Central Verification of the newly developed Applied Science (year 1) Graded Unit — the results of this exercise will be reported elsewhere.

There was only one candidate for the HND Environmental Science Graded Unit 2 — unfortunately this candidate was indisposed and did not complete. It is anticipated that this area will grow year on year and that next year 3-4 candidates will be entered.

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

## SVQ AWARDS

### TITLES/LEVELS OF SVQ AWARDS VERIFIED

#### SVQ Environmental Conservation — G70H 22

### FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

#### General comments:

- ◆ Two centres were verified during 2006-7, a total of 13 candidates.
- ◆ One of these centres was newly approved and received a post-approval visit in the autumn
- ◆ A further visit to a third centre was planned but they withdrew at a late stage because they had no candidates — this centre is currently setting up to deliver Rural Skills — Skills for Work.
- ◆ Both of the active centres use the award (G70H 22) as a context to train candidates to carry out footpath construction and maintenance
- ◆ Generally candidate work was of a very high (commercial) standard
- ◆ In all cases candidate work had been correctly assessed and internally verified
- ◆ No issues were identified at either centre

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

- ◆ Excellent use was made of real working environment
- ◆ Great use was made of photographic and other diverse forms of evidence
- ◆ Good use of site visits and reports
- ◆ Very professional project management
- ◆ Candidates are clearly highly motivated and regularly supply evidence over and above that required by the standard
- ◆ Candidates are clearly very proud of their work
- ◆ The candidates qualifying from both centres are highly employable — historical evidence suggests that in excess of 90% of candidates go on to achieve full-time employment in footpath construction — this is an excellent track record
- ◆ Excellent rapport between staff and students
- ◆ Some streamlining of course documentation was recommended
- ◆ Portfolios would generally benefit from an introductory grid detailing the location within the portfolio of each piece of evidence

All of the above is very positive and a great credit to those centres currently delivering the award. It does, however raise the question — why is uptake so low? I've listed some possible (plausible) answers below:

- ◆ The original rationale of the course included the aim to train candidates to become Countryside Rangers (Managers) — jobs in this area are few and far between, accepting candidates only with HN or Degree qualifications — the course does not serve this purpose — this area is already very well served by full time provision.
- ◆ Centres regularly complain that candidate funding mechanisms do not allow candidates to complete within the allotted timescale. The most successful centre currently running provides candidates with a living wage.
- ◆ Some centres, traditionally very active in this award, have turned their attention to delivering short courses eg Chainsaws, Pesticide Application, First Aid, etc.
- ◆ If centres are using Environmental Conservation as a context to deliver footpath construction, would it not be more valid to use Footpath Construction, Estate Maintenance, Forestry etc as a context to deliver

Environmental Conservation? Change the emphasis of the course to deliver practical, employability, skills with a strong environmental content.

- ◆ There is competition from increasingly popular NC Qualification Rural Skills (Skills for Work) and particularly the SPA in Rural Skills. The VQ Qualification does not necessarily represent a progression to these.

The central issue to be addressed is: Is the SVQ level 2 in Environmental Conservation still fit for purpose? Clearly several centres continue to make very good use of the award and it continues to be well liked by candidates but perhaps we should re-examine its rationale and clearly define where the award sits in the context of the other awards available in this curriculum area.

## **NATIONAL UNITS**

**(i.e. Freestanding units which contribute to NPAs or NCs etc.)**

## **TITLES/LEVELS OF NATIONAL UNITS VERIFIED**

### **SPA IN RURAL SKILLS**

#### **RURAL SKILLS (SKILLS FOR WORK)**

#### **MANAGING ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES ACCESS 2 and 3**

## **FEEDBACK TO CENTRES**

### **General comments:**

- ◆ Three centres received Approval visits in relation to the SPA in Rural Skills. Two were approved outright a further centre was approved with recommendations
- ◆ Two centres took the opportunity to have post-approval visits. The key issues identified revolved around the need for clear guidance on internal verification procedures.

I understand that a large number of Approval applications for the SPA in Rural Skills can be anticipated next year. Schools in rural areas clearly see a need for the award, teachers are very positive and candidates love it. It prepares candidates for a role in the community in which they were raised and will provide opportunities for them to progress to HN Qualifications (Countryside Management, Agriculture, Forestry, Equine, etc) at FE Colleges. It is a development which is long overdue and I commend it. A note of caution perhaps, centres need clear guidance on internal and external verification activity, eg what the frequency will be and the methodology for external verification: visiting/activity based or postal?

- ◆ A single centre was verified for Access 2/3 Managing Environmental Resources. This was carried out at the request of the centre and in conjunction with an HN visit. No problems were identified and a large amount of good practice was identified (below).

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

- ◆ Excellent QA and reporting systems
- ◆ Good use of logbooks/diaries
- ◆ Good use of identification keys
- ◆ Good flexibility of delivery/assessment between Access 2 and 3 ensuring that candidates achieved their full potential