



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

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

Centres have faced significant changes this academic session with regionalisation progressing at a pace. Staffing profiles are being transformed, systems are being integrated, management structures are being radically overhauled and functional areas are merging. The impact 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. Those centres concerned with the new approach to QA have adapted well to evidencing the criteria in the new system.

Some centres offered a mix of the old and new Economics Units, but the majority have moved fully to delivery of the Units in the new frameworks. The larger centres had significant numbers of candidates often across different groups and several awards. Centres 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 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, although there were some that were adapted to suit local needs. The staff involved in the delivery of the Economics Units appropriately judged the requirements and standard required. During the visits, staff were comfortable with the delivery of the Units, although there were discussions about the relative content of some of the Units. 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 most centres have delivered the newer or previous versions of the Units and this experience was invaluable. It cannot be taken for granted that this level of experience will be available in the future as the impact of the mergers fully takes effect. External verification identified positive feedback from learners about the level of support and guidance that centres provide.

## **Administration of assessments**

All centres are reported as organising and assessing candidates in accordance with the requirements set out in the Unit specifications. Centres need to maintain a check to ensure the authenticity of project work and oral checks may help in this area. Some centres used Turnitin 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 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 Economics Units. Good practice has to some extent become a victim of itself as in many cases examples have become embedded and are 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. For example, feedback is normal practice, but staff were often cited in the verification reports as giving excellent feedback beyond what might be expected, which is very valuable for candidates, and 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 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.