



**Higher National Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2016
Social Sciences**

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in Higher National Qualifications in this subject.

Higher National units

FM66 34 Social Science: Research and Methodology

F1BS 34 Research and Methodology

FM0J 35 Social Science: Research Issues

General comments

All the evidence and paperwork required for verification was usually produced by the centres. Some centres did not always fully appreciate the need for the qualifications verifier to see actual physical evidence of meeting minutes, etc.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Centres as a matter of course have master folders for each unit being verified which contain up-to-date unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplars of questions and marking guidelines.

Evidence requirements

Evidence requirements were met, in the main. A number of minor details in relation to checklists, remediation word limit (100 word/outcome rule), etc were evident, but nothing so serious as to detract from confirming that national standards are being applied.

Administration of assessments

Most centres chose to have their assessments prior verified so there were no real problems on the verification visit. It is sensible to submit both the assessment and the re-assessment for each unit. With the Research and Methodology units it often requires a lot of ingenuity to produce questions for the re-assessment of outcomes 1 and 2 that are dissimilar to those in the original assessment.

Some centres were making use of multiple choice assessments and this is likely to become more common as such questions become more widely available.

It is good to see evidence of centres using the three-stage verification process: prior, during and post-assessment.

General feedback

Materials presented for verification met the national standard.

Feedback given to candidates was generally good and candidates welcomed that fact. Some candidates struggle with the mathematical elements of the Research and Methodology units but with support they can be encouraged to achieve.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ It is interesting to see examples of innovative questions and the use of multiple choice questions.
- ◆ In one centre the wording of questions for outcomes 1 and 2, particularly the resit paper, allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge while also shaping their work towards graded unit 1 requirements. This was a very effective use of assessment to embed added value.
- ◆ One centre used the creation of a 'FAQ about Research Issues' leaflet as an effective way of assessing this unit.

Specific areas for improvement

Sometimes it can be difficult to see what the candidates' answers are to the initial assessment in relation to later remediation and/or re-assessment. The candidates' work should be clearly laid out separately so, if appropriate, the various stages and the candidates' progress can be seen and tracked.

Higher National graded units

Titles/levels of HN graded units verified:

FM67 34 Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1

FM68 35 Social Sciences: Graded Unit 2

FM6A 35 Social Sciences: Graded Unit 3

General comments

Almost all centres have a clear understanding of what is required. Where there are minor deficiencies, it is usually as a result of inexperience on the part of the centre or a member of staff which is not picked up in internal verification.

It is strongly recommended that **all** graded unit assessments are prior verified. It is important that centres submit the assessment and re-assessment in their entirety along with the respective marking guidelines based on the exemplars.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

All centres were using the correct version of the graded unit specifications and assessment instruments met the evidence criteria. All centres were using exemplar materials as a model for the graded unit exams.

Evidence requirements

Through the prior verification process and central verification, it is evident that centres are familiar with the requirements of the graded unit exams. Visits confirm a correct understanding of the graded unit project assessment.

Administration of assessments

The questions posed in the graded unit exams were appropriate to meet the evidence requirements of the respective units.

The graded unit project topics were changed from the previous year, as is appropriate. The materials produced in centres met the requirements.

General feedback

Most assessments were created imaginatively and were in line with SQA standards.

Candidates attempted the assessments at an appropriate time in the academic session.

Areas of good practice

Graded Units 1 and 3

- ◆ Knowledge and Understanding (KU) and Evaluation and Conclusion (EC) marks were shown on the student scripts for some subjects.
- ◆ Evidence of cross-marking and internal verification represents good practice.
- ◆ Good written, constructive feedback was given on candidates' work.
- ◆ Thorough internal verification was seen that included support for the assessor at each stage and a separate meeting for borderline grade candidates. Although this should be standard practice, the underlying ethos was of support for staff and learners rather than bureaucracy needs. This was naturally undertaken in line with SQA standards.

Graded Unit 2

- ◆ Use of a poster for the evaluating stage allows candidates to explain more fully their evaluation points. It also allows a different form of assessing in preparation for tutorials at university. Some were very imaginatively constructed, demonstrating academic poster skills.

Specific areas for improvement

- ◆ The marking guidelines for each question should be subdivided under two headings, namely, 'Knowledge and Understanding' and 'Evaluation and Conclusion'. While the KU heading is correctly used, all sorts of variants were used instead of the correct EC heading.
- ◆ Sometimes the division of marks between KU and EC were incorrect and occasionally marks were allocated to 'credit any other suitable point' which should not be done.
- ◆ When an assessment has been prior verified, it must be used in that exact form. One centre this year changed two of the questions after prior verification and in another centre a marking scheme for one question was used that was not the approved scheme.
- ◆ Some mark allocations on scripts could be clearer in terms of where KU and EC marks are being allocated.
- ◆ Better care is needed to ensure that allocated marks tally with the overall mark — there was evidence of addition errors.
- ◆ In centres, care should be taken to ensure that the marking of all subjects follows a specific pattern so there is parity across subjects. Individual differences in application of marking schemes can make one subject easier to achieve marks in than another. It is essential that centre teams look at this as part of their internal verification processes.