National Units

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2017
Administration

Introduction

Session 2016–17 was the first time the Administration team verified the National Qualification Group Award component units. External verifiers visited six centres. Almost all of the visits were successful.

In a very few instances, external verifiers noted a difference in quality assurance standards in centres between SCQF levels.

In some centres, external verifiers gave feedback to curriculum managers on a one-to-one basis. Centres should consider having more than one person available to receive feedback.

The following units were verified.

F59S 11   Central Services
F59L 11   Word Processing
F5AO 11   Researching and Preparing Presentations
F59P 11   Front of Office Skills
F5FJ 10   Assist with an Event
H1N5 10   Administrative Activities
H1N6 10   Prepare Business Documents
F4P1 11   Reception Duties and Skills
F5AG 12   Human Resources: 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 had effective systems in place to meet criterion 2.4. All centres carry out audits at the start of the academic session to check unit specifications and assessment materials to ensure currency (almost all centres used SQA-devised assessment support packs). All centres have systems in place to review this throughout the session. This is done on a formal basis and recorded, but is also carried out on an informal basis. Almost all centres provided lesson plans. Discussions between centre staff and external verifiers also showed that all centres had adequate equipment to meet the needs of the units being delivered.

Most centres are making use of virtual learning environments to support delivery, although very few are using them for assessment.

External verifiers identified good practice at one centre which uses a unit buddy system to support any assessor delivering a unit for the first time. This applies to experienced assessors as well. A meeting takes places between someone who has previously assessed the unit and the new assessor 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.

Only one centre did not interview applicants, although they were aware that this affected candidate attainment and retention. At this centre the decision to allocate places is left to administrative staff, who check entry requirements on application forms. All centres who interviewed applicants believed that the interview process ensured that their candidates were matched with the correct course at the correct level.

All centres offer candidates additional support if it is required. Candidates can be identified as requiring support prior to entry, at entry, and throughout the course. In addition, all centres allow candidates to self-refer. In almost all centres, candidates have access to a guidance tutor. Almost all centres indicated that they have weekly reviews of candidate progress. Candidates deemed to be at risk of falling behind have support plans put in place.

External verifiers identified good practice at one centre which formally identifies at risk candidates at the end of the first semester. Candidates then have one-to-one meetings with the curriculum manager to develop a support plan. Sessions are held during the Easter holidays to support all candidates, and those applying to advance to the next level complete an evaluation form along with assessors so that both sides are aware of progress. Assessors complete an equality and diversity checklist for all assessments. These were included in internal verification documentation.

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

All centres offer candidates access to assessors to review progress. All centres have formal and informal arrangements for this. Almost all centres have a service level agreement of two weeks for assessors to return marked work to candidates. All centres have timetabled remediation into the teaching and assessment schedules.

External verifiers noted that almost all centres have weekly meetings where candidate progress is discussed and reviewed and those at risk are identified and offered additional support. One centre has a risk register which uses a traffic light system. Candidates identified as amber or red are immediately offered additional support and learning plans are put in place for them.

All centres have additional support teams which have a variety of names.

One centre uses progression boards at this level. They hold sessions in June for candidates who have partially completed qualifications to support them with their outstanding work.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

All centres showed clear evidence that internal verification procedures are being followed. All centres hold meetings at the start of the year or semester to review internal assessment and to offer support to new assessors. External verifiers reported that all centres ensure standardisation across campuses. Staff have the opportunity to meet at least once a year to discuss assessment and internal verification and, in almost all instances, curriculum managers attend these meetings. Some staff teach across campuses and this helps to create a dialogue between campuses. External verifiers also reported that all centres have ongoing informal discussions throughout the year to ensure standardisation of assessment.

One centre has a week between semesters, which is allocated to internal verification. This is backed up their unit buddy system.

Evidence from one centre showed that, while procedures are in place to ensure standardisation, there are instances where inexperienced staff are not aware of the importance of discussing changes to assessment instruments with the internal verifier.

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

All centres used SQA-devised assessment instruments, which had been internally verified before use. Assessors felt confident about making minor changes to assessment instruments without submitting them for prior verification. These changes are recorded in their internal verification records. All assessors were aware that major changes to assessment instruments should be submitted to SQA for prior verification.

One centre successfully integrated the *Assist with an Event* unit with the *Study Visit* unit. The college funds the study visit and candidates are engaged in the process and find it useful and enjoyable. External verifiers highlighted this approach as an example of good practice.

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

Most assessment work at this level is carried out under supervised conditions, but it was obvious from the reports submitted that all centres include a session in their inductions to deal with plagiarism and malpractice. All centres ask candidates to sign a student charter document at enrolment, which highlights the consequences of plagiarism.

In some centres, assessors can restrict internet access when assessments are being taken.

Almost all centres use software such as Turnitin to monitor assessments for plagiarism, but its use is limited at this level due to the nature of the assessments. In one centre, candidates are not allowed to store assessment work on pen drives.

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

All centres are using SQA-devised instruments of assessment and are making assessment judgements consistent with the suggested solutions provided. Some centres annotated minor changes to suggested solutions and clearly documented these in their internal verification records.

Almost all centres carried out internal verification before they were externally verified. External verifiers sampled work that had been internally verified as well as work which had not and still found consistency in assessment decisions. In some centres, external verifiers reported that internal verification had resulted in amendments to assessment decisions. There was also evidence from all centres of discussion and feedback between internal verifiers and assessors.

One centre is encouraging internal verifiers to look at one unit each month in an effort to spread the load of internal verification and also to highlight any issues at an early stage.

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

All centres adhere to SQA's policy on retaining candidate evidence. All centres retain evidence securely for longer than the minimum required period.

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

Centres receive verbal feedback from external verifiers during verification visits and most centres relay this informally to assessors before the external verification report arrives. All centres formally disseminate information from their external verification report to assessors and hold meetings to discuss the report at the earliest opportunity.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

The following good practice was reported during session 2016–17:

♦ unit buddy system
♦ identifying candidates who are at risk of falling behind
♦ integrating unit assessments
♦ spreading the internal verification burden across the session

Specific areas for development

The following areas for development were reported during session 2016–17:

♦ All centres should consider devising their own instruments of assessment.

♦ National Qualifications assessors should consider attending the subject network event for Higher National Administration and Information Technology.

♦ Centres should ensure that evidence is available for all modes of delivery.

♦ Centres should consider having more than one person available to receive verbal feedback from the external verifier.