



National Units

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2017

Sport and Fitness

Introduction

The following units were looked at by the qualification verification team during the academic session 2016–17:

- F40J 11: Sports Injuries: Identification, Prevention and Treatment
- F40D 11: Developing Leadership within Physical Activities
- F7JB 12: Exercise and Fitness: Cardiovascular Training [seen in two centres]
- F40D 11: Developing Leadership
- D810 11: Sports Officiating and Organising — Badminton
- D761 12: Sports Officiating and Organising — Football
- F7JC 12: Exercise and Fitness: Fixed Weight Training
- F82D 10: Sporting Activity — Swimming
- F40D 11: Developing Leadership through Physical Activity
- D825 11: Sports Officiating and Organising — Recreational Orienteering
- F7JC 12: Exercise and Fitness: Fixed Weight Training
- F7JD 12: Exercise and Fitness: Free Weight Training [seen in two centres]
- D681 12: Human Physiology in the Development of Performance [seen in two centres]
- F7JE 12: Exercise and Fitness: Circuit Training

After an initial standardisation meeting, the decision was made to view a broad spectrum of national units covering both theory and practical elements. This target was achieved, and in general terms centres have developed sound working practices derived from delivering these units and their associated awards over a long period. It is apparent that the issue of merger has presented a number of logistical problems for centres: while some have made excellent progress in responding to these demands, there remain some significant issues still to be resolved. The team have been able to disseminate a wide range of good practice suggestions during the visit programme, many of which have been put into practice by centres submitting material for prior verification following a visit.

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 is not assessed as part of the HN programme, however it was apparent that centres have exceptionally well qualified teams delivering the award.

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

All centres visited had procedures in place to ensure review as required by this criterion. These varied from regular team meetings where the review process was a standing agenda item, to a basic QA pro forma which required staff to carry out review on an annual basis. These differences resulted in problems arising in some centres where the system had been treated as a paper exercise without thorough checks being made. Best practice was demonstrated in the form of regular team meetings involving reviews of learning, teaching and assessment materials, and reflections of teaching practice. In the case of one centre, the geographical separation of campuses meant that video conferencing was extensively used. Most centres commented that while there were always ad-hoc discussions regarding delivery, translating these into formal minuted meetings was not always easy due to time constraints. Centres are reminded of the importance of logging standardisation discussions. In another centre, the construction of a new facility had allowed innovative teaching to be developed which had had a significant effect on candidate achievement. In some instances, Health and safety reviews of buildings and equipment were conducted in association with the centre estates department. Centres where issues arose had not identified changes to unit specifications, had made alterations to assessment processes which overlooked critical evidence requirements, or had misinterpreted the demands of the SCQF. In some centres, the development of second/resit assessments which are significantly different from the first attempts should be a priority. Generally speaking, reviews of assessment environments; equipment; reference, learning and assessment materials were carried out effectively.

In one centre there were significant issues arising from inappropriate integration of units across courses — this gave rise to a lack of standardisation and the omission of minimum evidence. Centres should be particularly vigilant when integrating units, especially where they are at different SCQF levels.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

In all of the centres visited, candidate selection processes were well documented and appropriate for the award(s). Students undergo college-defined selection processes and are generally placed at an appropriate level for their identified abilities. Entry requirements for NQ courses vary greatly across the sector, and tend to depend on the individual candidates' other experience/skills. Extended learning support is well developed in all centres, with centre staff working closely with each other to make sure that candidates who indicate difficulties are given the necessary support.

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

All centres visited had robust procedures in place to support candidates. Most visits involved discussion with candidates, who were unanimous in their positive commentary relating to this criterion. Centres offer significant support to learners at all levels: guidance time is offered with learning development tutors (for the purposes of this report I have used this generic name — centres have different designations for this role), and tutorial/individual guidance time is specifically timetabled. All centres visited had comprehensive arrangements in place for candidates with additional support needs.

In all centres candidates felt that assessors and IVs were easy to approach, and accessible when they required feedback regarding their assessment progress. Good practice was demonstrated where staff involved candidates in the decision making regarding assessment times and deadlines: candidates felt involved and empowered by this. Positive commentary was also made in terms of verbal feedback provided by lecturers, which gave depth and understanding to written assessment decisions. Best practice was demonstrated in one centre where each student has access to an online management system that provides them with details of contact time with their tutor, and provides details of key dates for completion of work. This schedule is co-ordinated and monitored by the programme manager, who has the ability to make amendments and reschedule tutors when required.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

Most centres showed significant strengths in this criterion, however more than a few demonstrated amber/red results. This issue has been more prevalent in recent sessions as a result of centres struggling with the demands of increased student numbers, multiple campuses resulting from merger, and variance in KPIs. Significant strengths were apparent in the form of robust application of clearly-defined procedures, merged colleges drawing together staff from multiple campuses to ensure a standardised approach to assessment, the use of experienced staff to mentor new lecturers, and extensive use of the SQA prior verification service.

Problems occurred where centres had misinterpreted the requirements of SCQF levels, where there was a lack of expansion of marking guidance resulting in inconsistent assessment decisions, or where second assessments mirrored first attempts in direct contravention of centre (and SQA) guidance. Centres should be particularly vigilant when assessing across different units to ensure that all of the evidence requirements have been met. The SQA-produced exemplar materials are not as extensive for national units (compared to HN), and many centres have taken the option to have assessment materials prior verified to ensure consistent and accurate delivery/assessment. The external verification team have been able to disseminate good practice across the sector.

Many centres take a logbook approach to the practical elements of courses, allowing candidates to compile an extensive individual resource which they are able to keep once the course (and associated assessment/IV processes) is complete. This is especially useful for candidates progressing to higher-level study. In one centre, a decision log recorded questions and resolutions that IVs needed to seek further advice on; this was accessible to staff and represents good practice.

During the course of the session, it became apparent that while all centres have excellent procedures and policies in place, the interpretation in practice was variable. IV feedback was in some cases limited to commentary such as 'I agree with the assessment decision', rather than an evaluative review of process and response. It should be noted that where this criterion does not meet SQA standards, there is frequently a 'domino effect', whereby criteria 4.3 and 4.6 are also affected. Comments in section 2.4 above are also relevant here.

It should also be noted that simply recording an issue (eg a non-compliant assessment) in an IV meeting does not resolve the problem — action should be allocated to a specific individual to resolve, and should apply to the affected cohort as well as all those following.

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

Most centres showed significant strengths in this criterion, however more than a few demonstrated amber results. Where available, centres are using materials derived from SQA-produced exemplars; however it has become apparent during visits that centre-generated materials do not always fully meet the evidence requirements at the correct SCQF level. This is also apparent in the development of resit assessments, or those units where there is no exemplar. In some instances, assessment instruments used were compliant with the evidence requirements of the unit specifications, but (for example in the case of units in the 'Participation and Performance' group) the assessor and IV had not ensured that the marking guidance was appropriate — see also section 4.6 below.

Good practice was noted in most centres, with SQA exemplars or prior verified material used across multiple campuses as standard. The value of a clear re-assessment policy to ensure standards are met across all outcomes was apparent in most centres. Where materials have been developed, consistency among different assessors has been ensured with the development of effective statements of minimum competence forming the basis of marking guidance. There is a broad awareness and increasing use of the SQA prior verification service. Feedback to SQA verifiers regarding the support materials has indicated the need for some revisions and updates to both exemplar materials and unit specifications.

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

All centres had procedures in place to ensure that candidates' work was their own. This varied from a plagiarism agreement form/malpractice policy document signed at induction to signatures of authenticity on all submitted work. Many centres made use of anti-plagiarism software such as Turnitin. Where submissions are made electronically, use of VLE/Moodle ensures that personal login details underpin this process.

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

This area generated some significant issues, particularly in merged colleges, where there are frequently multiple assessors delivering the same unit. (See also sections 4.2 and 4.3 above). In more than a few centres, problems occurred where candidate evidence was judged/marked using centre-devised marking allocations which had not been subject to effective IV.

Good practice was apparent in most centres with the use of the SQA exemplars (where available — see also comments above) or prior verified material setting a clear standard backed up by regular IV/markers' meetings to ensure that consistency is being achieved across all units and across all sites. In most centres, marking was clear and feedback detailed, and standardisation meeting minutes reflected discussion within the delivery team. Documentation provided during visits clearly demonstrated effective standardisation in most centres. The development of effective observation checklists including 'model performance' statements was apparent in most centres.

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

In all centres, candidate evidence was retained in line with SQA requirements. In most centres it was apparent that policies for the retention of paper-based and electronic evidence made greater demands than those required by SQA.

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

In all centres, QV information is disseminated from the Quality department to staff via the appropriate line manager. Good practice was apparent in some centres where feedback from both the QV and IV processes was disseminated across the full staff team who are spread across multiple sites. This is done during whole-team meetings, but also via emails.

Almost all centres have timetabled weekly meetings for individual course/campus teams. All centres encouraged staff to attend SQA update and best practice events, though it is apparent that sometimes these are attended by managers rather than lecturing staff — centres should ensure that information from such events is appropriately cascaded.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

Encouragingly, all qualification verifiers reported good practice during session 2016–17.

- ◆ The use of presentations and class reporting will further prepare learners for progression while building confidence in speaking in public.
- ◆ Course leader internally verifies across all the centre campuses to allow for true standardisation within the college to occur. This is done over and above the standard internal verification policy.
- ◆ Use of online staff discussion forums aids the planning of assessments, particularly blended learning strategies.
- ◆ Learners contributing to the evaluation of units, and having input on their delivery for the next cohort.
- ◆ Use of a wiki to share practice among the learners as they plan for their sessions or expeditions.
- ◆ Practical sessions by the students are observed in a live commercial (real work) environment.
- ◆ Involving candidates in the assessment planning process demonstrates flexibility and joint-ownership of the learning process.
- ◆ Additional awards are offered to learners.
- ◆ Learners often work with students from higher-level courses in a peer-assisted learning context.
- ◆ Online candidate progress charts are maintained by the teaching team so that learners can be easily monitored (and can track their own progress).
- ◆ Evidence of a high level of candidate support in all centres.

Specific areas for development

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

- ◆ Development of greater diversity between existing assessment and re-assessment materials.
- ◆ Clear policy needed on resit/oral resit arrangements.
- ◆ Where two practical assessments are required, there should be clear separation between these.
- ◆ Removal of pass marks — this may on occasion mean that candidates can pass an assessment when they have not achieved the required evidence criteria.
- ◆ Evidence of IV in more than a few centres showed that the same learner's scripts were verified over multiple outcomes. It would be advantageous to sample different learners' scripts for each outcome.
- ◆ It is strongly recommended that centres provide competency statements to accompany assessor observation checklists. This should become the norm to ensure acceptable performance and standardise across learners and assessors.
- ◆ Record full justification of assessment decisions and provide all candidates with detailed, constructive feedback on their performance.
- ◆ Centre-devised assessments should be submitted to SQA prior verification before delivery of a unit rather than after it has been delivered and assessed.
- ◆ Ensure effective mentoring of new assessors takes place to help them assimilate the mandatory requirements and guidance aspects of unit specifications and understand the SCQF levels.
- ◆ Assessor feedback should aim to avoid significant repetition.
- ◆ Centres should consider the difficulties of cross-assessing units, especially when they are from different SCQF levels.