



**Higher National Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2016
Applied Sciences: Graded Unit 1**

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

Higher National graded units

H91W 34 Applied Sciences: Graded Unit 1

DJ89 34 Applied Sciences: Graded Unit 1

General comments

Five external verification visits were carried out by the team this session.

The sector is currently in a period of transition from the old to the new HNC/D group awards. Of the five centres visited, four centres had implemented the new HNC Applied Sciences: Graded Unit 1 (H91W 34). The fifth centre was planning to do so for session 2016–17.

Centres had a clear understanding of the standards required and the visits were successful. Candidate submissions were generally of a high or very high standard.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The current unit specifications were in use. Instruments of assessment were valid and reliable, and fully compliant with the requirements of the unit specification.

Understanding Standards materials have now been published for the new Applied Sciences: Graded Unit 1 (H91W 34), Applied Sciences: Graded Unit 2 (H91X 35), Applied Biological Sciences: Graded Unit 2 (H91Y 35) and Applied Chemical Sciences: Graded Unit 2 (H92L 35). These documents can be accessed from SQA's Understanding Standards website ([SQA Understanding Standards](#)). Centres are strongly advised to follow the standards as specified in these documents.

The assessment judgments by assessors and internal verifiers were confirmed by external verification to be accurate.

Administration of assessments

All centres visited had clear, effective and routinely applied policies regarding the administration of assessments. All assessment conditions complied with the requirements of the relevant unit specification.

Centres had good policy and practice on ensuring the authenticity of candidate submissions, and routinely applied anti-plagiarism software to candidate submissions. One centre also deployed 'mini vivas' to further assure authenticity.

All centres complied with SQA policies and procedures regarding retention of evidence, security of storage and dissemination of external quality control reports.

General feedback

Delivery of the Applied Sciences: Graded Unit 1 at the centres visited was appropriate and candidates gave consistently positive feedback on the support received. Grading of candidates was equitable, valid, reliable and fair.

External verifiers were in agreement with all of the assessment and internal verification decisions made.

Overall, this was a successful year for all centres involved in the external verification exercise.

There were no visits for the Applied Sciences: Graded Unit 2 this session. Centres are however referred to the recently published Understanding Standards materials which provide guidance across Applied Sciences: Graded Unit 2 (H91X 35), Applied Biological Sciences: Graded Unit 2 (H91Y 35) and Applied Chemical Sciences: Graded Unit 2 (H92L 35), including information on the suitability of projects. Centres should ensure that candidates undertake projects which are commensurate with a double credit unit at SCQF level 8.

Areas of good practice

External verifiers' comments in relation to good practice are included below:

- ◆ The academic standing of the sources of information used by candidates was very good, with heavy use of peer-reviewed scientific journals.
- ◆ Most of the candidates had a pre-printed logbook where they kept weekly entries on the progress of projects. These entries contained sections where tutors could give feedback and sign off.
- ◆ Extensive guidance to centre staff was contained in the policy, with a range of assessment and internal verification advice and definitions.
- ◆ If centre staff had any doubt regarding the authenticity of submitted work, they would give the candidate in question a 'mini viva'. This form of questioning would establish if the submitted work was the candidate's own work.

Specific areas for improvement

The following recommendations were made on visit reports:

- ◆ To ensure the validity of final grade criteria, centre staff should consider holding a formal grade award meeting to collectively discuss the grade awarded to a candidate against the final grade criteria. Decisions taken and grades awarded should then be formally recorded.
- ◆ Assessors should annotate projects with numbers relating to each grading criterion. This will make it obvious to the candidate, internal verifier and external verifier where marks have been allocated.
- ◆ Centres must ensure that the internal verifier refers to the published Understanding Standards materials for the unit while verifying work.

- ◆ Centre staff should discuss and agree on the penalties to be applied to candidates who submit late, fail a section, need remediation, or plagiarise. Some assessors stated that decisions on penalties to be applied were made on a case-by-case basis. In order to maintain a fair approach, rules should be standardised for all candidates.