



**Higher National Qualifications  
Internal Assessment Report 2013  
Business**

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

# Higher National Units

## General comments

The centres selected and visited this year are facing significant changes with the implementation of regionalisation. Staffing profiles are changing as staff leave, systems are being altered and merged, management structures are being overhauled and functional areas are coming together. The impact of these changes will be felt well into the future. The continuing development and rolling implementation of SQA's new approach to quality assurance (QA) has added a further element of change, and centres affected have adapted well to evidencing the criteria in the new system.

Some centres offered a mix of the old and new Business Units, but with the exception of some Units that have not been revised, the majority of centres have moved over to the new frameworks and the new Units. Some of the larger centres had significant numbers of candidates often across different groups and awards. Centres, in the main, passed successfully through visiting verification during which there was evidence of a good understanding of the requirements of the Units.

## Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The general success at external verification events supports the view that assessors and centres are familiar with the Unit specifications, the SQA-produced assessment exemplars and the associated standards. It is important that staff continue to refer back to the Unit specifications to maintain that knowledge.

The centres have in the main used the SQA-produced assessment exemplars. The staff involved in the delivery of the Business Units appropriately judged the requirements and standard required. During the visits, staff were comfortable with the delivery of the Units and the methods of assessment. It is particularly important during the current period of change when staffing has been affected that centres continue to ensure that all staff, especially new staff, are given suitable information, guidance and support.

## Evidence Requirements

Centres and staff had a clear understanding of the Evidence Requirements in each of the Units that were externally verified but, again, it is important to stress the need for staff to refer to the Unit specifications on a regular basis. Where staff or centres are new it can be difficult to judge the standard required but many staff involved are very experienced and this was invaluable. It cannot be taken for granted that this level of experience will be available in the future as the impact of the changes in the sector fully takes effect. External verification identified positive

feedback from learners about the level of support and guidance that centres and staff provide.

### **Administration of assessments**

All centres are reported as organising and assessing candidates in accordance with the requirements set out in the Unit specifications. One instance was recorded where a candidate group fell behind with a Unit, and it took considerable effort to retrieve the situation but this was successful. The nature of some Units where an assessment is conducted over the duration of the delivery period require particular close scrutiny to avoid candidates delaying starting the work.

Centres need to maintain a check to ensure the authenticity of project work and oral checks may help in this area. Some centres used plagiarism software as part of the authentication process, and this is becoming increasingly common for other Units where out-of-class work is now more common. Provided that plagiarism checkers such as Turnitin are set in an appropriate manner this can be an excellent means of reducing the instances of plagiarism. The continuing security of assessments is of continuing importance in safeguarding the integrity of the Units and the awards.

### **General feedback**

The verification reports and discussions with candidates indicate that there were excellent examples of feedback being given to candidates from assessors. This is particularly valuable in helping candidates identify and understand their strengths and weaknesses. Some centres were cited for the level of feedback and guidance that they provided candidates. Feedback can be time consuming, but good feedback is very valuable and centres are encouraged to continue with their efforts on this important means of communication.

### **Areas of good practice**

The current format of the HNC/D Business and the associated standards are well understood by centres and staff, who were familiar with the requirements and standards of the Business Units. Previous good practice has often become embedded and is, in effect, now standard practice. In the future, it is likely that more innovative ideas and exceptional examples will be highlighted as good practice. That does not mean to say that where normal practice is implemented in a particularly good manner that it will be discounted. Feedback is normal practice but staff were cited in some verification reports as giving excellent feedback beyond what might be expected, which is valuable for candidates, and yet, can be very time consuming. The use of Turnitin is increasingly being used to check the authenticity/similarity of candidate evidence and if used in appropriate manner this is certainly a tool that can help staff and candidates alike. There was an increased use of materials being placed online in various VLEs and again this assists the learners and helps to widen access.

### **Specific areas for improvement**

Whilst using a recognised form of referencing and citations are not a mandatory requirement, their adoption and use when appropriate, is an area where encouragement needs to be maintained for work undertaken out of class. The increased numbers of candidates progressing into degree courses makes this particularly pertinent.

Often areas for improvement are more about maintaining current efforts. For example, continuing to make checks on plagiarism is, in effect, a never ending task which requires to be undertaken each year. The security of all assessments again continues to be of prime importance and continued vigilance and effort is essential from all centres and staff. Overall, the centres and staff are doing an excellent job and the enthusiasm of staff was noted as a key characteristic identified during verification visits.