



**Higher National Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2016
Art & Design**

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

Higher National units

General comments

Centres generally have a genuine understanding of the requirements of national standards. Our qualification verification visits were focused this session on NC units and awards although HN units were verified. Assessors are currently judging candidates' performances appropriately and assessments were in line with national standards.

Significant challenges arose with centres delivering outwith Scotland: the initial approval process and further development visit format was followed.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

During generally positive feedback sessions, centre staff were informed that all assessment instruments requested were made available and that centres were using appropriate SQA materials. The instruments of assessment provided across the curriculum were valid and reliable and clear documentation for assessors and candidates was in use. Assessment instruments were available as hard copies and where possible within the centre VLE. The assessment instruments were clear with valid and reliable guidance and easily accessed by all assessors and candidates. Where there was an 'amber' noted it generally related to the need for engagement with the prior verification system or access to assessment exemplars. Some assessors were not aware of these options. Development visits were another option offered. Art & Design HNs are currently under review and this material will be updated. Centre staff teams were encouraged to become involved in this process.

Evidence requirements

There is an understanding of evidence required for the units. There was sufficient evidence of candidate performance with a wide variety of briefs with resultant portfolios and sketchbooks showing evidence of creative work presented well. Where there was an issue SQA's prior verification system or access to assessment exemplars was recommended. Development visits were also offered as an option.

Administration of assessments

Centre teams mentor, assess and evaluate candidates' work to a good standard. The internal verification systems are effective and documentation is in evidence. Staff teams clearly meet to discuss the internal verification system within small teams and intend to meet to discuss across the curriculum area. Due to college mergers, staff from different campuses should meet on a regular basis to share internal verification details and to share good practice. This was noted during feedback to the centres.

Electronic evidence of internal assessment and verification procedures was presented and was being used to ensure standardisation of assessment within and across the units sampled. The material presented was robust and was used/supported by the teaching and internal verification teams in their delivery across the centres.

Peer review and support of new verifiers takes place and it is generally successful. This is evidenced by the new assessor judging candidates performance appropriately. Assessments were in line with national standards. Where an 'amber' was activated it related to a new assessor who declared that they had no training or support relating to internal verification.

General feedback

Centres engage in regular mentoring and reviews, which result in comprehensive and relevant feedback to candidates. The staff teams are responsible for joint delivery, marking and review. This peer support and delivery is evidence of good practice. There is a recommendation however that staff further include candidates in the feedback/feedforward process and capture this 'audit trail' of progress and remediation. A signature from the candidate during formative feedback and capturing the feedback for future review (video or audio recorded feedback) is recognised by staff as a positive move. (Staff verbally feedback but tend not to capture during formative stages) Copies of feedback to students could also be issued so that the candidate is more likely to act upon remediation action points.

The emergence of digital portfolios is a significant issue and has been discussed on many of our external verification visits. In response to the changing culture in design studios and the pressure of tight deadlines, the design process is becoming more and more digital. The current topic relating to the use of digital folios and whether they will replace hand-rendered portfolios is an issue to be discussed.

Sketchbooks (or notebooks, or journals) are not just used by artists and designers. It might help to think of sketchbooks, notebooks or journals as places in which you collect thoughts, imagery and references.

Fundamentally sketchbooks are about making your thoughts and ideas real, by writing, drawing, doodling, scrawling, sticking. Something creative happens when you begin to externalise your thoughts, and once you get into the habit of keeping some kind of sketchbook your thinking (and learning) will develop in new and inspiring ways, whatever it is centred around. It is agreed by the majority that the continuation of tactile, sketchbooks and portfolios is vital to retain elements of experimentation, exploration and creativity. Technology is just another tool and should be included in the design process but not to the exclusion of hand-rendered creative artwork.

Areas of good practice

It is clear that candidates are producing good work and are well informed, highly engaged and feel appropriately challenged by units, course content, delivery and assessment as well as by enthusiastic, engaged and knowledgeable lecturers. Candidates also feel very well supported and able to contribute to course development. Relevant, topical and challenging live briefs are in use as assessment instruments. Excellent links with industry are a major enhancement of any course and in particular Edinburgh College continues to engage in meaningful internships.

Centres engage in regular internal verification course meetings, which are recorded and made available to all staff. This practice is crucial in all centres and particularly within merged campuses. Staff teams in general can easily access internal verification information via hard copy or VLE.

One centre in particular has invested in a bespoke online internal verification system accessed at all levels by appropriate staff.

Specific areas for improvement

Centres should take account of ease of access to digital folios as evidence of assessment and internal verification systems. This would prevent the need for further questions or investigation by the external verifier.

Higher National graded units

Titles/levels of HN graded units verified:

Graded Units 1 & 2 Visual Communications, Contemporary Art Practice, 3D Design, 3D Computer Design, 3D Product Design, 3D Interior Design

General comments

Centres have a clear understanding of the requirements of the national standards. Assessors are currently judging candidate performance appropriately and assessments were in line with national standards. Overall the results achieved have been of a high level. Good preparation for candidates' articulation to higher levels is noted as a positive result of the Art & Design graded units delivered. Centres engage in regular mentoring and reviews, which result in comprehensive and relevant feedback to candidates. The staff teams are responsible for joint delivery, marking and review. This peer support and delivery is evidence of good practice.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

During very positive feedback sessions centre staff were informed that all assessment instruments relating to graded units requested were made available and that centres were using appropriate SQA materials. The instruments of assessment provided across the awards were valid and reliable and clear documentation for assessors and candidates was in use. Assessment instruments were available as hard copies and where possible within the centre VLE. The assessment instruments were clear with valid and reliable guidance and were easily accessed by all assessors and candidates.

Art & Design HNs are currently under review and this material will be updated. Centre staff teams were encouraged to become involved in this process.

Evidence requirements

There is a clear understanding of evidence required for the graded units. There was good evidence of candidate performance with a wide variety of briefs with resultant portfolios and sketchbooks showing evidence of creative work presented very well. It is clear that staff maintain very high standards of assessment and record keeping for graded units. Candidates reported that they feel well prepared for the graded unit assessments. Candidates receive informative project briefs and have scheduled verbal and written feedback/mentoring sessions, the majority of which is available via an interactive virtual learning environment.

Administration of assessments

Centre teams mentor, assess and evaluate candidates' graded unit work to a very good standard. The internal verification systems are effective and documentation is in evidence.

General feedback

Candidates who were interviewed gave feedback that they are made aware of assessment requirements as part of the graded unit brief and are well prepared for the assessments. Centres engage in regular mentoring and reviews, which result in comprehensive and relevant feedback to candidates. The staff teams are responsible for joint delivery, marking and review. This peer support and delivery is evidence of good practice.

Areas of good practice

Centres are using relevant, topical and challenging graded unit briefs as assessment instruments in line with national standards. It is clear that candidates are producing good work and are well informed, highly engaged and feel appropriately challenged by units, course content, delivery and assessment — as well as by enthusiastic, engaged and knowledgeable lecturers. Excellent links with industry are a major enhancement of any course and in particular Edinburgh College continues to engage in meaningful internships. This prepares the candidates very well for the graded units where they gain relevant attributes required for employment within the creative industries. Centres have also engaged in themed 'employability' days, which have included informing parents and prospective candidates of the opportunities available within Art & Design courses and Art & Design as a potential career path. Alongside traditional exhibitions and events, courses and candidates now have good presence on social media and blogs. Edinburgh College's 'We love design' blog is particularly well constructed.