



# NQ Verification 2014–15

## Key Messages Round 1

01

### Section 1: Verification group information

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| Verification group name:                | Sociology          |
| Verification event/visiting information | Verification event |
| Date published:                         | March 2015         |

#### National Courses/Units verified:

National 5 and Higher Human Society, Social Issues and Culture and Identity

02

### Section 2: Comments on assessment

#### Assessment approaches

Half the centres presented assessment materials from the Unit assessment support packs on SQA's secure website. Half submitted centre-devised assessments. Where centre-devised assessments were derived from Unit assessment support packs, assessment approaches were valid — but those that deviated markedly from the Unit assessment support packs were highly likely to miss out Assessment Standards. Some centre-devised assessments inserted questions from the old Higher or the mandatory content in the Course Assessment Specification which are not required for Assessment Standards, such as stages in the research process.

The best centre-devised assessments flagged up the Assessment Standard next to each question and encouraged candidates to do the same in their answers. This made it very easy for verifiers to find evidence.

Most centres attached the Candidate Assessment Record to the front of each candidate's assessment. It was extremely difficult to consider an assessor's judgement if they had not done this, as verifiers only had an overall pass or fail to go on.

Very few centres indicated the conditions of assessment in the second column of the Candidate Assessment Record, so verifiers had no way of knowing if it was open book or closed book. Whilst this was not a barrier to approval, it is recommended as good practice for the future.

The majority of centres had been made aware of the requirement to submit an indication of the internal verification procedures used by the department. It was extremely helpful to have a clear context in which assessment judgements had been made. Centres should be aware of *Internal Verification: A Guide for Centres offering SQA Qualifications* (February 2011). However, it was often difficult to see where sampling of candidates' work had taken place. One centre did explicitly flag-up internal verification on the Candidate Assessment Record of selected candidates, which was very good practice.

### **Action points**

- ◆ Centres are reminded that they need to use the most up to date version of the Unit assessment support pack. For example, the Higher Human Society Unit assessment support pack is currently at version 1.1. This has seen a significant change since the first version. It is the centre's responsibility to keep up with published changes.
- ◆ The National 5 and Higher Sociology Courses give rise to a variety of integrated delivery of Units and integrated assessment approaches, partly due to the need to cover Social Issues and Human Society for the assignment deadline. Centres might find it helpful to review Unit assessment support packs 2 and 3 in order to explore the combined/portfolio approach as a means to reducing the overall assessment burden for candidates.

### **Assessment judgements**

Most centres were judging the evidence according to the appropriate Assessment Standard and were correctly entering candidates for the appropriate level.

There was good practice regarding the clarity of decision-making processes in terms of annotation of scripts at Higher where Assessment Standards had been achieved. This was very helpful for verifiers in understanding the process that centres had carried out. However, less feedback was provided at National 5. Some centres provided very little written feedback to candidates and did not indicate if it was given orally instead.

Nearly all centres provided a record of internal verification, but there was less evidence of good practice in checking assessment judgements, eg blind-marking and cross-marking and sampling of scripts.

There was evidence of good practice in giving feedback, where assessors used developmental language to suggest ways to pass Assessment Standards. For example, one centre used comments like: 'Can you develop this point further?' Or 'Can you re-visit this and expand on your answer'. This was much more encouraging to candidates than focusing on a failure to meet the standard.

There was some confusion about Higher Human Society Outcome 2.

- ◆ 2.1 reads: 'Explaining features, strengths and weaknesses of structural and action perspectives'
- ◆ 2.2 reads: 'Applying structural and action perspectives and theories to explain relationships amongst individuals, groups and institutions'

Candidates first have to explain the features, strengths and weakness of structure and action theory in general, and only need to apply it to a topic for 2.2. They do not need to evaluate the theories on the topic.

### **Action points**

- ◆ Some centres need to develop a more secure understanding of the differences between Unit assessment and Course assessment. The purpose of Unit assessment is to assess skills at minimum competence without the use of marks, whereas Course assessment aims to assess content and skills. Centres might find it helpful to review their Unit assessment tasks to ensure that these are aimed at gathering evidence of minimum competency in the Assessment Standards. Assessments with marks and time limits can easily be used for formative assessment. Every Unit specification clearly states that time limits are not a feature of Unit assessments.
- ◆ Only one centre allowed candidates to choose their method of assessment. Centres should review their assessment tasks to ensure that candidates are being offered personalisation and choice in how they provide evidence to meet the Assessment Standards.
- ◆ The current Candidate Assessment Record attached to the Unit assessment support pack has no column for recording remediation. One centre was using colour-coded comments in the boxes to flag-up remediation, but a cover sheet with a remediation column would be excellent practice so a teacher, candidate and verifier can track changes.
- ◆ Ensure that centres are clear about the requirements for Higher Human Society 2.1 and 2.2.

03

## **Section 3: General comments**

Each centre selected for verification should submit evidence for a sample of 12 candidates. The centre can choose which Unit (or Units, in a combined approach) to select for each level. The sample submitted should comprise six candidates per level at the two different levels (National 5 and Higher).

When completing the Verification Sample Form, it would be helpful if candidates were entered in this order.

If the centre does not have candidates (or sufficient candidates) at one level then further candidates should be added to the levels they do present at to ensure there is still a sample of 12 candidates. The centre must choose the same Unit for all candidates at any one level, but can choose different Units for different levels.

Ideally the sample should include a variety of candidate performances covering both pass and fail categories.

Centres should take care when transcribing details onto the Verification Sample Form that pass/fail indications match, and that Unit codes are entered correctly.

On this form, 'interim evidence' relates only to where one Outcome from a Unit is submitted.

**Action point**

- ◆ Centre staff are reminded that all assessments must be checked to ensure their validity before they are taken by candidates. Internal quality assurance procedures must ensure that all assessors have a common understanding of the standards required. Meetings between assessors to discuss the planned assessment will help to standardise interpretation and understanding of Assessment Standards. Whilst we appreciate that this might take some time to do, it is likely to save more time later in the assessment process.