



**National Qualifications 2015  
Internal Assessment Report  
Skills for Work: Early Education  
and Childcare**

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

# National Courses

C221 74 National 4 Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare

C246 75 National 5 Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare

## General comments

The National 4 and 5 Early Education and Childcare: Skills for Work Courses are designed to support the learner to develop the employability skills required for working within early education and childcare. Over this academic session, it is clear that this is also the focus of centres delivering the qualifications. Centres are using a variety of methodologies and techniques to support the development of employability skills, including practical learning, workplace experiences and reflective practice.

Centres are delivering the Courses in a variety of ways — to senior phase pupils within schools or in colleges, and to full-time and part-time learners in colleges on SCQF 4 and 5 level Courses.

External Verifiers have identified some excellent examples of partnerships between schools, colleges, other training providers, local authorities and employers. These partnerships enable the Courses to be delivered in a variety of learning environments with access to relevant teaching expertise, which enriches the experience for learners.

Throughout this session, it has been evident that the majority of centres have presented evidence for external verification which was based on the requirements and assessment guidance within the Units and at the appropriate Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level(s) 4 and 5. Centres have embedded employability skills and supported the development of knowledge, skills and practice for working in early education and childcare.

## Course specification, Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The centres delivering National 4 and 5 Early Education and Childcare: Skills for Work Courses have assessors and internal verifiers who are familiar with the Course and Unit specifications. External Verifiers have found that staff at centres understand the process and practice required to deliver these Courses well and in line with Course and Unit specifications.

Most centres are using National Assessment Bank materials, which incorporate a number of assessment methods and cover all Evidence Requirements in the Unit specifications. These have been downloaded from SQA Secure as required and are therefore current instruments of assessment. Many centres have adapted the format of the NABs (font or style) but are maintaining the rigour of the assessment instrument.

## **Evidence Requirements**

It has been evident from external verification this session, that there is a clear understanding of the Evidence Requirements for the National 4 and 5 Early Education and Childcare: Skills for Work Courses and the Units within them.

External Verifiers have sampled assessment evidence and verification activity across all Units at both levels. In the majority of cases, from the assessment evidence sampled, it is clear that assessors are making accurate and reliable assessment decisions based on the evidence presented by the learners. These decisions were in line with the requirements in the Units, marking guidance in the NAB and the SCQF levels. Where Evidence Requirements have not been met, remediation is being undertaken appropriately.

## **Administration of assessments**

External verification has found that most centres are administering assessment appropriately. Centres are using National Assessment Bank materials and these are being administered according to the assessment conditions, timing and duration, and assessment instrument. The majority are following SQA guidelines for re-assessment and are assessing work produced using marking information within the NAB. Most are using the checklists and tracking sheets provided.

## **Feedback to learners**

In most cases, assessors were providing focused and supportive feedback to the learners following assessment. The majority of assessors were providing verbal feedback, which effectively guided and motivated learners, while written feedback identified development points and areas of success. This allowed for progression, and supported the development of self-esteem and confidence in learners.

External Verifiers also found evidence of learners having the opportunity to evaluate and comment on feedback, with clear guidelines given on areas that needed remediation or re-assessment.

## **Internal verification**

In the majority of centres, there has been evidence of effective internal verification. Internal verification policies and systems are in place and are robust and compliant with SQA guidance. Generally, Unit assessments sampled for external verification had all been internally verified and appropriate reports written. It is clear that correct and reliable verification decisions have been made and positive and constructive feedback given to assessors.

External Verifiers have seen quality assurance processes and internal verification policies which demonstrate a commitment to excellence in delivery and assessment practice. For example: cross-marking of assessment evidence between assessors delivering Units; clear tracking of internal verification from prior-verification, verification sampling of assessment evidence and evaluation of assessment practice; constructive discussions around the Course documents

and assessments, regarding the ways that these have been marked and delivered.

These processes have been recorded through minutes of standardisation meetings which clearly show action points and completion dates noted; action logs, particularly where there are small teams; learners' work clearly tracked to show internal verification taking place; and internal verification records with feedback to assessors.

In some cases, internal verification tracking and feedback is maintained electronically and all staff have access to verification decisions. There are processes in place for any highlighted issues to be rectified.

External Verifiers also found that new assessors were well supported with the verification processes, where all their assessment work was sampled and tracked effectively.

## **Areas of good practice**

External Verifiers have seen some excellent examples of practice which have enhanced the learning experience. Centres have developed learners' understanding of the early education and childcare workplace and the employee's responsibilities; they have assisted learners to develop self-evaluation skills, flexibility, adaptability and a positive attitude to learning. They have encouraged learners to set goals, reflect and learn from their experience.

## **Experiential and enhanced Learning**

The majority of centres have allocated dedicated practical/teaching rooms which are well resourced and allow for practical sessions with the learners. These practical activities are often used when the learner is working with children, either as part of a placement experience or when children attend the centre. These practical experiences are available to learners within schools, colleges or training providers.

There have been some innovative approaches to teaching these Courses with team approaches to supporting classes and shared responsibility between schools, colleges and employers.

Overall, the staff delivering these Courses are offering high quality learning experiences, pitched at a level which easily meets learners needs at both National 4 and 5.

External Verifiers highlighted many excellent examples of experiential or enhanced learning opportunities, such as learners being given the opportunity to work in local primary and nursery schools, supporting, planning or leading play sessions; learners being provided with a budget to support their Course which developed practical, confidence and team-working skills; learners working with a local nursery to improve an outdoor learning space and engaging with the John Muir Trust; and learners hosting a nursery story-telling session using puppets

and a puppet theatre the children had made, then developing this in a further session where children were able to use the puppets in a water play activity. These are all excellent examples of where this Course is being delivered to best effect.

### **Employability skills**

Across centres, External Verifiers found a commitment to developing employability skills. Learners were being encouraged to demonstrate emerging research skills and to apply to writing in tasks; to match age-appropriate play to aspects of development within portfolio tasks; to use their own experiences for research; to use creative skills and resources to enhance presentation of assessment material in PowerPoints; to work in teams; enhance their communication skills, etc. All of these allowed learners to develop their awareness of self, to build their confidence and understand their potential responsibilities for working in early education and childcare.

### **Reflective practice**

External Verifiers found good evidence of learners engaging in reflective evaluation of Units. Good use was made of evaluative tasks to support learners to understand why they have chosen the Course and what they were learning as they progressed through the Units.

Assessors were providing some excellent feedback to learners which was clear and focused, identifying strengths and areas for development. Learners had the opportunity to use this feedback to evaluate and comment on their own progress and development.

### **Partnerships**

There was evidence of strong partnership arrangements to support the delivery of National 4 and 5 Early Education and Childcare: Skills for Work Courses. These partnerships were between schools, colleges, training providers, employers, local organisations and a number of professionals.

Partnerships with nurseries, childminders, primary schools and out-of-school care providers allowed learners the opportunity for practical experience, whilst partnerships with professionals and organisations in play, childcare, education and health provided learners with information, practical experiences and developed knowledge. For example, visiting speakers included a family support worker, child psychologist, health visitor, Active Schools co-ordinators, and volunteers from the local voluntary groups, all providing up to date information on play, parenting and child development.

There are also partnerships with external organisations to provide learners with some additional certification, for example, first aid, food hygiene certificate, environmental awards, forest school certificates. These links clearly add value and quality to the delivery of the Courses.

## **Partnerships for quality assurance and internal verification**

External Verifiers found some good examples of partnerships to ensure the quality assurance and internal verification practice within centres. They found that there were standardisation meetings and internal verification practice across schools delivering the qualification in a local authority area or between schools and their local further education college, and with college mergers there were new opportunities for staff to come together within campuses. This has allowed for the standardisation of assessment and verification practice, enhanced quality assurance and development of learning and teaching practice.

## **Specific areas for improvement**

### **Assessment practice**

In a small number of centres, External Verifiers found some aspects of assessment practice that could be improved.

Centres need to ensure that when undertaking assessments 'under controlled conditions' (closed book) that learners understand the question commands (describe, identify, explain, evaluate), that timings are adhered to, re-assessment guidance is complied with, and that marks are allocated in line with marking information in NABs.

Centres need to ensure that all assessment paperwork is completed: evaluation sheets, tracking sheets and observation checklists. It is not possible to only complete parts of assessments: each part must be answered.

If centres are redesigning the format of the National Assessment Bank material to create assessment workbooks/logbooks and other resources, they must ensure that they do not alter the assessment wording. This will ensure standardisation of assessment practice.

### **Internal verification**

External verifiers have seen improvement in internal verification practice over the past academic session, however there are still some areas where further improvements can be made:

**Prior verification** — Centres should ensure that as part of standardisation meetings staff should take each Unit and check assessment materials against the SQA assessments and Course documents to ensure the correct assessments are being used, to improve on consistency and to ensure the currency of learning and teaching materials. They should ensure the competency and confidence of the assessor delivering each Unit, identify any support required and specify the verification sample for the session ahead.

**Recording of internal verification practice** — External Verifiers found good standardisation practice between assessors and internal verifiers, however much of this was not always recorded or captured. Centres should ensure that standardisation decisions are recorded in minutes of meetings or on decision

logs and that internal verification is noted on the work verified and a verification record kept with feedback on assessment practice and any action identified.

**Action and evaluation** — Centres should ensure that any actions required should be noted when verification is completed and that any standardisation decisions made should be evaluated following implementation to identify any enhancement or progress as a result of the change.