



**Higher National Qualifications  
Internal Assessment Report 2014  
Business Management**

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

Many of the centres selected and visited have, again this year, continued to face significant changes as a result of regionalisation. There have been changes to staffing profiles and managerial structures have been altered. College systems have been overhauled whilst others are still undergoing integration and the effects of regionalisation are likely to be felt for some time to come. Where staffing has been affected, it is particularly important that centres continue to ensure that all staff are given suitable information, guidance and support.

Some centres have reverted to the mainstream approach to external verification whilst others have adopted the new approach to quality assurance (NAQA). Most centres have had a qualification verification visit based upon their legacy institutional centre rather than as a new single centre. Some of the larger centres have significant numbers of candidates, often across different groups and awards, and as centres are recognised in their new form this will be a trend that will become commonplace. Centres, in the main, passed successfully through visiting external/qualification verification for Units in group 254 and on the whole there was evidence of a good understanding of the requirements and standards associated with these Units.

## Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The assessors and centres are largely familiar with the Unit specifications, the exemplars and the associated standards. Whilst there is a good degree of familiarity, it is vital that staff continue to refer back to the Unit specifications to maintain that knowledge. Specifications and exemplars/ASPs do change on a regular basis and one has been withdrawn from use by SQA this year as a result of a breach in security. Centres have, in the main, used the SQA assessment exemplars/ASPs and the consequence of a breach in security just reinforces the need for the utmost care to be maintained with regard to the security of SQA assessments.

## Evidence Requirements

Centres and staff had a clear understanding of the Evidence Requirements in each of the Units that were externally verified. Whilst most outcomes of the visit were very positive, care needs to be taken that all the requirements of each Unit are met and that the standard has been correctly judged. In addition, centres need to be clear in conveying through feedback that the standard has been met. 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, and whether new or not, internal verification is a vehicle that can and should be used for developmental purposes as well as recording that appropriate checks

have taken place. On the whole, internal verification is moving in the right direction but further work needs to be undertaken by some centres in this area. External verification identified positive feedback from learners about the level of support and guidance that centres and staff provide.

### **Administration of assessments**

All centres undergoing external/qualification verification were reported as organising and assessing candidates in accordance with the requirements set out in the Unit specifications. One issue was raised over a lack of feedback showing whether candidates had met the standards or not and it is important that this is clearly recorded and is justified.

Centres need to maintain a check to ensure the authenticity of work and oral checks may help in this area. Quite a number of centres used plagiarism software as part of the authentication/originality process and some also used it as a tool to impose deadlines. It also provided feedback through it as well. Provided that checkers such as Turnitin are set in an appropriate manner, they can be an excellent tool. The continuing security of assessments is of ongoing importance in safeguarding the integrity of the Units and the awards.

### **General feedback**

The verification reports indicated that delivery of the Units was successful and that centres and their staff are used to the Units. Discussions with learners were very positive. They could see the relevance of the Units and they appreciated the experience at their centres.

### **Areas of good practice**

The examples of good practice are possibly more varied than in the past due to the broader range of criteria in the new approach to quality assurance than in the mainstream approach. The use of plagiarism software (outlined above) was commented upon at several centres and is an interesting and welcome development. Other centres were cited for encouraging a high standard of referencing, whilst for others it was the excellent use of their internal verification process to improve delivery and assessment.

Again the quality of feedback was identified in some centres, with one centre linking feedback in one Unit to the topics in the Business Graded Unit 1. Another centre showed good practice through the use of a guidance folder for each learner containing records of meetings with advice and guidance on how each learner could improve. Again there was an increased use of materials being placed online in various VLEs and this is becoming more sophisticated as time goes on.

### **Specific areas for improvement**

The key areas are security and originality. Keeping assessments secure and ensuring that learners' work is authentic are ongoing matters rather than

necessarily 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.

Overall, centres and staff are doing a good job during a period of significant change and this is to be congratulated.