Higher National Qualifications

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2017
Childcare

Introduction

Units verified in session 2016–17 were:

F290 34   Graded Unit 1: Early Education and Childcare
H9PR 34 Graded Unit 1: Childhood Practice

External verification in 2016–17 for Childcare HN qualifications focused on the graded units. Both *Graded Unit 1: Early Education and Childcare* and *Graded Unit 1: Childhood Practice* were verified across a number of centres, which provided a comprehensive picture of how these units were being delivered and assessed.

Where the older unit *Graded Unit 1 Early Education and Childcare* (F290 34) was delivered, external verifiers discussed the good practice that could be taken forward. For other centres offering the new unit *Graded Unit 1 Childhood Practice* (H9PR 34), they could offer advice and support for the new award.

Some excellent practice was seen across most centres, and teams were working hard to ensure they are taking a standardised approach to the graded unit. In a few centres the graded unit has been integrated well with other units. A high level of verification was apparent, as is usually the case with the graded unit. Almost all centres appeared keen to support lecturers to maintain the standard already set.

Generally, centres across Scotland are working well to share resources and support each other as they embed or start the new revised HNC Childhood Practice award.

Category 2: Resources

Criterion 2.1: Assessors and internal verifiers must be competent to assess and internally verify, in line with the requirements of the qualification.

(This criterion should be completed for regulated qualifications only.)

N/A for HN and graded unit.

However, it is clear thoroughout discussion and verbal feedback from external verifiers, that in almost all centres continuing professional development (CPD) is an embedded feature of the centre's practice.

The new HN award with SVQ units will mean that, from next year, centres will be required to show CPD for staff assessing the SVQ units, in line with the assessment strategy. It is hoped that centres will encourage the practice that allows for the same staff delivering the taught units to assess the workplace practice SVQ units. This will ensure continuity of delivery and that a sound understanding of how to integrate the learning and assessment of the award remains a major feature of the centres' practice.

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

External verifiers reported that all centres visited this year effectively use pre-delivery checklists for the units delivered. These are completed and carried out by the designated internal verifier. In all cases the pre-delivery and internal verification records show that action is taken to ensure all materials, assessment environments, equipment and assessment material is reviewed regularly, and confirmed that action is taken to update and replace where required. As a result, all centres visited have current teaching packs that show up-to-date teaching and learning resources and in almost all cases these are stored electronically and are available to lecturers teaching on the programme. Almost all centres use virtual learning platforms so that candidates can access standardised assessment and support materials at their convenience. Almost all centres visited allow candidates to bring their own laptops to class or provide an opportunity to use college laptops where appropriate. In a few centres, IT access is more limited but this is being addressed by the centres concerned.

All centres work closely with student placement providers. The placements used are regulated and inspected by the Care Inspectorate and HMIE, which shows commitment to ensuring that candidates are supported in a suitable workplace environment. This appears to work well for candidates, lecturers and placement providers.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

External verifiers reported that in all cases an opportunity to assess the candidate development needs is available at application and interview stage. This allows candidates to be supported at an early point in their course. All centres visited this year effectively support their candidates via a designated learning and development centre. These centres usually employ specialist staff who can help assess needs and provide support for the candidates as they move through their course. All centres provided good examples of how students were supported for the graded unit. For example, by the use of software to aid learning and assessment, and allowing candidates extra time for assessment where required.

Across all centres visited the graded unit was well positioned in the second part of the course. This allows candidates the opportunity to acquire relevant underpinning knowledge and skills to undertake their graded unit. All centres were able to show good evidence of the support given to candidates through detailed feedback and clearly signposted remediation requirements and timescales.

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

External verifiers reported that all centres provide their candidates with taught classes or tutorials throughout the duration of the graded unit. Candidates discuss with the tutor their

choice of topic and the reasons for this and are provided with constructive and supportive feedback for each stage of their graded unit project.

Almost all centres indicated that placement providers support the candidates with scheduled recorded meetings with their workplace supervisor to assist with the project investigation. All candidates spoken to by visiting external verifiers confirmed they had regular contact with assessors and supervisors, and ample opportunity to discuss their work and revise plans where required and appropriate.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

All centres visited were able to show evidence of robust verification procedures in operation. Each centre use pre-delivery checklists to ensure the most current specification is being used and that assessors are aware of assessment criteria and conditions. All centres provided evidence that any changes or points for standardisation were implemented through the verification process.

In all centres, a high percentage of verification was noted, particularly in relation to the new graded unit, *Graded Unit 1 Childhood Practice* (H9PR 34). Centres should be commended on their diligent approach to the standardisation and integration of this unit. It is clear that staff teams have worked particularly hard to ensure a standardised approach to the learning, teaching and assessment of the award and to reducing the assessment burden for candidates.

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

All centres provided evidence of equality of candidate access to assessment, and support was offered to candidates, when required. In all cases the assessment task used for each of the graded units viewed, was the current SQA assessment task. This is a three part investigative report, which allows candidates to develop their research skills, and show their knowledge of theory, allowing them to practice and integrate their learning across a range of HN units. In all centres, marks are allocated in line with unit specification marking guidance. However, almost all centres have devised a more detailed marking scheme that breaks marks down further to ensure candidates are clear on where they have excelled and identify areas where they may need to remediate or pay extra attention to, as they move through to the next stage. All centres provide appropriate opportunity where necessary to remediate or re-submit ensuring that the assessment is valid, equal and fair.

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

All centres visited this year had a suitable malpractice and plagiarism policy item. In all cases candidates sign a disclaimer to state that the work handed in is their own work. In most centres, candidates and assessors use a software programme which tells them the percentage of work

which has come from other sources. Almost all centres who use this monitor it closely and address the instances where there is problem. This good practice is becoming commonplace across the sector and should be encouraged. It should help promote sound academic writing skills and encourage candidates to develop the knowledge and skills required for further study.

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

External verifiers reported that in almost all centres assessors have accurately and consistently judged the candidates work in line with SQA requirements. The allocation of marks and assessment judgements made are sound and meet SCQF level 7 requirements. In all centres cross-marking and internal verification sampling highlighted areas of inconsistency. In all centres these were clearly identified, rectified and noted on internal verification forms. This highlighted the effectiveness of the quality procedures in place across the sector.

In all cases, candidates are given the opportunity to remediate or re-submit where appropriate. In all centres, there is evidence of candidates demonstrating critical analysis skills and the ability to identify the relationship of theory to practice.

External verifiers identified good practice in some centres, where candidate's investigations were supported with comprehensive placement practice/observations. This allowed for a sound analysis of findings and the opportunity to relate theory to practice in a meaningful way. The use of a global concept map also helped the candidate to maintain a focus on the direction of their investigation and fuel their motivation.

Many centres were beginning to see the benefit of integrating units across the HNC. In many cases where students had implemented a change to practice as part of their graded unit investigation, the assessment generated evidence for the workplace SVQ units and the *Support for Play, Learning and Development* unit. It is anticipated that this practice will grow as centres become more familiar with the new HN Childhood Practice award. The award is designed to be assessed in an integrated way in order to ensure candidates are not over assessed.

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

All centres visited this year adhere to a robust retention policy that requires evidence to be retained in line with SQA requirements. All units requested by external verifiers were available on the days of the visits undertaken.

There was clear evidence of effective ongoing development of staff teams delivering the graded units and new HNC. In all cases some members of the delivering teams were present for feedback from the visiting external verifier. This shows a clear commitment of centres to engagement with the SQA, the verification process and a willingness to take on board the comments of the external verifier team.

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

In almost all cases external verifiers reported that centres were effectively using previous external verifier reports to inform future assessment practice in the centre. Evidence of this was seen in meeting minutes which detailed discussions of feedback from previous external verification visits and from SQA development visits or network events.

Areas of good practice report by qualification verifiers

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

♦ Some excellent integration of units to support candidate learning and reduce the assessment burden.
♦ Good use of global concept maps to aid the graded unit investigation.
♦ Good use of VLE to support student learning and assessment.
♦ Renewed focus on academic writing to support candidate progress and further study.

Specific areas for development

The following area for development was reported during session 2016–17:

♦ Centres will be required to ensure that they comply with the assessment strategy for both HN and SVQ and check CPD requirements are met for the new HNC Childhood Practice.