Higher National

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2017
Sports Therapy

Introduction

The following qualifications were sampled this session:

H4XP 34 Soft Tissue Therapy: Graded Unit 1
H73A 35 Sports Therapy: Graded Unit 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 is not assessed as part of the HN programme, however discussions with staff at all levels indicate that centres have well-qualified teams who undertake regular and appropriate continuing professional development training.

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

Documentation was provided by all three centres visited which confirmed that team/course agendas included all of the above items and that action points were recorded. A few (one) centre reported learner representation at bi-annual course meetings to raise learner issues and provide feedback to the learner cohort. Most (two) of the centres were in brand new buildings; the suitability of these new assessment environments and equipment was a constant topic of conversation between staff and shared with visiting verifiers. Generally, the new facilities and equipment provided positive aspects for change from old delivery and assessment practices; however, an increase in learner numbers and a decrease in space for carrying out some practical units may present some challenges for a few (one) centres. Although significant strengths were recorded for this criterion based on the documentation provided, it became evident in later criteria that assessment materials may not have been robustly reviewed in these meetings. Furthermore, there was a lack of reported detail from verifiers for a few (one) centres on any individual aspect of the criterion. Centres and verifiers should be vigilant in ensuring that this criterion does not just become a 'paper exercise'.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

Significant strengths were recorded for this criterion across all centres. All reported well-documented and appropriate selection criteria for the awards, which included diagnostic testing and referral where appropriate to learning support. If a learner experienced academic issues during the course, there were procedures for referral or self-referral in all centres. Recruitment was either via progression from (usually) the centre's own SCQF level 6 award, or through the achievement of two Highers. The subjects for Highers, or other acceptable qualifications, was dependent upon the individual's additional experience/skill.

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

Significant strengths were recorded for this criterion across all centres. All reported some one-to-one review time built into the delivery and assessment schedules for individual units. Most (two) centres described additional support mechanisms where individual learners were allocated an 'academic' tutor responsible for monitoring overall attendance and achievement, who would arrange to meet with the learner to prevent major issues occurring. All centres indicated that learners were encouraged to arrange meetings with their assessors if they were encountering any academic difficulties.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

Given that only three centres and two graded units were subject to external verification this year, the amber rating across most (two) centres (for the same graded unit) may not be a true reflection of practices across all centres and all units of the award. However, it is a concern that problems occurred in most (two) centres where, despite documentation being provided that indicated pre-delivery checks and internal verification had taken place, issues identified through external verification had not been picked up either at the pre-delivery or at the internal verification stages. The results of the issues led to inappropriate instruments of assessment and marking guides being used, learner evidence not achieving the correct SCQF level (8), and a lack of evidence of standardisation across groups and assessors. Non-compliance in this criterion had a knock-on effect of non-compliance for criteria 4.3 and 4.6.

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

As above for 4.2, the small number of centres and units externally verified may not be a true reflection of practices across all centres and all units of the award. However, most (two) centres used inappropriate assessment instruments/marking guides that rendered them invalid and unreliable.

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

Significant strengths were recorded for this criterion across all centres. All centres covered plagiarism and its consequences at induction, and this was reiterated in learner handbooks/information. Most (two) centres required learners to sign that written work submitted was their own. A few (one) centre indicated that it may move towards using Turnitin this next academic session.

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

As above for 4.2 and 4.3, the small number of centres and units externally verified may not be a true reflection of practices across all centres and all units of the award. However, the lack of pre-delivery checks to identify issues with the assessment instruments meant they were applied, leading to inaccuracy in assessors' judgements against the standards outlined in the unit specification. Invalid and unreliable marking guidelines meant that there was a lack of evidence of standardisation across learners and assessors. Unfortunately, in most cases these issues had not been identified through mid-delivery internal verification sampling of scripts.

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

Significant strengths were recorded for this criterion across all centres. All centres confirmed that learner evidence was kept far in excess of SQA requirements.

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

Significant strengths were recorded for this criterion across all centres. All centres confirmed that verifiers' reports, once received through the SQA co-ordinator, were distributed to the line manager who distributed them to the appropriate team. Dissemination to individual team members occurred through the most appropriate team/course meeting.

Areas of good practice report by qualification verifiers

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

♦ Learner representation at course team review meetings.

Specific areas for development

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

♦ Review of internal verification procedures and paperwork to ensure that appropriate checks are being carried out, actions are recorded, and information recorded regarding internal. verification sampling of learner scripts contains appropriate information for verifiers' visits
♦ Development of minimum competence statements and (for graded units) clear justification for the awarding of additional marks to aid standardisation.
♦ Use of standardised marking checklists across all assessors, with space to record comments and justification for the awarding of additional marks (for graded units).
♦ Writing of assessment briefs in user-friendly language.