

Research and Information Services

Monitoring Standards Report



## **HNC Early Education and Childcare (G7CX)**

## Introduction

SQA has been carrying out an annual monitoring standards programme since 1998. The exercise plays a very important role in ensuring that we continue to offer qualifications of a consistently high standard. The process involves scrutinising candidate evidence, assessment material and marking guidelines for the current year and comparing these with archived evidence from a previous year's exercise where available, to judge if standards are being maintained over time. Centres with candidates taking the units in the current sample are asked to submit the work of two candidates who have been awarded a bare pass and whose evidence as far as possible exemplifies the standard for the qualification. HN unit specifications for both the current and comparator years are made available to the scrutiny teams. The panels are chaired by the Senior Verifier (mostly) and the other two members of each group are an experienced verifier and where possible an external specialist from Higher Education or an expert from industry or related sector. The Units scrutinised were:

- ◆ DF4Y 34 Working in an Early Education and Child Care Setting
- ◆ DF50 34 Children and Young People's Rights: Provision, Protection and Participation
- ◆ DF52 34 Theoretical Approaches to Development and Learning

## 1 Source documents

The HNC in Early Education and Childcare is a revision of an earlier version with the title HNC Child Care and Education. The new title was chosen to reflect the terminology used in the National Care Standards. This revision was initiated as part of the normal SQA five-year cycle and responded to several developments in the Early Education and Childcare sector:

- ◆ The advent of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and its role in setting qualifications required to enable workers to be included in the Social Care Register.
- ◆ The review of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Early Years Care and Education.
- ◆ The review of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Playwork.
- ◆ The increasing variety of job roles within the Early Education and Childcare sector.
- ◆ The publication of the National Care Standards — early education and childcare up to the age of 16.
- ◆ New initiatives in Childcare related studies.

- ◆ SQA's revision of all HNCs, with new improved design rules.

With the introduction of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), this qualification is levelled at SCQF level 7. The previous qualification was not levelled and was probably not assessed at this level.

The demand of the qualification is higher and the Evidence Requirements more in depth.

## 2 Assessment instruments

Assessment exemplars are available for all three Units. This has the potential to contribute to standardisation of evidence across centres.

The use of the assessment exemplar for each Unit varied. Most centres utilised the exemplars for Units DF52 34 and DF50 34. Few centres used the assessment exemplar for Unit DF4Y 34.

Not all exemplars have instruments for re-assessment and very few centres provided alternative assessments. There is little evidence that exemplar assessments, re-assessment instruments, or assessments adapted from exemplars have undergone thorough internal verification or, where appropriate, prior verification.

The use of exemplar assessments has reduced the level of integration that could be implemented. There were examples of integration within Unit DF52 34, and one example of appropriate integration of this Unit with Unit DF4Y 34.

Instruments of assessment for Unit DF4Y did not approach assessment holistically and there was minimal evidence of integration across Outcomes within the Unit. Candidates were required to provide evidence that did not meet Unit specifications. A significant number of centres demanded excessive evidence from candidates for this Unit.

Candidates had been given inaccurate and out-of-date information about Scottish legislation. Marking guidelines for instruments of assessment relating to Scottish legislation were also inaccurate.

Many centres did not provide information on how the conditions of assessment or the criteria for a pass were communicated to candidates. Although conditions and criteria are available in Unit specifications and exemplars, it was unclear in many cases how candidates were informed of these. It seemed that candidates may have been informed verbally, but this information should be provided in writing. Some centres provided this information in their assessments.

In general, most assessment instruments for assessing at SCQF level 7 are sufficiently demanding. However, there are issues and weaknesses in some exemplars, and centres should ensure that they are familiar with the Unit

Evidence Requirements to assess the suitability of the instruments of assessment. The same care should be taken with centre-devised assessment instruments as a few were not assessing at SCQF level 7, nor meeting the Evidence Requirements of Unit specifications.

### 3 Evidence of candidate performance

Overall, there was good feedback to candidates from assessors, though a minority of centres provided no feedback.

Evidence submitted was of a varying standard across all three Units. Candidates achieved Units where there was insufficient evidence to meet the Unit requirements and evidence was not at the required SCQF level 7.

Approximately 50% of centres submitted evidence of internal verification of assessments and candidates' submissions. Standards of sampling and internal verification were variable.

There was widespread evidence of remediation, which often did not conform to SQA guidance. There were varying degrees of remediation used with no common standard between centres as to what was, or was not, acceptable. There were very few examples identifying where a candidate should be re-assessed rather than remediated. Most evidence of remediation was satisfactory but there were instances where this appeared superficial. Where verbal evidence had been accepted there was no evidence of oral questions asked or candidate responses, so evidence was incomplete.

Evidence of group presentations did not provide sufficient evidence of individual candidate knowledge and understanding to meet the requirements of the Unit specification.

There was a significant amount of inaccurate and outdated evidence related to Scottish legislation which had been accepted.

There was minimal evidence of a holistic approach to working in early education and childcare. Very few candidates provided evidence of the relationship between observing children, assessing and planning to meet their needs, and the implementation and evaluation of the planned activities. Evidence of reflection on practice rarely related to planned activities based on observation and assessment of children's needs.

The presentation of candidate evidence varied between very good and unsatisfactory. Often evidence was extremely difficult to identify, especially in portfolios with wide-ranging evidence. An evidence index in these would have facilitated the monitoring exercise.

## 4 Comparing Standards over time

A direct comparison between current Units and those in the comparator year 2003 was not possible.

## 5 Conclusions

In general, the new HNC Early Education and Childcare is upholding standards at SCQF level 7. This has the potential of assisting candidates to progress into higher education and employment.

The provision of assessment exemplars by SQA has meant that there is less variation between centres in interpreting standards when these assessments are used. There is evidence that the provision of exemplars has led to a degree of complacency from some centres with regard to the assessment's suitability and correctness. Some centres had developed assessment instruments based on the exemplar. Other centres had developed their own assessment instruments. It is important that these assessments are internally verified and it is recommended that they are also subject to prior verification.

Care should be taken to ensure that conditions of assessment adhere to the requirements of the Unit specification. The overriding standard is established in the Unit specification and not the exemplar.

Many centres are interpreting and applying the standards acceptably but issues relating to remediation, re-assessment, internal verification, and prior verification should be addressed.

## 6 Recommendations for centres

- ◆ It is recommended that centres continue to work to improve standards of assessment, including:
  - ◆ Providing appropriate feedback for candidates
  - ◆ Ensuring that internal verification procedures are in place.
  - ◆ Disseminating information from SQA to all appropriate staff.

### Recommendations for SQA

- ◆ Conditions for assessment and criteria for a pass should be stated at the beginning of each assessment instrument.
- ◆ SQA should investigate ways in which it can assist centres in developing assessments.

## **Initial Response**

We will review the way in which we specify conditions for assessment and pass criteria within assessments. The SQA will continue to support centres to develop assessment.

## Appendix: Unit report

### 1 The Units

Unit	Main Purpose	Candidate Profile	Uptake
<p><b>DF4Y: Working in an Early Education and Child Care Setting</b></p>	<p>This Unit is intended to provide a practical understanding of working in an early education and childcare setting. It is designed to enable candidates to understand the features of working in an early education and childcare setting and of how to observe, plan, record and report in that context. It is intended for candidates who want to work with children in an early education and childcare setting and to build their skills and make them competent to work with children, including those for whom additional support is required, and as part of a team of other professionals.</p>	<p>It is recommended that candidates should have, or be able to demonstrate, an understanding of the development and behaviour of children. This may be evidenced by significant experience of working with children.</p> <p>Evidence could also be demonstrated through achievement of current NQ Units or equivalent, which assess knowledge and understanding of children from birth to 12 years, or SVQ level 2 Early Years Care and Education or Children’s Care Learning and Development.</p>	<p>Currently the majority of centres delivering these Units are colleges of further or further/higher education.</p> <p>This Unit is a mandatory Unit at SCQF level 7.</p> <p>Evidence from 27 centres was sampled.</p>
<p><b>DF50: Children and Young People’s Rights: Provision, Protection and Participation</b></p>	<p>The purpose is to enable candidates to understand relevant legislation designed to ensure children and young people’s rights in Scotland and how legislation influences practice in early education and childcare settings. Candidates explore the concept of participation</p>	<p>It is recommended that candidates should be able to demonstrate a sound knowledge of child development and an awareness of the issues surrounding child protection and the promotion of children’s rights. This</p>	

	and their role in responding to child protection concerns.	may be evidenced by significant experience of working with children in the age range from birth to 12 years. Evidence could also be through achievement of current NQ Units or SVQ level 2 Early Years Care and Education or Playwork or Children's Care Learning and Development.	
<b>DF52: Theoretical Approaches to Development and Learning</b>	<p>This Unit is designed to enable candidates to research and gain theoretical understanding of the development and learning of children. This Unit highlights the role of play in children's development and learning. This theoretical knowledge will be linked to practice.</p> <p>This Unit is intended for candidates who are on work placement or employed in the childcare sector and/or who are undertaking the HNC Early Education and Childcare.</p>	<p><b>Recommended prior knowledge and skills:</b> It is recommended that the candidate should be able to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the development and needs of children. This may be evidenced by significant experience of working with children. Evidence could also be through achievement of current NQ Units or equivalent, which assess knowledge and understanding of children in the age range from birth to 12 years, or SVQ level 2 in Early Years Care and Education, Children's Care, Learning and Development or Playwork.</p>	<p>This Unit is a mandatory Unit at SCQF level 7.</p> <p>Evidence from 28 centres was sampled.</p> <p>All centres were colleges of further or further/higher education.</p>

## 2 Assessment instruments

<b>DF4Y:Working in an Early Education and Child Care Setting</b>	
<b>Fitness for purpose/ integration</b>	<p>The Unit specification is appropriate for candidates working at SCQF level 7. An assessment exemplar is available for this Unit and it is recommended that one assessment instrument is used to generate the required evidence. Most centres used the assessment exemplar although many centres adapted it. Not all centres indicated that the assessment instruments had passed internal verification.</p> <p>Many centres integrated across Outcomes and Units although exemplar does not show examples of this.</p>
<b>Quality of presentation</b>	<p>This was generally of an acceptable standard. It was felt the assessment exemplar is very clear and well written, however this is not true of each centre's assessment instrument pack; the quality is variable and at times unclear on the evidence required. Referencing when used is very poor. Centres could offer support where candidates have attempted this. Evidence was very difficult to locate within many candidate portfolios. It is strongly recommended that a tracking sheet is made up. This is of particular importance when Units are integrated.</p>
<b>Level of demand</b>	<p>The assessment exemplar requires more evidence than required by the Unit specification.</p>
<b>Conditions of assessment</b>	<p>The majority of centres were applying the conditions of assessment as outlined by SQA but there were a number of issues identified at some centres as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ no guidance to candidates on pass criteria</li> <li>◆ written in pencil</li> <li>◆ no feedback</li> <li>◆ unclear what work was remediation</li> <li>◆ no evidence of internal verification</li> </ul>
<b>Guidance on criteria for pass and validity to PCs and range/summary</b>	<p>The standards expected are outlined within the Unit specification and are further defined in the exemplar assessment. There is some evidence that these criteria were communicated to candidates in some centres. It is unclear how candidates at other centres were informed as to what constituted a pass.</p>

<b>DF50: Children and Young People’s Rights: Provision, Protection and Participation</b>	
<b>Fitness for purpose/ integration</b>	<p>There is an assessment exemplar for this Unit consisting of three assessment instruments (one for each Outcome) which candidates complete under open-book conditions. In the Outcome 1 assessment, candidates can do an oral presentation or a written report.</p> <p>The Outcome 2 assessment asks for evidence of two theories or policies, whereas the Evidence Requirement asks for evidence of three. Most centres used the exemplar. Some centres extended the Outcome 1 assessment and some centres asked for three theories or policies in Outcome 2 as per Evidence Requirements.</p> <p>Where centres used their own assessments there was no evidence of prior verification, however the Evidence Requirements were met.</p> <p>Only two centres showed evidence of integration; the majority choosing to assess as outlined in the assessment exemplar.</p>
<b>Quality of presentation</b>	<p>There was a wide range from very good to unsatisfactory. At SCQF level 7, work should be referenced using an accepted method (using research skills). The majority of the work was word processed.</p>
<b>Level of demand</b>	<p>The majority of centres used the assessment exemplar, which is appropriately levelled at SCQF level 7. A few centres accepted work which was below standard.</p>
<b>Conditions of assessment</b>	<p>The majority of centres specified the conditions of assessments and there was some very good evidence of quality feedback to candidates. However there were a few centres that didn’t provide evidence of assessment guidelines or feedback.</p>
<b>Guidance on criteria for pass and validity to PCs and range/summary</b>	<p>The standards are outlined in the Unit specification and are outlined in the assessment exemplar. There is evidence in the majority of centres that this was communicated to the candidates, however there were a few centres where this wasn’t clear.</p>

<b>DF52: Theoretical Approaches to Development and Learning</b>	
<b>Fitness for purpose/ integration</b>	<p>An assessment exemplar is available for this Unit and it is recommended that one assessment instrument is used to generate the required evidence.</p> <p>Most centres used the assessment exemplar, though some centres adapted the content.</p> <p>Some centres provided instruments of assessment that did not meet the Evidence Requirements of the Unit specification.</p> <p>The assessment exemplar integrates the two Outcomes in the Unit.</p> <p>Some candidate evidence showed no integration across Outcomes.</p> <p>One centre had integrated evidence from this Unit with evidence for Unit DF4Y 34 Working in an Early Education and Childcare Setting.</p>
<b>Quality of presentation</b>	<p>The assessment exemplar is well presented, clear, and well written.</p> <p>Where centres have developed their own assessments, the quality is extremely variable. Some centre-developed assessments are difficult to interpret and unclear in their presentation.</p>
<b>Level of demand</b>	<p>The assessment exemplar is above the level of demand as it requires more evidence than required by the Unit specification.</p> <p>Some centre-developed assessments are below the level of demand and do not meet the Evidence Requirements of the Unit specification. Some of these assessments also did not demand evidence at the appropriate SCQF level 7.</p>
<b>Conditions of assessment</b>	<p>Assessment guidelines recommend one assessment to meet Evidence Requirements of both Outcomes to be carried out under controlled conditions and most centres follow these guidelines.</p> <p>Some centres appeared to have given candidates three separate small open-book assessments in the form of extended response questions.</p> <p>Some centres had not provided an identifiable instrument of assessment or the candidate evidence indicated that other verbal instructions had been given that were not evident in the written submissions.</p>
<b>Guidance on criteria for pass and validity to PCs and range/summary</b>	<p>There are clear instructions on what evidence is required to achieve the Unit through the assessment exemplar which includes checklists for the evidence required.</p> <p>Several centres gave no clear indication of the criteria for a pass.</p>

### 3 Evidence of candidate performance

<b>Overall</b>	
<b>Examples of good assessment practice/summary</b>	<p>There was some very good evidence of clear marking guidelines and tutor feedback sheets giving clear extensive feedback to candidates. In most cases where remediation was required candidates were given clear guidance on the areas they needed to address in order to achieve. There was evidence of good integration of Units.</p> <p>One centre had integrated the assessment of one Outcome of Unit DF52 into the assessment of Unit DF4Y 34 Working in an Early Education and Childcare Setting. This practice demonstrates good evidence of a candidate's ability to relate theory to practice. There was some evidence that candidates had been given a timeline for completion of tasks.</p>
<b>Comparison over time</b>	There were no previous Units from the comparator year for comparison with these mandatory Units in the new HNC Early Education and Childcare.
<b>DF4Y: Working in an Early Education and Child Care Setting</b>	
<b>Accuracy of assessment decisions</b>	<p>Centres mainly submitted scripts that were bare passes. The evidence presented by centres was very mixed with some candidates performing at SCQF level 7 and some candidates performing well below it.</p> <p>It was felt that eight of the presenting centres were rating their candidates' performance too highly. It was found that several centres submitted incomplete evidence though classed this as a bare pass. Standards of what centres described as a bare pass varied tremendously across the range of centres. Several centres accepted descriptions when in fact analysis was asked for.</p>
<b>Consistency of application of standards</b>	This varied across centres
<b>DF50: Children and Young People's Rights: Provision, Protection and Participation</b>	
<b>Accuracy of assessment decisions</b>	<p>Eleven centres rated their candidates as a bare pass where it should have been below a pass. This was almost exclusively due to accepting work which was not showing the SCQF level 7 requirements for analysing and evaluating.</p> <p>Some centres chose to do a group presentation and there wasn't always clear evidence that this had been carried out in relation to Evidence Requirements, ie that each individual had used research skills to explore three pieces of legislation. The tendency was for a group of three to take one piece each.</p> <p>Evidence was minimal for Outcome 2 in relation to candidates' ability to analyse. There were a number of occasions where a description of theory was accepted instead of analysis.</p> <p>There was evidence of incomplete assessments, although the centre indicated a pass.</p>

	<p>There were a number of centres which accepted incorrect pieces of legislation, eg where the full title wasn't given, the date was wrong or not evident. In a few centres candidates talked about the Additional Support Needs Bill, which has been an Act since 2004. Care needs to be taken to ensure candidates have the most up-to-date information.</p>
<p><b>Consistency of application of standards</b></p>	<p>The application of standards varied with some centres being very clear and supporting candidates to take a professional approach to their work. The application of oral presentations for Outcome 1 meant some candidates were not meeting Evidence Requirements and showing minimal research skills. In some cases the only evidence of the oral presentation was the tutor checklist.</p> <p>There wasn't always evidence of internal verification as requested, and in one case the internal verifier had stated legislation was up to date and it wasn't.</p>
<p><b>DF52: Theoretical Approaches to Development and Learning</b></p>	
<p><b>Accuracy of assessment decisions</b></p>	<p>Centres submitted evidence for candidates who were mainly borderline passes or fails, although one centre submitted two good passes.</p> <p>The evidence presented by centres was of a very variable standard with some candidates performing well below the expected SQCF level 7.</p> <p>A minority of centres had over-assessed their candidates and demanded more evidence than required by the Unit specification. In consequence, a few candidates should have achieved the Unit where the centre had recorded a failure. Other candidates assessed as achieving a 'bare pass' had achieved a 'good pass'.</p> <p>Several candidates had achieved passes on incomplete evidence.</p>
<p><b>Consistency of application of standards</b></p>	<p>The application of standards was very variable across centres with approximately 50% of assessment material inappropriately assessed, incomplete and/or inappropriately marked.</p> <p>The requested internal verification documentation was missing from several submissions.</p>