



Higher National and Vocational Qualifications Internal Assessment Report 2016 Environment

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

Higher National Units

General comments

Three external verification visits, to three separate centres, took place this academic year. The following units were sampled:

F432 34 Countryside Recreation and Access
F2G8 34 Environmental Awareness
DN38 34 Sustainable Development

Generally provision was of a high or very high quality and all visits resulted in a 'significant strengths' outcome. The external verifier was impressed by how well the centres had taken up this curriculum area that was new to them. It is heartening to see that centres are incorporating 'sustainability' units into mainstream HN programmes.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The units were delivered, assessed and verified entirely in line with the requirements of the unit specifications. Assessors and verifiers had an excellent understanding of unit requirements.

Evidence requirements

Assessments were valid, reliable, practicable, equitable, and fair. The external verifier was in agreement with all of the assessment decisions made. Generally, the centres had a very good grasp of the evidence requirements for the units verified.

Administration of assessments

Overall, internal verification was robust and effective. Documented records were maintained of the internal assessment and verification procedures. Candidate evidence was retained and stored in accordance with SQA requirements.

General feedback

Candidate feedback was both timely and effective. Access to assessment was fair and equitable and there were no obvious barriers to achievement.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ Annual use of pre-delivery checklist
- ◆ Provision of master folder for the external verifier, containing relevant policies and procedures
- ◆ Involvement of the assessor in the feedback session with an external verifier
- ◆ Good use of plagiarism-checking software

- ◆ Use of the 'virtual farm' to support delivery of all units in the programme, including F2G8 34

Specific areas for improvement

No specific areas for improvement were identified in this category this year.

Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

F4BS 35 Countryside Management Graded Unit 3

F6VA 35 Environmental Management and Sustainability Graded Unit 3

General comments

A single postal/central external verification event was carried out this academic year. Two units were scrutinised — both examinations. A minor issue was identified with one of the units.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The assessment instruments had been prior verified by SQA and were valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair. It was suggested that the centre move to replace the closed-book examinations with a double credit, project-based graded unit bringing these awards into line with other HND awards in this area, eg Applied Science and Environmental Science. The centre concerned was in general agreement with this recommendation

Evidence requirements

An issue was identified in relation to F6VA 35 Environmental Management and Sustainability. Generally, marking was clear and concise and the external verifier was in complete agreement with 9 out of 10 of the assessment/grading decisions. However, in the case of one student, the marks for Paper 2 had been incorrectly totalled as 62 instead of 76 — and the error had been missed at internal verification. This made a difference between the student receiving a grade B and a grade A. An action point was raised and the centre re-totalled the marks correctly and adjusted the result to a grade A.

Evidence of candidates' work for the Countryside Management unit was accurately judged irrespective of delivering campus. The external verifier agreed with all of the assessment/grading decisions.

These were closed-book, invigilated, examinations — there were no issues relating to authenticity.

Administration of assessments

Evidence was presented in a clear and unambiguous manner and was easily cross-referenced. Evidence was retained in accordance with SQA requirements

General feedback

Given that these were invigilated closed-book examinations the need for candidate feedback was limited except in the case of a 'fail' grade.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ The centre chose to submit evidence from three campuses that were delivering the graded units — this assists with standardisation across the centre as a whole

Specific areas for improvement

Other than the issue outlined above, no specific areas for improvement were identified in this category this year.

SVQ awards

General comments

A single verification visit was made in relation to the SVQ 2 Environmental Conservation: H466 04; H45M 04; H45L 04; H46P 04; H46T 04; HA0D 04. This resulted in a 'significant strengths' outcome and no issues were raised.

Two development visits were carried out in relation to Environmental Conservation and Estate Maintenance (Rural Skills). There was also a successful approval visit for the same awards.

There is increasing interest in the PDA in Sustainable Business Practice with several large centres, delivering or preparing to deliver. Two unofficial development visits were carried out this year.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The centre had developed instruments of assessment and exemplification materials in accordance with centre priorities and candidate needs. These were valid and reliable and allowed candidates to demonstrate competence in the NOS for the award. Centre staff are experienced, proficient and fully familiar with the relevant National Occupational Standards.

Evidence requirements

The assessor and verifier sampled during the external verification visit are qualified in assessment and/or verification — and their work was fully compliant with the requirements of the Assessment Strategy. Assessment/verification decisions were clearly recorded on centre documentation throughout.

No issues were identified and the overall quality of candidate submissions were of a high or very high quality. All assessment decisions were accurately and consistently made across all candidates against SQA requirements and the requirements of the unit specifications.

Administration of assessments

There was satisfactory evidence that internal verification was taking place on completed candidate submissions. This was robust and effective. The centre takes steps to review (internally verify) course materials on a regular basis. Again this is good practice.

General feedback

Candidate support was of a high or very high standard throughout.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ Good internal quality management systems
- ◆ Good clear portfolio construction

Specific areas for improvement

It was observed that the course delivery team might wish to attend the annual LANTRA assessor/verifier forum.

It was remarked that two years was a long time to complete the SVQ. Prompt signing-off of completed units would assist with this.