



**National Qualifications 2017
Internal Assessment Report
Skills for Work: Rural Skills**

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

National Courses

Skills for Work: Rural Skills at SCQF level 4

General comments

Fourteen centres were selected for routine external verification visits for Skills for Work: Rural Skills during the past academic year; three of these were recorded as not running, and verifiers cancelled one centre visit because it had been successfully verified the previous year. Accordingly, the external verification team visited 10 centres.

All visits were successful and none resulted in a 'hold' on certification. Verifiers found National Assessment Bank support materials (NABs) in use in all centres. Centres were fully acquainted with the standard expected, and in almost all centres delivery was of a high or very high standard. Verifiers recorded good practice at all but one centre (see below).

Skills for Work: Rural Skills continues to be a popular vocational course. Uptake appears to be steady, despite funding difficulties in the college sector. The National Progression Awards in Rural Skills and the SVQs (Modern Apprenticeships) in Estate Maintenance and Environmental Conservation provide clear progression pathways for students electing to pursue a career in the land-based industries.

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

Centres continue to have a clear understanding of the standard required. At the time of writing, the course has been available in its current format for 10 years. The external verification team noted that it would be timely carry out a review of course arrangements.

All centres are using NABs. Centres have adapted the NABs where necessary in order to provide appropriately for candidates with additional support needs. Student support continues to be of a high standard.

Evidence requirements

In all cases centres met the standard at National 4, and sometimes exceeded it, as borne out by the external verification reports. There remain a significant number of 'minor' issues listed under the 'Specific areas for Improvement' section (below).

Administration of assessments

Verifiers noted that assessment arrangements and record keeping were fully compliant fully with all SQA policies and procedures.

Areas of good practice

Good practice was observed in all but one of the centres visited, as outlined in the reported specific examples from various centres below:

- ◆ Candidates critiquing their own performance in the practical tasks for the crop production unit, which encouraged reflection
- ◆ Using photographs, diaries or personal blogs as supporting evidence to formal assessment decisions; using photographs to demonstrate effective planning of crop 'allotment' areas, record completed candidate projects and to reflect on the student experience
- ◆ High standard of completion of NAB checklists for soft landscaping, with photographs providing supporting evidence of details of the task and when it was carried out
- ◆ Asking candidates to sign up to an agreement which reflects workplace standards and therefore develops employability skills
- ◆ Using the change to the NAB in employability skills to improve teacher feedback and, as a consequence, candidate reflection
- ◆ Very clear annotation of NAB checklists to clarify who had carried out what tasks in crop production
- ◆ Live internal verification of the practical assessment to improve standardisation
- ◆ Collaboration with other, local centres (through the learning town strategy) to share practice regarding the qualification (instruments of assessment and delivery), thereby contributing to improved standardisation and practice
- ◆ Enlightened time-tabling, permitting half-day excursions and work parties, and an excellent range of visits and work experience
- ◆ A realistic range of work-experience opportunities, with the 'marking of the lambs' on a local croft particularly noteworthy at one centre

Specific areas for improvement (Development Points)

External verifiers identified a number of areas for improvement, examples of which are compiled below:

- ◆ Further adaptation of NABs to improve comprehension of the knowledge evidence areas
- ◆ An internal verification process in all centres to ensure not just appropriate assessment, but appropriate assessment at a standardised level. Moreover, revised assessment instruments should be internally verified prior to use. Particular consideration should be given to live verification, given the practical nature of much of the activity
- ◆ Include more technical detail within knowledge evidence for Outcome 3 of the crop production unit (and consider the 'crop' more in the context of potential commercial production). The crop chosen should conform to the allocated list of crop groupings in the unit specification
- ◆ Further develop the summative assessment sheet to help assessors identify evidence gaps for each individual and therefore ensure they all have an assessment opportunity before the course is completed
- ◆ A need to define the difference between an assessment task and formative assessment for learning in workbooks, particularly given the complicated

presence of two sources of evidence: the candidates' workbooks and the NAB checklists

- ◆ Centres should ensure that assessment decisions are made on the basis of the numbers stated in the unit specification, eg Estate Maintenance is 10 tools and 5 tasks; Employability is only 1 risk assessment
- ◆ Centres should take care that employability reviews are completed at appropriate intervals during the programme
- ◆ Where checklists include a generic heading, eg 'post-planting task 1' or 'pre-planting treatment', the details of the task or treatment chosen should be added to the checklist
- ◆ Checklists for Soft Landscaping and Crop Production should be signed/initialled and dated by the assessor
- ◆ Ensure that all candidates complete the team-working elements of the adapted NAB used for the LBI unit, in order to cover Outcome 1 fully
- ◆ Provision of a designated storage space for the Rural Skills class outdoor/work clothing and equipment in centres is invaluable