

Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Principles and Practice of Self-evaluation and Internal Quality Audit

Unit code: DV5A 36

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed for candidates employed in Further Education (FE) Colleges, Community Learning and Development (CLD) or in other workplace contexts who have responsibility for carrying out internal quality audit and/or self-evaluation within their own organisation. It is designed to equip candidates with the skills, knowledge and understanding of self-evaluation and internal quality audit processes. It will provide them with underpinning knowledge and a critical understanding of relevant quality frameworks and their application to self-evaluation and quality auditing principles and techniques. It will also allow them to develop the skills of self-evaluation and audit against an agreed set of standards and to apply those skills in one context, either self evaluation or internal quality audit.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

- 1 Demonstrate a critical understanding of quality frameworks relevant to self-evaluation and internal quality audit.
- 2 Explain key principles and processes of self-evaluation and internal quality auditing.
- 3 Critically review the techniques for auditing and evaluating different types of evidence.
- 4 Carry out a self-evaluation or internal quality audit.

Credit points and level: 2 HN Credit at SCQF level 9: (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 9*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Access to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre. Candidates would normally have qualifications and experience of the area being audited or evaluated. Some previous experience in self-evaluation and/or internal quality audit is useful.

Core Skills: There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of Problem Solving and Communication at SCQF level in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

Context for delivery: If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

General information for centres (cont)

Assessment: The evidence for this Unit will be required in the form of a portfolio. Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 will require a report of the candidate's analysis of quality frameworks and the key principles and processes of both self evaluation and internal quality audit. The report will be from 1,500 to 2,000 words in length. For Outcome 4, the candidate will produce a written report of either a self evaluation or internal quality audit in the context of the candidate's team or area of responsibility. The written report will be in the format of the organisation's formal evaluation or audit report, along with appendices and relevant workplace documentation to support the report. The candidate will also produce a self-reflection of approximately 500 words on the process of planning, implementing and completing the self evaluation or audit.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

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The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, knowledge and/or skills, and Evidence Requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the knowledge and/or skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Demonstrate a critical understanding of quality frameworks relevant to self-evaluation and internal quality audit

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Quality terminology
- ◆ The range of applicable quality frameworks
- ◆ Methods of self-evaluations and internal quality audits

Outcome 2

Explain key principles and processes of self-evaluation and internal quality auditing

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ The purposes of self-evaluation and internal quality auditing
- ◆ The key principles of self-evaluation and internal quality auditing
- ◆ The processes of thinking and writing evaluatively
- ◆ The processes of preparing and giving oral and written feedback

Outcome 3

Critically review the techniques for auditing and evaluating different types of evidence

Knowledge and/or skills

- Sources and use of evidence
- The nature and limitations of evidence
- The validity of sample sizes
- The application of techniques for auditing and evaluation

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

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Evidence Requirements for Outcomes 1, 2 and 3

Candidates will provide written evidence in the form of a report of between 1,500 to 2,000 words to cover the knowledge and skills requirements of Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 in the context of self evaluation and internal quality audit within their organisation. The report will be supported by relevant documentation, frameworks and audit tools.

The candidate must select the quality framework and audit tool(s) used by their team, department or organisation and must critically analyse these and make comparisons with two other possible options.

The report must also detail the following:

- ◆ Key principles of self-evaluation and internal quality audit as they relate to their chosen frameworks.
- ◆ Benefits of internal quality audit and self-evaluation to the quality assurance and improvement agenda of their organisation.
- ◆ Methodologies used when conducting self-evaluation and internal quality audit using their chosen framework.
- ◆ Processes employed to ensure evaluative writing and reporting and effective oral and written feedback when using their chosen framework.
- ◆ A minimum of three possible sources of evidence used in the evaluation and audit (for example performance indicators, service delivery, client satisfaction, annual reports, development plans, minutes of meetings and views of staff.) For each chosen source of evidence, candidates must critically analyse the source's limitations, the impact of sample size on validity and the application and limitations of the methodology used to gather the evidence.

The report must follow a standard reporting format including a glossary of terms and bibliography.

Assessment guidelines for Outcomes 1, 2 and 3

The report will assess the candidate's understanding, explanation and critical review of the knowledge and skills in Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 in the context of carrying out self-evaluation and internal quality audit in the Further Education, Community Learning and Development or other sector as appropriate. Appendices may be used to clarify examples given and provide supporting evidence.

Examples of relevant quality frameworks could be SFEFC/HMIE; SQA; SQMS; IiP; Charter Mark; EQFM but this is not intended to be an exhaustive list. The candidate may use other frameworks or sources of evidence not mentioned above, as long as it is relevant to their field of work. However, whichever framework is chosen and used as the basis of the report, the same framework must be used for carrying out the self-evaluation or internal quality audit required for Outcome 4.

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Outcome 4

Carry out a self-evaluation or an internal quality audit

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Planning a self-evaluation or internal quality audit
- ◆ Implementing a self-evaluation or internal quality audit
- ◆ Interpersonal, communication and negotiation skills required to complete the task, reach consensus and give oral feedback on Outcomes from the self evaluation or internal audit
- ◆ Producing formal written report on the findings and Outcomes of the self-evaluation or internal quality audit
- ◆ Following through actions, recommendations and/or good practice
- ◆ Self-reflection on the effectiveness of the candidate's role throughout the process

Evidence Requirements for Outcome 4

The candidate should produce a portfolio of performance, written and oral evidence of their ability to plan and implement either a self-evaluation or an audit, to give clear oral and written feedback, to write evaluatively and to take appropriate action to follow through actions, recommendations and good practice. The number of quality standards or elements to be covered will normally be determined by the requirements of the quality procedures within the candidate's organisation, but for evidence purposes should cover a minimum of two standards or elements.

Performance evidence from implementing either one internal quality audit or one self evaluation should be provided, with the candidate demonstrating the required interpersonal, communication and negotiation skills to reach consensus on the Outcomes, to give oral feedback to the team or auditee(s) which is clear, sensitive, and to respond to any questions to the satisfaction of the team or auditee(s).

The written evidence should include:

- (i) a written statement covering:
 - ◆ the planning of either a self evaluation or an internal quality audit
 - ◆ the implementation of the plan and any variance
 - ◆ sources of evidence used to support the analysis and/or judgements
 - ◆ the process of reaching consensus
 - ◆ how actions, re^{re}commendations and good practice will be taken forward
- (ii) a formal written report on the self evaluation or internal quality audit which follows the requirements of the candidate's organisation and demonstrates the quality of analysis and evaluation, and a clear match between the identified strengths, weaknesses, supporting evidence and actions and the relevant elements of the framework or audit tool(s) and

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- (iii) a written reflective statement which should be a minimum of 500 words and should cover all stages of the process in knowledge and skills, including a commentary on the effectiveness of the candidate's role throughout the process, how the team/auditee(s) responded to the approaches and any changes they would make in the future.

The candidate's reflective statement regarding their effectiveness in providing feedback will be endorsed by the person(s) receiving the feedback.

Assessment guidelines for Outcome 4

The report for Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 and the self reflective report required in Outcome 4 may be integrated and produced as one report. Other Evidence Requirements for the portfolio will be work–place documentation eg formal self evaluation or audit report, relevant framework, procedures, qualitative and quantitative data, internal communications, endorsement of candidate's statements, observation checklists.

The portfolio of evidence of the candidate's performance during some of the processes of planning, implementation, reporting, action planning and providing feedback may be supplemented by an assessor's observation checklist. This checklist could be used to record how the candidate's interpersonal, communication and negotiation skills meet the knowledge and skills requirements, and how they have given the oral feedback. This checklist could also be provided to the candidate to assist with the completion of the self reflection.

The evidence for the candidate's reflective statement could take the form of written or oral evidence and should incorporate all stages of the process listed in knowledge and skills.

Administrative Information

Unit code:	DV5A 36
Unit title:	Principles and Practice of Self-evaluation and Internal Quality Audit
Superclass category:	GE
Date of publication:	January 2006
Version:	01
Source:	SQA

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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Principles and Practice of Self-evaluation and Internal Quality Audit

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 80 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This Unit has been designed for candidates who have responsibility for carrying out internal audits and/or self-evaluation within their workplace. It is particularly relevant to staff who are, or aspire to be, managers, team/programme leaders/section leaders, project managers and other staff with skills, experience and responsibility for quality improvement. This Unit leads into the Unit *Managing Self-Evaluation and Internal Quality Audit*, which is aimed at quality managers, SCEWS and senior managers.

The principal contexts will be the Scottish Further Education environments. The candidate will be required to identify evidence and produce self-evaluation reports against the HMIE Quality Framework or internal quality audit reports. The candidate should have responsibility for carrying out self-evaluation of programme(s) and/or specialist functions and/or internal quality audits.

The following outline gives a suggested content for a taught programme. The list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive and should be used as a guide only. The content below is current as of August 2005 but will need to be updated to reflect changes as they occur eg the content of Quality Frameworks, PI definitions.

Outcome 1

There is an international Standard titled Quality Management Systems – Fundamentals and Vocabulary (ENISO 9000: 2000). However there are a number of terms that it is important that candidates can describe and explain in relation to how they apply in their own organisations. Quality terms should include the following (some **possible** descriptions have been added in brackets):

- ◆ Quality Assurance (Part of quality management focused on providing confidence that quality standards will be fulfilled).
- ◆ Quality Improvement (The use of audit, self-evaluation and review to improve the quality of the learner experience, particularly, but not exclusively in teaching and learning).
- ◆ Quality Standard (Specified and agreed set of criteria which can be measured and evaluated. They are set by stakeholders, customers and funding bodies and some are quantitative and some are qualitative).
- ◆ Quality Framework (A structured set of standards or quality indicators that cover a comprehensive range of staged criteria, such as HMI Review).
- ◆ Continuous improvement.
- ◆ Effectiveness (The extent to which planned activities are realised and planned results achieved).
- ◆ Efficiency (The relationship between the result achieved and the cost of resources used).
- ◆ Process.
- ◆ Procedure.
- ◆ Record.

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- ◆ Quality System.
- ◆ Quality Enhancement.
- ◆ Auditor.
- ◆ Audit.
- ◆ Auditee.
- ◆ Performance Indicator.

Aims and methods of self-evaluations and internal quality audits:

◆ **Compliance/binary systems**

British Standard 4778/ISO 8402 defines quality as:

‘The totality of features and characteristics of a product or service which bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs’.

This type of definition of quality focuses on fitness for purpose and the satisfaction of needs and expresses the concept of being ‘good enough’ but not the idea of being ‘as good as it can be’.

In compliance/binary systems, the evidence to meet the stated threshold is judged as either in place/sufficient/relevant/reliable or not in place/insufficient/irrelevant/unreliable. Compliance systems are associated with the setting of threshold standards, ensuring conformity to minimum requirements and ensuring consistency, usually recorded by checklists.

◆ **Improvement/graded systems**

The HMI Quality Frameworks embody a concept of quality which goes beyond minimalist threshold standards. Quality defined as the pursuit of excellence has no finite limitations. It is about exceeding requirements and moving beyond the achievement of *‘stated or implied needs’* to achieving quality at the highest level. In these systems eg HMI Quality Frameworks, the evidence for a particular element is judged on the balance and importance of its strengths and weaknesses using one of either four grades (FE) or six grades (CLD). Grades are awarded accordingly, both for internal self-evaluation and external review. Evaluative reports summarise the strengths and weaknesses of each element and recommend action points for quality improvement.

◆ **The HMI, Quality Frameworks.**

SFEFC/HMIE (May 2004) — comprises the frameworks for Subject and College Reviews. The Standards and Quality in Scottish Further Education Colleges National Briefing Document (Aug 2005) gives other useful information.

Subject review is designed to answer the following questions:

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- How effective is learning and teaching?
- How effective are learners in achieving learning goals?
- How good are the programmes and how well are they managed?
- How effective are specialist staff in improving the quality of the learner experience?

The CLD quality indicators are a core component of an overall quality assurance framework. The framework has been developed to focus on six questions which encompass the key dimensions of CLD delivery and management.

- What key performance Outcomes have we achieved?
- What impact have we had in meeting the needs of our stakeholders?
- How good is our delivery of key processes?
- How good is our operational management?
- How good is our strategic leadership?
- What is our capacity for improvement?



Outcome 2

The purposes of internal auditing and self-evaluation are ultimately to improve quality and in particular the services to clients and factors that impact significantly on the quality of the student experience. Internal auditing and self-evaluation allow organisations to develop their own quality culture based on their existing experience of quality improvement and building on their strengths and weaknesses. The purpose is to give ownership to organisation and the teams within it and to promote a genuine self-critical approach to quality improvement. Internal auditing and self-evaluation encourage the sharing of good practice and the development of best practice.

- ◆ The key principles of internal auditing and self-evaluation — Self-evaluation uses the same quality framework as used by HMIE for external quality review, or other frameworks developed nationally and locally, eg College Managed Funds, ICT Support, College Nursery, College MIS. It is the common element between both FE and CLD services' internal self-evaluation and quality improvement processes and external quality assessment. It should be simple in concept and implementation and should incorporate existing quality assurance practice. It should encourage a quality culture and encompass all college operations and all categories of staff. It requires the ability to be self-critical. It involves reviewing team performance against the quality indicators, identifying strengths and weaknesses and formulating team actions to bring about improvement. A brief evaluative report is written and one of four (FE) or six (CLD) grades given for each element. Improvement plans with targets and/or action points follow on from the self-evaluation report. Internal auditing against other Quality Frameworks involves ensuring that evidence is in place to meet all the standards and pointers — compliance rather than grading.
- ◆ The processes of thinking and writing evaluatively — Evaluation involves making judgements based on analysis of relevant information and identifying/taking appropriate actions. Evidence is judged to identify strengths and weaknesses and form a judgement and in the self-evaluation process a grade is given for each quality element.

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- ◆ Techniques to promote evaluative thinking and writing include:
 - making a judgement on the success or effectiveness of the activity described (include an evaluative word)
 - after a descriptive statement asking the questions ‘So what?’ or ‘Therefore?’
 - asking the question ‘How do we know?’ — what is the evidence?
 - using targets/PIs/benchmarks to measure achievement and performance
 - identifying strengths and areas for improvement
 - giving a grade for each element
 - devising action/development plans
 - reviewing, modifying and evaluating these plans
- ◆ The processes of preparing and giving oral and written feedback — the same general principles of giving feedback apply to many situations eg giving feedback to a learner on a piece of work or to a colleague on a self-evaluation or audit report or to a colleague following an observation of learning and teaching. Feedback should be clear, specific and backed up by observational evidence. Documentation and procedures/guidelines such as who has access to the report/feedback, where it is stored and what purpose it is used for, when and where the feedback take place, need to be clear.

Outcome 3

Evidence sources are numerous and wide ranging and include:

- ◆ Strategic/Development/Business/Operational/Departmental Plans.
- ◆ Annual Reports.
- ◆ Prospectus of courses/programmes/promotion and advertising materials.
- ◆ Newsletters/staff notices.
- ◆ Policies, procedures/arrangements in all key areas eg equality of opportunities, health and safety, assessment, staff development.
- ◆ Organisational structures and committees/charts/staffing lists/job descriptions in relation to all key areas eg marketing and promotion, programme design and approval.
- ◆ Procedures eg Programme review, complaints and appeals, document control.
- ◆ Performance Indicators eg Student and employer satisfaction learner details, staff qualifications, student attendance, student achievement.
- ◆ Records in relation to: School/employer/college liaison, health and safety.
- ◆ Learning, teaching, support and assessment plans, materials and records eg Lesson/teaching plans, learner induction packs/programmes, assessment criteria/guidelines/schedules, teaching and assessment packs, guidance and support plans and materials.
- ◆ Minutes, notes, surveys, evaluations, research reports, action lists/plans, schedules in relation to all key areas eg Access, guidance, counselling, support and learner welfare, educational/strategic leadership and direction.
- ◆ Plans, programmes, resources, and records of staff development eg Staff induction, staff performance/career review, evaluation of the effectiveness of staff development.
- ◆ Information on any relevant Scottish Executive policy.

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Direct evidence includes observation of teaching and learning, examination of teaching and assessment packs and examination of learners' work etc. Indirect evidence includes interviews with staff, learners and employers and records, reports, leaflets and documents etc. Direct evidence provides the most robust source of evidence. Several, rather than one or two, indirect evidence sources are helpful to form a judgement on a particular quality indicator. PI data is useful if it is robust, interpreted carefully and used to support quality improvement. All evidence needs to be carefully considered for its reliability before forming judgements based on it.

Validity of sample sizes — PI data, including client satisfaction data, based on small sample sizes can be very misleading. Small sample sizes sometimes occur because only a very few learners follow a particular programme or undertake a particular Unit. Evaluations based on a small sample size can be distorted by the performance of one or two learners and should be interpreted accordingly. Data needs to be interpreted very carefully as very often only a small percentage of successful learners supply data. Data from client satisfaction surveys needs to be examined carefully to look at the proportion of any particular learner group who have responded. Data gathered centrally, on client satisfaction needs to be interpreted carefully and not used as inappropriate evidence for a particular programme when the sample size of learners from that programme is very small.

Techniques for internal auditing and self-evaluating include:

- ◆ **Observation** — produces direct evidence of the learning and teaching process in a classroom, workshop or work placement situation. Observation also includes examination of students' course work and marked assessed work. The observation of learning and teaching and other activities that impact on the student experience e.g. guidance interviews require to be established with care by producing clear guidelines, procedures and documentation and information and training for both observers and the observed.
- ◆ **Analysis of Documentation** — produces much evidence for internal auditing and self-evaluation and comes in a wide variety of forms such as policies, plans, questionnaires, procedures, Unit specifications, records etc. It is important to confirm by interviews and observation that the procedures, schedules and policies that are documented are implemented in practice. Important to follow audit trails and produce evidence, such as minutes of meetings, to confirm that policies and procedures are carried out and that action points are monitored and reviewed.
- ◆ **Interviews** — interviews with learners, employers/FE/HE and staff can produce useful evidence of client satisfaction and confirmation that policies and procedures that are documented are taking place. Different interview techniques can be used such as individual interviews, group interviews, structured interviews, focus groups etc.
- ◆ **Analysis of Performance Indicators** — produces quantitative and qualitative evidence that can be interpreted to help evaluate educational provision, analyse trends over time and help identify good practice. It is important to use a combination of PIs and to interpret them carefully. For self-evaluation and internal quality audit data on client and learner satisfaction in areas such as content of programmes, teaching and assessment methods and guidance and support can provide useful evidence.

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Outcome 4

The planning of the self-evaluation or internal audit should cover areas such as:

- ◆ the scope of the coverage
- ◆ the allocation of responsibilities within the team/group of staff
- ◆ the evidence to be produced and analysed
- ◆ the timescale

The implementation of the self-evaluation or internal-audit should be managed to ensure that the tasks are carried out effectively and comprehensively to generate reliable evidence that supports the judgements of grades awarded.

The internal audit or self-evaluation report — to enable candidates to produce effective reports they could be reminded of:

- ◆ the techniques of good report writing
- ◆ evaluative writing skills
- ◆ the need to identify strengths and weaknesses based on sound evidence
- ◆ the importance of ensuring that what they write is relevant to the particular element or standard
- ◆ the need to try and briefly cover the quality indicators for each element/standard
- ◆ the importance of producing improvement/action points.

For a self-evaluation report candidates could also be reminded of:

- ◆ the requirement to grade each element and to ensure that the strengths and weaknesses support this grading in the self-evaluation report
- ◆ the requirement to use one of the grade words when grading an element in the self-evaluation report

Oral feedback — to enable candidates to give clear and effective oral feedback they could be reminded of the principles of giving feedback and could be encouraged to practise giving feedback in a role play/simulation exercise. It can be useful to practise both giving and receiving feedback. Feedback on the self-evaluation or audit report could be given to members of a team, to line managers and/or to other teams within an organisation.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

The achievement of the skills and underpinning knowledge required for this Unit would be facilitated by orientation of delivery towards the candidate's own experience, with opportunities for candidate-centred discussions on topics relating to the Outcomes. Exercises and activities to develop evaluative thinking and writing would be useful as would examples of good self-evaluation reports for illustration. Role play/simulation exercises in giving and receiving feedback would be helpful to develop these skills.

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Candidates will be generating real performance evidence from the workplace for Outcome 4.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

Problem Solving at SCQF 6 could be partially evidenced through the planning of the audit or self-evaluation.

Communications at SCQF Level 6 could be partially evidence through the report writing and oral reporting on the audit or self-evaluation.

Open learning

The underpinning knowledge for this Unit can be developed through self-directed study. However, this Unit required all aspects of the audit or self-evaluation skills to be demonstrated in the work place with close monitoring by an experience auditor who could authenticate the work. For further information and advice please refer to Assessment and Quality Assurance for Open and Distance Learning (SQA, February 2001 — publication code A1030).

Candidates with additional support needs

This Unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Alternative Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs*, which is available on SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk.

General information for candidates

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- 1 Demonstrate a critical understanding of quality frameworks relevant to self-evaluation and internal quality audit.
- 2 Explain key principles and processes of self-evaluation and internal quality auditing.
- 3 Critically review the techniques for auditing and evaluating different types of evidence.
4. Conduct a self-evaluation or internal quality audit.