



**Higher National Qualifications  
Internal Assessment Report 2014  
Applied Sciences**

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

# Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

Applied Sciences Graded Unit 1 (DJ89 34)

Applied Sciences Graded Unit 2 (DW8J 35)

## General comments

Four external verification visits were carried out by the team this academic session, with three of the visits relating to Applied Sciences Graded Unit 1 (DJ89 34) and one of the visits relating to Applied Sciences Graded Unit 2 (DW8J 35). Two visits were conducted under the traditional system and two were conducted under SQA's new approach to quality assurance. Centres that were verified had a clear understanding of the standards required, the visits were successful and no major issues were identified. Student 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 fully compliant with the requirements of the Unit specification; assessment instruments were valid and reliable. All of the assessment specifications had been internally verified; SQA-approved assessment specifications and marking schemes were in use throughout.

## Evidence Requirements

In general, the External Verifiers were in complete agreement with the marks and grades awarded to learners at all centres sampled.

The reluctance of learners to take on any analysis and interpretation in the development section of the project had been noted previously as a key concern, and this has been largely overcome this academic session at those centres that were verified.

## Administration of assessments

All assessments verified were administered in line with the requirements of the Unit specification and SQA guidance. Centres generally had a very good understanding of the levels required for the grading of learners. Double-marking of scripts was universally applied — this is good practice and is to be commended. Records of learner achievement were retained as required, and internal verification procedures were available in course documentation — master folders — at all centres sampled. These procedures were robust, effective and routinely applied. Generally, internal course teams met on a regular basis to monitor learner progress and undertake standardisation activities.

There was a good understanding by both assessors and Internal Verifiers of the standards expected. Generally, final grades were discussed by the assessor and the verifier and a consensus reached. Discretion was exercised appropriately and all centres operated a fair and equitable appeals procedure.

## **General feedback**

Centres have gained considerable experience delivering the graded Units, year on year, and this has given rise to a concomitant improvement in quality and learner experience/achievement.

## **Areas of good practice**

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

- ◆ New members of staff were well supported in the delivery and assessment of the Unit by experienced staff members.
- ◆ Good use was made of the Presentation Skills in Science Unit (DG70 34). Learners used this Unit to outline their project topic — this is subject to peer and staff feedback and it has assisted learners in shaping their final project scope.
- ◆ Evidence was presented of internal verification across the learner range, and there was evidence of support through the internal verification process for a new member of staff who was delivering the Unit for the first time.
- ◆ An appeal was resolved through the internal verification process, with two staff members looking at the grounds for the appeal and the manner in which it was resolved.
- ◆ The allocation of the final grade was based on the application of the SQA criteria for the Unit. Each learner's script clearly indicated the justification of the final grade.
- ◆ There was an excellent selection of project scenarios available to learners.
- ◆ There was a very broad range of analytical skills evident in learner submissions with an ideal balance between practical work and analysis being achieved in the delivery of the Unit.
- ◆ Projects submitted were of a high or very high standard.
- ◆ Guidance provided to students completing the Unit was excellent and learners were left in no doubt as to what was required of them.
- ◆ There is a professional and effective approach to Unit delivery. The team undertakes regular course team meetings and employs ongoing, informal contact in order to standardise marking and grading decisions.
- ◆ There is an excellent team approach to course delivery evidenced by regular standardisation meetings and informal contact.
- ◆ There is evidence of excellent learner support, eg guidelines, records of tutorial and feedback. All learners had fair access to assessment. Clear deadlines for submission of the project components had been notified to learners well in advance, and if any difficulties arose then there were processes in place to ensure fair treatment of the learner's personal situation.

- ◆ There is evidence of excellent communication between staff involved in the delivery and all student groups. This has resulted in standardisation of assessment decisions. A well-developed marking grid for the three project stages was evident for all learners. This included a section on learner feedback, justifying the mark allocations for each section of the project.
- ◆ Overall, a quality course led by a dedicated team, ideal for all who aspire to a career in the scientific sector whether by moving directly to employment or to degree-level courses.

### **Specific areas for improvement**

The External Verifiers' reports were almost entirely devoid of negative comments. Only one specific area for improvement was identified:

- ◆ Ensure appropriate use is made of anti-plagiarism software.