



**National Qualifications 2016
Internal Assessment Report
Skills for Work: Rural Skills**

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

National courses

Skills for Work: Rural Skills

General comments

Fifteen centres were selected for routine external verification visits for Skills for Work: Rural Skills (436) during the last academic year — six of these were recorded as 'not running'. The remaining nine centres were visited by the external verification team.

All external verification visits were successful and none resulted in a 'hold' on certification. National Assessment Bank materials (NABs) were in use throughout. Delivering centres were fully acquainted with the national standards, and delivery was generally of a good standard. Examples of good practice were universal. This is recorded in the 'Good practice' section (below).

The Skills for Work: Rural Skills (National 4) course continues to provide students with an excellent learning experience and a clear vision as to whether their career ambitions lie within the land-based sector.

Course arrangements, unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Centres generally had a good grasp of the standard required. Most centres had compiled master files containing all necessary course documentation.

Centres contextualised the NABs for students with additional support needs and student support was of a high standard.

Evidence requirements

Centres generally met, and often exceeded, the evidence requirements for the course. This is reflected in the external verification reports and the fact that all external verifier visits were successful and no 'holds' were issued. Some minor issues were identified and these are listed in the 'Areas for improvement' section (below).

Due to some strategic staff changes, internal verification procedures at one centre had lapsed somewhat, almost resulting in a hold. Fortunately, the missing evidence was speedily submitted. This is recorded in the 'Areas for improvement' section (below). Otherwise centres were fully aware of SQA internal verification requirements and implemented these accordingly.

Administration of assessments

Generally, record keeping was good and assessments were carried out in accordance with the requirements of the NABs.

Areas of good practice

Good practice was observed in the majority of centres visited — some examples from external verifiers' reports are outlined below:

- ◆ The student experience was greatly enhanced through the partnership with the local Forestry Commission office. The group were able to observe and work in both commercial forestry — timber production — and gain experience of heritage — conservation planting. This is significant as forestry represents a major employer in the area.
- ◆ Excellent use of IT — students build their own portfolios — blogs — based on their experiences during the course. This instils a sense of ownership in participating students.
- ◆ Great use of photographs that lends authenticity and gives a clear view of the real work environment(s) in which the students operate — and provides concrete evidence of tasks completed.
- ◆ The real work environment provided by the nature reserve is exemplary and a comprehensive range of tasks is available to candidates. The centre continues to add value to the course by offering activities not specifically referenced in the SfW curriculum.
- ◆ The centre operates a full-scale nature reserve that is open to the public. This means that a majority of the tasks carried out by the students are necessary for the day-to-day running of the centre. Tasks acquire a legacy value which inspires a sense of ownership in candidates.
- ◆ Course time-tabling, a whole day at a time, ensures that students have sufficient time to become fully engaged with the course and its assessments.
- ◆ The centre has devised a simple but useful observation checklist for use with the Land-based industries: An Introduction unit during the candidate 'Presentation' assessment. This has ensured a consistency of approach and marking.
- ◆ The centre is in partnership with a private company that is responsible for the delivery and assessment of the three practical units of the award. This ensures all practical activity is carried out (and internally verified) by staff who are qualified in horticulture, have assessor and verifier qualifications, and a wide range of expertise in practical horticulture. This partnership ensures a very high level of horticultural training for the candidates.

Specific areas for improvement

Quite a number of areas for improvement were recorded this academic year. The examples below are from a range of centres:

- ◆ A key problem with the delivery of SfW (vocational) courses in the school sector is that of timetabling. While it is appreciated that the S3 curriculum is very full and the allocation of one half-day per week is nigh on impossible, there is no doubt that the student experience would be much enhanced by occasional full day-release activities.

- ◆ The centre should review the range of candidate assessment evidence it uses to possibly include audio, video, IT and limited multiple choice questions.
- ◆ The centre should ensure that candidate written assessment evidence is clearly marked, with appropriate feedback (oral or written), and the use of a scribe clearly noted.
- ◆ Developing a summative evidence sheet for the whole award for all candidates would allow the performance of individual candidates to be tracked so that gaps in evidence can be seen at a glance (the centre was delivering the award in a holistic portfolio approach). It may also be useful to have a 'master' folder with all prior verified internal assessment instruments in it as well as current specifications and standardisation information (this might also include a delivery plan and annual record of delivery).
- ◆ The centre should review how it liaises with industry and carry out standardisation, eg through visits from different industry specialists or visits to the land-based college. Also, forming a network group with other delivery agents in the area would help ensure that candidates have experience of the industries that they will potentially move into and it would allow centres to share practice on standards.
- ◆ The assessor and internal verifier should consider their own CPD regarding land-based industries.