



**National Qualifications**

**Qualification Verification Summary Report 2022–23**

**Skills for Work: Rural Skills**

**Verification group number: 436**

# Skills for Work Courses

## Rural Skills: National 4

Group award code: C239 74

Mandatory units:

J161 74 Estate Maintenance: An Introduction

J162 74 Land-based Industries: An Introduction

J163 74 Employability Skills for Land-based Industries

Optional units:

J164 74 Animal Husbandry: An Introduction

J165 74 Animal Handling: An Introduction

J166 74 Crop Production: An Introduction

J167 74 Soft Landscaping: An Introduction

J166 74 Crop Production: An Introduction

## General comments

There was a very welcome return to visiting verification in 2022–23. Class sizes were generally modest, none exceeding 12 candidates, usually less. All external verification visits resulted in an ‘accepted’ decision.

Overall, a successful and positive outcome in, yet another, challenging year.

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

The course arrangements and qualification structure are well understood by centres and there were no significant deviations from these. It’s incumbent on centres to ensure that current unit specifications are used, as displayed on the SQA website.

The SQA approved NABs are universally used for assessment purposes. While these are a little outdated, centres like them and continue to support their use.

## Evidence requirements

The evidence submitted for external verification was both comprehensive and logically presented. External verifiers were in complete agreement with the assessment decisions made by the centres. There was a good appreciation by assessors and internal verifiers of the evidence requirements for the units comprising the award.

## **Administration of assessment**

All assessment materials as requested by the external verification team were made available during the visits. Candidate sample forms were completed by all centres. Candidate evidence was stored and retained appropriately.

## **Learning and teaching**

Learning and teaching generally took place in outdoor settings, very much within the spirit of the award. A proportion of centres have agreements with local organisations to provide a realistic work environment. Good use was made of the Employability unit to provide timely and effective course feedback (progress reports) to participating candidates.

## **Overall assessment**

All assessment judgements were appropriate. Practical checklists were well completed with a good level of detail. Written work was marked appropriately.

## **Verification**

Internal verification has been shown to be a problematic area in the past. The current verification exercise has shown that this is no longer the case. All centres had devised documented internal verification procedures. Some regional, some in collaboration with other participating centres, and some locally devised. All were found to be appropriate, timely, effective and routinely applied.

## **Areas of good practice reported in 2022–23**

- One centre that was verified receives regular visits and help from a landscaping professional, who supports the assessor and helps guide the candidates in practical work.
- The candidates have visited a number of local land-based workplaces to gain a wider understanding of the land-based industries. This includes a local forest to watch tree harvesting and a sawmill to see the processing of the trees. They have also visited a large local dairy farm that sells its own milk and dairy products.
- The structured diary kept by candidates as part of their workbook is good and encourages them to reflect on the practical work they have completed.
- In one of the centres verified an area of ground had been reserved for the use of the course. This is currently a wildlife garden and includes a dilapidated poly tunnel. The area offers excellent potential to enhance course delivery in future years.
- Some good use was made of photographic evidence.
- The candidate evidence was logical and precise with good attention to detail.

## Specific areas for improvement reported in 2022–23

- It would be helpful if any teacher verbal feedback could be recorded and included in student submissions.
- Employability Skills: the centre should increase the time between the employability reviews to allow time for skills to be improved.
- A hand tool identification/description of use test should be used to supplement the assessor observation checklist for J161 74 Estate Maintenance: An Introduction.
- The centre may wish to consider supplying the few written assessments electronically for completion by candidates rather than having them write the answers.
- The centre might wish to consider widening out the range of crops chosen for J166 74 Crop Production: An Introduction — potatoes or tomatoes being suitable to grow.
- The Animal Handling and Animal Husbandry units should focus on only one species of animal and appropriate breeds for all assessment purposes. Other species may be included in the award delivery but not the assessment evidence.
- A wider range of photographic, video and recorded oral evidence should be considered, to support the effective capture of candidate unit evidence.
- For some candidates the centre should consider the use of oral recording or scribes if appropriate.
- Due to the seasonal nature of the practical work it would be beneficial if a small number of photographs were kept to show progress of tasks, for example, the sensory garden before and after planting for the Soft Landscaping units and the chosen crops at both the seedling and harvesting stage for the Crop Production unit.
- When choosing the crops for Crop Production Outcome 3, ideally the candidate should choose the crops they plan to grow, for example potatoes or chillies, rather than crops they are unlikely to grow such as spruce trees or silage.
- The Crop Production unit should be started earlier in the year with a clearer focus on the assessment requirements and tasks/visits, which link with the seasonal crop production cycle.
- The three Employability unit review sheets should be fully completed on a regular basis (in writing) with appropriate candidate action points and support indicated.
- Evidence of a wider range of practical estate maintenance tasks should be recorded, using photos, videos and observation checklists.
- Where assessments have been scribed this should be indicated on the assessment with a date and signature from the scribe.