NQ Verification 2015–16
Key Message Reports

Verification group name:	Psychology
Levels	N5 and Higher
Date published:	October 2016

This Report combines all Verification Key Messages for the academic session 2015-2016.

NQ Verification 2015–16 Key Messages Round 1

01 ▶ Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Psychology
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	March 2016

National Courses/Units verified:

Psychology National 5 and Higher all Units

02 ▶ Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

The majority of centres used SQA-provided assessments from the Unit assessment support packs (UASPs).

Most centres used package 1: Unit-by-Unit approach although there were a handful of centres using package 2: combined or portfolio approach. It is possible that using the portfolio or combined approach could reduce the amount of assessment for candidates. If centres do choose the portfolio approach, it is recommended that the tasks used for gathering candidate evidence be included in the verification sample.

It is strongly recommended that centre-devised assessments be sent for prior verification before use with candidates.

Centres should note that using an approach which involves judgements based on threshold marks is not valid as candidates must demonstrate success in each Assessment Standard. Centres should also note that assessing a whole Unit using a closed-book approach increases the level of demand for their candidates and as such they are potentially being disadvantaged.

Centres are advised to develop a more secure understanding of the differences between Unit assessment and Course assessment; the purpose of Unit assessment being to assess skills, 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.

Assessment judgements

The verification team was able to confirm assessment judgements in two-thirds of presenting centres. Where this was not the case, assessment judgements had either not been securely based on the published Assessment Standards of the Units, or centres had used alternative approaches to measuring success.

In some instances centres were lenient in judging application of knowledge. This occurred predominantly for Units H262 75 and 76 — National 5 Social Behaviour Assessment Standard 1.3: Using psychological knowledge to explain examples of everyday behaviour; and Higher Psychology Social Behaviour Assessment Standard 1.3: Applying understanding of social psychology to everyday behaviour — where candidates had explained an everyday behaviour using concepts but not research. There were some instances of inaccuracies in assessment judgements and centres are reminded to use the judging evidence table when making assessment judgements if using an SQA-provided UASP.

Many centres had good practice in checking assessment judgements, eg cross-marking. In addition, many centres had good practice with respect to the activities of the internal verifier who sampled scripts in an agreed manner and recorded the details and decisions from this activity.

Most centres were correctly entering candidates for the appropriate level.

Many centres provided clear checklists or grids indicating where Assessment Standards had been achieved, which was helpful during the verification event. Identifying where Assessment Standards were met on candidates' scripts was noted as good practice as it provided very clear, supportive feedback for candidates to measure their own progress.

Some centres also provided positive developmental feedback signposting to candidates where they had developed subject-specific skills. Some centres gave useful feedback on the development of other relevant skills, such as blogging and researching information, which was considered to be good practice.

03 ▶ Section 3: General comments

It is important that centre-devised assessment materials relate clearly to the Assessment Standards for each Outcome. Prior verification of centre-devised assessment materials should ensure this and is recommended.

Centres should ensure that assessments devised internally address all the relevant Assessment Standards for the Unit Outcome and give candidates full opportunity within the task to be able to demonstrate their performance against the standards.

The verification team was encouraged to see evidence of personalisation and choice in some approaches to assessment, particularly in candidate posters and presentations. Candidates seemed engaged with the subject and demonstrated ownership of their learning. It was also encouraging to see some centres adopting a themed approach, giving candidates the opportunity for deep learning and understanding of psychology. Candidates given a focused question for Unit assessment also produced insightful responses.

Centres are reminded that candidate evidence should be viewed holistically in relation to Assessment Standards. Assessment approaches should enable candidates to achieve the minimum standard and as such there is no requirement for assigning marks or the use of time limits.

Annotating candidate evidence with an indication of where Assessment Standards had been met was extremely useful during the verification event.

Centres are required to submit an indication of the internal verification approaches adopted. A clear context of the conditions of assessment and internal verification procedures is extremely helpful and supports verifiers in confirming assessment judgements. The SQA Internal Verification Toolkit provides advice on the development and maintenance of an effective internal quality assurance system.

NQ Verification 2015/16
Key Messages Round 1

01 ▶ ## Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Psychology
Verification event/visiting information	Postal
Date published:	June 2016

National courses/units verified:

There was only a limited selection in this round of verification, covering National 5 and Higher.

02 ▶ ## Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

Centres verified used SQA provided assessments from the unit assessment support packs (UASPs). All centres used package 1 (unit-by-unit approach).

While centres are free to make slight alterations to SQA's UASPs, it is advised that any changes should be consistent with the assessment standards to ensure validity of assessment is retained.

Assessment judgements

Centres are advised to adhere to the assessment standards while judging candidate evidence and to pay particular attention to the level of demand generated by different command words. This applies particularly in relation to the difference between 'describe' and 'explain'.

Centres are also advised that there is no requirement to give detailed descriptions or evaluations of research evidence in the Higher Psychology: Individual Behaviour unit.

Centres showed good practice when checking assessment judgements, eg cross-marking. In addition, the centres sampled demonstrated good practice by

the internal verifier, who sampled scripts in an agreed manner and recorded the details and decisions from this activity.

Further good practice was identifying where assessment standards were met on candidate scripts, as it provided very clear, supportive feedback for a candidate to measure their own progress.

03 Section 3: General comments

It is important that centre-devised assessment materials relate clearly to the assessment standards for each outcome. Prior verification of centre-devised assessment materials should ensure this and is recommended.

Centres should ensure that assessments devised internally address all the relevant assessment standards for the unit/outcome and give candidates full opportunity within the task to be able to demonstrate their performance against the standards.

Centres are reminded that candidate evidence should be viewed holistically in relation to assessment standards. Assessment approaches should enable candidates to achieve the minimum standard and as such there is no requirement for assigning marks or the use of time limits.

Annotating candidate evidence with an indication of where assessment standards had been met was extremely useful during the verification event.

Centres are required to submit an indication of the internal verification approaches adopted. Providing a clear context of the conditions of assessment and internal verification procedures is extremely helpful and supports verifiers when confirming assessment judgements. SQA's Internal Verification Toolkit provides advice on the development and maintenance of an effective internal quality assurance system.