



Higher National and Graded Units

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2017

Information Technology (288)

Introduction

This report covers visiting HN verification activity at two centres in which a number of units were selected. Also included in the report is visiting verification of graded unit projects and central verification of graded unit examinations. The units verified are listed below.

This report also covers visiting verification activity to ten centres in which a number of units were selected. The qualification block relates to N-HS. The report also covers some units from block N-W which is work-based assessment and two visits took place in this sector within this group.

The outcome of this verification activity was all positive and it was noted that centres are performing well.

Activity was impacted by the industrial action taken by college staff. Despite the need for rearranging of visit dates there was little impact on standards or the quality of evidence presented at visits. Thanks must go to centre staff for ensuring that visits took place and that evidence was available and presented at a time of increased workload.

Units verified

Visiting HN

F1VV 34	User Interface Design
H1F7 34	Professionalism and Ethics in Computing
H177 34	Troubleshooting Computer Problems
F22V 35	Interactive Media Composition
D75X 34	Information Technology: Applications Software 1
H17C 34	Computer Networks: Building Local Area Networks
H1EM 34	Client Operating Systems

Visiting Graded Units

H48X 35	Computing: Technical Support: Graded Unit 2
H48V 35	Computing: Networking: Graded Unit 2

Central Verification (Graded Unit Examination)

H1J8 34	Computing: Graded Unit 1
F21G 34	Interactive Media: Graded Unit 1

N-HS

F1JT 10	Digital Media: Audio Acquisition
F1JY 10	Digital Media: Image Acquisition
F1JM 10	Computing: Digital Media Elements for Applications
F1KH11	Computer Networking Fundamental

FN8P 11	Gameplay
F1KF 11	Computing: Install & Maintain Computer Hardware
F1KS 11	Computing: Digital Media Elements for Applications
F1KR 11	Computing: Computer Hardware and Systems
F1KT 11	Digital Media: Audio Editing
F1KV 11	Digital Media: Video Editing
F1KS 11	Computing: Digital Media Elements for Applications,
F1KW 11	Digital Media: Still Images Editing
FIKV 11	Digital Media: Video Editing
F1KP 11	Computing: Install and Maintain Computer Software
F1KD 11	Computing: Troubleshoot and Secure IT Systems
H2P211	Mobile Technology and Personal Computer Applications
F5D6 11	Engineering: Using Information Technology
F5D4 12	Engineering: Applying Information Technology
F5D4 12	Engineering: Applying Information Technology
F5D4 12	Engineering: Applying IT
F3SY12	Computing: Computer Hardware and Systems
H2N6 12	Network Fundamentals

N-W

H3C3 04	Health and Safety in IT and Telecoms
H3C5 04	Personal Effectiveness 2
H3BP 04	Networking Principles 2
H3AL 04	Remote Support for IT and Telecoms Products or Services 2
H3AP 04	IT and Telecoms Fault Diagnosis 2
H39M 04	Customer Care for IT and Telecoms Professionals 2
H3B0 04	IT and Telecoms Systems Security 2

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.)

This criterion was not required to be verified within block N-HS. However, for N-W block this criterion is required to be reviewed.

Where this criterion was reviewed, staff were found to be suitably qualified and either in possession of an assessor verifier award or working towards one. All staff were aware of the qualifications requirements within the assessment strategy, and evidence was available which showed qualifications and current CPD.

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

Centres are carrying this out effectively. Evidence has been presented in the form of master pack and supporting evidence such as team minutes and more formal review.

Many centres make use of checklists which show consideration of each of the items in this criterion and evidence suggests that standardisation meetings are being held and documented. In some instances there is evidence that assessment instruments and learning, reference and teaching materials are all checked in terms of equalities. This is based on Quality and Equality of Learning and Teaching Materials (QELTM) guidelines.

Most centres make extensive use of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) for delivering learning materials. These are regularly updated to ensure that they are relevant and up to date. In addition these are also used effectively to cater for learning needs as they can be viewed in a variety of formats.

In terms of equipment resources these meet the requirements of the awards and are regularly reviewed and updated, generally on a rolling programme.

Where work-based assessment is carried out, review was available of site selection lists and employer checklists held within a candidate portfolio.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

Verifiers have reported that centres are very effective in selection of candidates and matching them to appropriate courses. They also demonstrated a high level of candidate support and a candidate-focused approach.

Centres visited demonstrated a thorough approach to selection, which involved some form of screening to give a good indication of the course level that would best meet the needs of the applicant. This also involved taking prior learning into consideration. In almost all cases this ensured that the candidates were well matched to the qualification.

Centres demonstrated a commitment to recognition of development needs. Initial requirements for additional support needs are referred to specialist support teams and extensive use of learning plans is evident. It was evident that referral can be from candidates and/or staff.

Where discussion with candidates took place, confirmation was provided that the support that is available is well understood by all.

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

Evidence confirmed that all classes are timetabled, but candidates have contact with assessors in addition to this. This can be either formal or on an informal basis as required.

Centres make good use of VLEs for providing feedback on assessment and progress, and this allows both assessor and candidate to track progress and arrange for remediation and reassessment.

One centre visited provided a timetabled three-hour support class for all candidates. This allowed for reassessment to take place and for candidates to undertake additional learning as required.

Within training providers candidates have face-to-face contact with their assessor who, as well as assessing the candidate in the workplace, will review progress and revise assessment plans if necessary. In addition to the face-to-face meetings, telephone and email support is also available.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

In all cases there is evidence that assessment and verification procedures are being carried out, and in almost all cases it is evident that this is being done effectively. Verifiers have seen copies of the minutes of standardisation meetings, and have seen internal verification documentation being completed effectively. Centres are operating a three-stage process, and pre-delivery checks were being carried out to ensure that assessment is fit for purpose, even when SQA-produced assessment is being used.

Documentation was made available as evidence for central events, though verifiers did not have evidence of the actual policy and procedures to measure this against.

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

Extensive use is made of SQA-produced Assessment Support Packs (ASPs) for HN units and Graded Unit 1. Verifiers reported that these were reviewed at centres to ensure that they met the principles of assessment.

Verifiers confirmed that when alternative assessments were used, centres had reasons for doing so and no advantage was gained by candidates using these assessments.

In Graded Unit 2 projects, verifiers reported that the ASP shell had been used and that marking schemes were further developed for allocation of marks.

In Graded Unit 1 the following ASPs were used:

H1J8 34	ASP v4, ASP v6
F21G 34	ASP v5

For unit F21G 34 one centre had devised their own instrument of assessment and this had been rigorously scrutinised to ensure that it met the principles of assessment.

In a few instances, evidence was available that showed that assessment was being integrated with similar units. Where this happens it is clearly documented to show outcome and unit coverage.

Some centre-devised assessment had been used. This is generally where no SQA instrument of assessment is available, or an additional attempt is required for re-assessment. Where these had been used there was clear evidence of pre-delivery checks taking place.

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

In all cases, evidence shows that assessment meets the conditions of assessment stipulated in the unit specification. In some cases, where available, this is confirmed in discussion with candidates.

In all cases evidence was seen that centres have a malpractice policy and that this is being adhered to effectively. Evidence was seen of submission forms being completed and of declarations of own work being used.

Centres also confirmed that traditional methods of checking authenticity, such as oral questioning, were used where there was doubt. Such methods were generally used in graded unit projects.

Verifiers saw evidence of electronic assessment being used and extensive use of authenticating software (Turnitin).

Candidates are made aware of plagiarism and its meaning. This is generally done at the induction stage. Policies for staff detail clear responsibilities and procedures to follow if malpractice is suspected, and this is reiterated in student handbooks.

In one instance of F21G 34 the centre had using an electronic method of assessment and there was detailed evidence to suggest that this was administered appropriately to ensure that access was controlled.

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

In almost all cases verifiers reported that marking decisions were consistent and met the requirements of the assessment. In almost all cases this was confirmed by the verification process.

In a few instances verifiers reported that incorrect marking decisions had been made or that there was an error in a marking scheme. In all cases this had been identified by the verification process and rectified accordingly.

In all graded units (examinations and projects) there was evidence of double marking having taken place. In almost all instances this was effective, and evidence was provided of resolution of discrepancies. In a very few instances in graded unit 1 evidence of mismarking was identified, which resulted in a higher grade being awarded. Both double markers and the IV had missed this.

All centres had appropriate sampling procedures in place and it was evident that this was being carried out effectively. Where new or inexperienced assessors were assessing a unit it was generally noted that there was a higher sampling rate.

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

All centres are aware of SQA retention policies and almost all centres retained evidence beyond the three-week requirement as a matter of course.

Almost all evidence is held electronically, and verifiers have confirmed that this is retained securely and confirmed backup procedures.

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

In almost all cases of visiting verification this is discussed with centre staff. Verifiers establish how this is handled and disseminated to the course team.

All centres were aware of previous reports, and confirmed that points raised had been discussed. Where applicable, evidence was seen of discussion and implementation of action points. Almost all centres reference previous reports in standardisation activity, thus confirming effectiveness.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

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

- ◆ A centre devised an IT aptitude test, with online core skills testing for numeracy and communication, in order to help the team to place candidates on the correct level of programme, and to provide the best opportunity for each candidate to achieve his/her awards.
- ◆ Use of Personal Learning Support Plans sent to class tutor to be disseminated to all candidates' assessors to allow targeted support to help the candidates to achieve their awards.
- ◆ Provision of a dedicated three-hour IT support class every week.
- ◆ Adoption of 'You said, we did' review.
- ◆ Use of QELTM-based checklist to meet equalities issues.
- ◆ A high standard of feedback with constructive and comprehensive comments to support candidates.
- ◆ Considerable effort being put into the creation of a centre-devised instrument of assessment to ensure that it meets the needs of the centre and SQA's requirements.
- ◆ Effective use of an on-line assessment environment
- ◆ The use of VLEs for managing assessment submission and giving feedback through Gradebook is extremely effective for both candidates and staff, with a high level of feedback given.
- ◆ The holding of 'pre-start days' allows candidates to be aware of what units they may choose to undertake, to become familiar with the college, and to have support requirements in place before commencing the award.
- ◆ A centre had two units (appropriate to the level of a candidate) officially added to the framework by SQA to aid the candidate's development.
- ◆ Use of photographic evidence for the practical assessment in F1KR 11 Computer Hardware and Systems was good practice.
- ◆ Relevant CPD activities organised by the Curriculum and Quality Leader for staff involved in the delivery of Digital Media units.
- ◆ Use of e-portfolio system to record skills and achievements.
- ◆ Changing the class groups with the agreement of the candidates to allow them to progress at a pace that suits their ability.
- ◆ The use of formative assessment to monitor candidate progress and supply targeted support where required in class time.
- ◆ Use of specialist staff to deliver all outcomes of units F5D6 11 and F5D4 12 (Engineering).

Specific areas for development

There were no development issues identified during session 2016–17.