



Higher National Qualifications

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2017

Administration

Administration and IT Graded Units

Medical Secretarial

Introduction

The units that were externally verified form part of the Higher National Administration and Information Technology qualification. This qualification has undergone a limited review to ensure its currency in terms of emerging technologies. In some instances unit specifications have been updated and where this has happened new assessment support packs have been created. One noticeable difference will be the new Digital Technologies for Administrators unit where the assessment is only available through SOLAR. The external verifier reports show limited use of SOLAR at present, but it is hoped that, with the introduction of dynamic papers for Graded Units 2 and 3, the uptake will improve.

External verifiers still found more than a few instances where college mergers were having an impact on quality systems and standardisation across campuses. However, in almost all instances centres are working well to ensure a standardised experience for candidates.

External verification was limited for this qualification. The introduction of new assessments over the 2017–18 academic year will mean that further verification will be required.

The following Administration Graded Units were verified:

F8KW 34	Administration and Information Technology: Graded Unit 1 (Exam)
F8KX 35	Administration and Information Technology: Graded Unit 2 (Exam)
F8KY 35	Administration and Information Technology: Graded Unit 3 (Project)

Exam-based graded units are verified through central verification. Ten centres were selected for central verification of Graded Unit 2. Two centres out of the ten verified were required to submit further evidence. In one instance internal verification was not fully completed before submission and this led to additional evidence being required.

One centre was centrally verified for Graded Unit 1. The centre had awarded marks for all three questions in Paper 2 and they were asked to amend this to show marks for only two out of three questions as specified in Paper 2.

Project-based graded units are verified through visiting verification. Five centres were selected for visiting verification of Graded Unit 3. Verifiers advised that centres which choose to use 'old' assessment support packs for formative assessments will need to ensure that the pack is no longer available on the secure site — see Specific areas for development.

External verifiers commented on the use of bullet points in extended-response questions. They advised that, particularly at SCQF level 8, full answers were expected for these questions and in project-based graded units.

Verifiers found that most centres, the date and time of the assessment (for Graded Units 1 and 2) was not marked on the assessment scripts. They commented on the importance of including the assessment instrument, the marking scheme and any additions to the marking scheme along with work submissions sent for central verification. They noted that one centre

had not submitted the Sample Form VS00 showing the Scottish Candidate Number and date of birth, which allows external verifiers to check scripts produced against the list of candidates. The external verifiers further noted that a full list of candidates and grades awarded would have allowed them to check that they have been given a representative sample.

Despite advance notice of central verification deadlines, two centres were late in submitting evidence for central verification and this resulted in remote verification events.

Three centres were externally verified for the following Administration units:

F84V 34	IT in Business: Spreadsheets
F849 35	IT in Business: Advanced Spreadsheets
F7JA 34	Office Administration
F84D 35	Office Management
F7J9 34	Office Technologies
F84C 34	IT in Business: Word Processing and Presentation Applications
FG69 33	IT in Business: Word Processing, Spreadsheets and Databases: An Introduction

Two centres were selected for external verification for the following Medical Secretarial units:

FG61 34	Medical Terminology for Administration Staff
FG63 34	GP Medical Administration
FG65 34	Hospital Patient Administration

Category 2: Resources

Criterion 2.4: There must be evidence of initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials.

All centres have systems in place to ensure ongoing reviews of assessment environments, equipment, assessment procedures, learning resources and assessment materials. Pre-delivery checklists are used in all centres. Almost all centres provided evidence of ongoing reviews throughout the academic session. All centres were using up-to-date unit specifications and SQA assessment support packs. However, there was evidence in one centre that internal verification policy regarding pre-delivery was not being adhered to and verifiers brought this to the centre's attention.

Good practice was identified in one centre where a 'Unit Buddy' system is used for anyone delivering a unit for the first time, regardless of the assessor's experience. The new assessor (for the unit in question) meets with someone who has delivered the unit previously to discuss all aspects of delivering and assessing the unit.

Category 3: Candidate support

Criterion 3.2: Candidates' development needs and prior achievements (where appropriate) must be matched against the requirements of the award.

All centres have systems in place to offer additional support where necessary. The degree of support required can be identified at various stages from initial receipt of an application form through to progress reviews during the year. All centres have dedicated additional support teams, and all candidates with additional support needs have personal learning plans in place.

Only one of the centres visited did not interview candidates prior to offering a place on a course. In that centre, if the candidate meets the entry requirements, a member of the administration team contacts them to offer them a place. Some staff at this centre felt that this approach had a negative impact on attainment and achievement. All other centres interview candidates to determine their suitability for a particular course.

Criterion 3.3: Candidates must have scheduled contact with their assessor to review their progress and to revise their assessment plans accordingly.

In all centres, candidates see their assessors weekly during class time. In all centres, candidates can contact assessors via e-mail, while in some centres candidates can also contact assessors via the virtual learning environment. Most centres have a system of Progression Boards at the end of a semester/block in which candidates who are at risk are identified and additional support is put in place. While all centres have formal systems in place for candidates to talk to assessors, in almost all centres informal contact is also possible.

Good practice was identified in one centre in which a full day of classes to cover mandatory units was timetabled with the same lecturer. Such an approach allows for flexible delivery and assessment, and helps to demonstrate the relationships between units to candidates. Moreover, it allows candidates to build good relationships with their lecturers.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

Criterion 4.2: Internal assessment and verification procedures must be implemented to ensure standardisation of assessment.

All centres have master folders for each unit, and in almost all centres this is stored electronically, using password protection. Very few centres do not keep their master folders up to date, as this can have a negative impact on the assessor's ability to ensure standardisation of assessment. All centres use SQA-devised assessment support packs and adhere to suggested solutions, thereby ensuring standardisation of assessment. Almost all centres record pre-delivery checklists and meetings, ongoing delivery checks and end-of-unit checks. Very few centres did not record an update on action points raised at meetings.

One centre holds a standardisation event for all three campuses twice a year to allow team members to share ways of working for those units offered on more than one campus. This was identified as good practice.

Criterion 4.3: Assessment instruments and methods and their selection and use must be valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair.

All centres use SQA-devised assessment support packs, which have been internally verified. In most cases the suggested solutions have been annotated to show additional acceptable solutions. Most centres have clear audit trails to show where work has been remediated. Almost all centres accept submissions of work and carry out marking electronically, either by using the virtual learning environment or comment boxes within the word processing software used. Centres which devise alternative assessments are aware that SQA recommends these be prior verified.

Criterion 4.4: Assessment evidence must be the candidate's own work, generated under SQA's required conditions.

All centres have some form of plagiarism and malpractice policy, and all centres highlight this at Induction. Almost all centres make candidates sign this document at Induction and in almost all centres candidates must sign cover sheets for any open-book assessment to say that the work is their own. Most centres are now using some form of software to help detect plagiarism, such as Turnitin. Some centres are encouraging the use of Harvard referencing as a further means of combating plagiarism, by making candidates aware that the source of their work can be traced.

Criterion 4.6: Evidence of candidates' work must be accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements.

There was evidence that all centres use SQA-devised assessment support packs and marking schemes to ensure consistent assessment judgements. In almost all centres this is backed up by the internal verification system. Almost all centres had carried out internal verification prior to the external verification event. Almost all centres are using candidate checklists to record marks and to highlight any remediation. In more than a few cases, candidates who were interviewed said that feedback was better for candidates who needed to remediate but was limited for candidates who achieved first time.

In one instance an assessor for the unit Hospital Patient Administration had commented on scripts that they would have preferred more detail, but had still passed the candidates. This was picked up by the external verifier who realised that the scripts did not meet the evidence requirements. After much discussion the centre agreed with the external verifier and necessary amendments were made by the candidates. This additional evidence was reviewed by the external verifier who was satisfied that it now met requirements.

In most centres, standard annotation was used during marking and comments backed up the assessment decisions made.

In one unit, which was externally verified, there was extensive and constructive candidate feedback using an electronic proforma. Where remediation had taken place additional feedback was recorded in a different font colour. The external verifier highlighted this as an example of good practice.

Criterion 4.7: Candidate evidence must be retained in line with SQA requirements.

All centres abide by SQA policy in relation to the retention of evidence. In all centres evidence is held for longer than the minimum requirements, and is stored securely.

Criterion 4.9: Feedback from qualification verifiers must be disseminated to staff and used to inform assessment practice.

All centres disseminate information from the visit report. In all centres this is discussed at the first opportunity and any necessary action implemented. Most centres feedback informally to assessors before they receive the verification report.

Areas of good practice report by qualification verifiers

The following examples of good practice were reported during session 2016–17:

- ◆ Unit Buddy: where an assessor delivering a new unit is mentored by an assessor colleague, regardless of the delivering assessor's level of experience
- ◆ Timetabling a day of classes covering mandatory units with the same lecturer to allow candidates to see the connections between units
- ◆ Twice-yearly standardisation events across campuses to ensure standardisation of delivery, assessment and feedback
- ◆ Electronic pro-forma to ensure candidates receive standardised feedback from assessors

Specific areas for development

The following areas for development were reported during session 2016–17. Discussions specifically highlighted the need to:

- ◆ ensure that those centres who choose to use 'old' assessment support packs for formative assessments do not make the pack available on the secure site, and to further ensure that the ASP has been updated to reflect accurately the evidence requirements of the revised unit specification
- ◆ discourage the use of bullet points in answers at SCQF level 8, as this format does not allow for a full development of responses
- ◆ ensure that Sample Form VS00 is submitted with the Scottish Candidate Number and candidate's date of birth
- ◆ take cognisance of verification plans and arrange submission dates for Graded Unit 3 accordingly so that candidate work is readily available for external verification
- ◆ avoid late submissions for central verification
- ◆ be aware of revised group award and new unit specifications and update delivery and assessment accordingly
- ◆ develop the use of SOLAR
- ◆ ensure that assessors are adhering to their centre's internal verification processes