

Research and Information Services

MONITORING STANDARDS REPORT



HNC Social Sciences (G0VH 15)

2005 Report on Monitoring Standards

Scottish Qualifications Authority

2005 Report on Monitoring Standards in

HNC Social Science (GOVH 15)

Two experienced members of SQA's moderating team and an external specialist in the field judged assessment material and candidate evidence against the standards of Units:

- ◆ **A4YG 04** *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*
- ◆ **A4YN04** *Introducing a Geographical Perspective*

Centres were asked to provide evidence for two candidates for each of the above Units. The total number of judgements for 2005 assessment instruments and assessment decisions was 34 and 18 for 2002 materials.

The scrutiny panels' findings can be summarised as follows:

Quality of collected material

The quality of material presented ranged from 'satisfactory' with most considered to be 'good'.

Assessment instruments

In general there was a good understanding of standards with regard to both Units and these were reflected in the assessment instruments used. Most used a variety of assessment instruments which were fit for purpose. There were some instances where clear and explicit assessment guidance was being given to students. The majority of instruments of assessments were at an appropriate level of demand required to achieve the Unit concerned. There was one example of instruments of assessments being used that went beyond the requirements specified in the Unit, consequently, placing higher than expected demands of their students. Most of the assessments explicitly identified the conditions under which assessments would take place as well as the standards required for achieving a pass or a merit. There was limited evidence of integrated assessments (in Research Methods), however, and opportunities to integrate assessments (within the same Unit or across Units) were not exploited as much as they could have been, sometimes leading to a fairly high volume of assessments. In general there was a tendency to use the same assessments year on year with little updating or variation. The development of the new HN Framework which is more prescriptive with regard to assessment and assessment conditions, and the provision of exemplar materials will all assist to overcome some of the shortcomings prevalent in the assessment process in relation to the Units scrutinised by the team.

Evidence of candidate performance

In general candidate performance demonstrated that adherence to standards and level of demand as being appropriate.

Assessment decisions

Overall the standard of assessment decisions in 2005 seemed appropriate. Decisions made on candidate performance were accurate, consistent, fair and valid. Written feedback was provided only in a minority of cases.

Comparing standards over time

Generally speaking, the standards between 2002 and 2005 were considered to be similar with the same assessments being used in 2002 and 2005. Much of the assessment was PC driven which is probably a reflection of the perspectives on assessment of the time. Both Units (but the Geography Unit in particular) and the assessment tasks and guidance were considered to be a bit out of date.

General comments

There are some important contextual factors that require to be taken into consideration. The Units which have been scrutinised have been delivered by centres for at least 10 years and are generally well embedded. However, the Units (particularly Geography) are quite dated. In addition, the requirements and the assessments for both Units also reflect views and expectations of assessments which are different to current practice.

Examples of 'good practice' identified were the practice of giving comprehensive feedback and the use of prompts/assessment answer booklets to aid the assessment process.

Despite the out-dated Units, most centres were clearly supporting the development of a geographical perspective in relation to the Geography Unit, as well as developing an understanding of the importance of systematic data collection in the Social Sciences.

Conclusions

In general the observations of the team can be summarised as follows:

- ◆ the assessment instruments were mostly set at the appropriate level
- ◆ there was a tendency not to be explicit about the conditions of assessment or pass requirements
- ◆ opportunities for integrating assessments were not fully exploited
- ◆ assessment decisions were accurate, consistent, fair and valid, across centres, and in 2002 and 2005
- ◆ the Units are dated and the assessment instruments and assessment decisions to some extent reflect this

Recommendations

SQA should:

- ◆ encourage centres to move to adopt the new qualification framework as soon as possible. This is more precise about assessment instruments, conditions of assessment, etc

Centres should:

- ◆ continue the good practice of adhering to the standards for the Unit
- ◆ provide students with clear information on Units, assessments and conditions of assessments and achievement
- ◆ provide more written feedback to candidates