**Higher National Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2015**

Learning and Development

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

Higher National Units

Units verified during session 2014–15:

GG87 49 PDA Teaching Practice in Scotland's Colleges (2 Units at SCQF level 9)

H416 36 Plan and Prepare the Learner Experience
H417 36 Learning and Teaching

General comments

This is the first time the two Units from the PDA: Teaching Practice in Scotland's Colleges have been delivered by centres and externally verified. These Units focus on the valuable skills of being able to plan and deliver well thought-out, interesting and engaging learning and teaching sessions to meet learning objectives. The other skill developed is to produce new learning materials and be able to evaluate the resources that will best support and progress learning.

The centres have demonstrated that they are fulfilling the need within the national standards to develop fundamental teaching skills and to embed creative, contextualised and inclusive learning approaches within the curriculum.

Three external verification visits took place at three different colleges during session 2014–15. All three visits resulted in an overall outcome rating of Significant Strengths. Overall, five areas of good practice were identified and two main recommendations were made to the centres.

Only one centre was in their second session of delivery of this new award using staff with many years of experience in this subject area. The other two centres were in their first session of delivery of this PDA using new course team staff. This will have been the first time that the assessment teams for this new award have been externally verified under SQA's quality assurance criteria within all three centres.

They all seemed to have been well prepared for the visit to their respective centres by having sufficient evidence available for the qualification verifier to review. The evidence presented showed good team work and regular reviews and standardisation of their practice against the national standards.

The centres were also continuing to make changes and adaptations to their practice in order to improve their way forward with this award, to also encourage change in this sector and to provide inspiration and motivation for future candidates.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

All visited centres were using the most up-to-date Unit specifications and instruments of assessment for the PDA.

Within each centre, the assessors continue to have informal discussions as well as formal meetings to ensure that their assessment judgements remain competent and consistent with each other and the standards.

Instruments of assessment and assessment evidence requirements were clearly understood by the tutors and used appropriately, thus ensuring assessments were equitable and fair for all candidates.

Sampling of candidate evidence available showed consistent judging of attainment across the three centres.

One new assessor felt she had received effective support and training in her new role through the use of a shared team portal which allowed her to view other assessor-marked scripts and judge level and standards. She also shadowed more experienced assessors when they were assessing observed candidate lessons.

Evidence Requirements

Through the use of the SQA assessment support packs and the current Unit specifications, combined with appropriate assessment opportunities, all three centres' assessment teams for the PDA were able to demonstrate that they understood how to apply the evidence requirements for the Units. Their marking guidelines were also standardised against the evidence requirements. Good consistent standardisation activities, both formal and informal, added weight to the robustness of their practice.

Administration of assessments

Effective course and assessment review with input from candidates is being carried out, showing a willingness to embrace transparency and collaboration. Centres are using either a VLE such as Moodle or a shared drive to store support and assessment materials and encourage candidates to be independent learners. The candidates all stressed how supportive and encouraging their tutors had been.

The candidates in all centres were greatly encouraged by the good feedback they received from their tutors.

Assessment and internal verification is being undertaken well in the centres and the level of assessment decisions is in line with SCQF level 9.

General feedback

These are some of the comments made by the qualification verifier about the general practice within the centres visited:

♦ Effective support and training for new assessors was in evidence for the delivery of this PDA

♦ Effective promotion of positive course team ethos as well as demonstration of good practice by the tutors

♦ Equitable and fair access to online instruments of assessment and assessment guidelines and checklists

♦ For internal assessment and verification and records/data management, robust internal verification process, effective course reviews, ownership by all staff

♦ Promotion of professional reflection and innovation in learning and teaching

♦ Use of creative and diverse assessment including the use of professional discussion evidence

The centres could enhance their practice by incorporating more use of professional discussion with their candidates. This would give their candidates opportunities to describe their teaching practice in greater detail.

A Curriculum Manager in one centre commented that the new revised award was now more streamlined and contextualised well to candidate work practice.

A member of staff in another centre thought this new PDA was an improvement on the older version.

Areas of good practice

Over the three centres, the following features were highlighted as points of good practice:

♦ The blended delivery approach in one centre which incorporates online resources with a visually effective structure within Moodle, alongside scheduled 2 hour class contact sessions and an accessible mentor support — this delivery team also incorporates the use of a 'flipped' classroom model to encourage their candidates to create active, engaging learning and teaching materials and approaches after experiencing these themselves in action

♦ The valuable use of external speakers and specialist college staff — candidates' comments on this type of support event were positive, stating how much they benefitted from these opportunities to develop their teaching practice through hearing about different perspectives on learning and teaching

♦ Access to online course structure/materials prior to the start of the course proved invaluable to the candidates and promoted an effective induction experience

♦ The use of a diagnostic tool — such as College Development Network's Professional Standards Profiler, which establishes prior learning/experience and delivers personalised learning

The candidates in more than one centre have mentioned that the introduction to lots of tools and ideas to choose from to support their planning and delivery of their teaching sessions was so helpful to them. This and the encouragement to share practice with other colleagues demonstrated the excellent course ethos that is prevailing in the centres.

Specific areas for improvement

Last year's report brought up the issue of using, maintaining and disseminating a decision log to record all assessment decisions mentioned within narrative/actions of standardisation meeting minutes. This would allow staff quick, easy reference to group assessment decisions, not actions: for example, word count for particular assessments — will the group insist on the exact word count or allow a 10% ± word count margin? This does not seem to have been adopted as yet by the centres visited this session and encouragement to do so for next session is made here.

Candidates have stated they would welcome peer observation and critique, thus expanding the sharing of practice which they have found so valuable. Centres might like to consider if this might be possible to enhance their PDA delivery content.

Candidates from all three centres commented on the oral and written feedback they had been given throughout the course but the Qualifications Verifier felt that more meaningful written feedback should be consistently given and this would enhance their practice even more.

For reference:
Websites with further information on topics covered in this report:

Flipped classroom
http://educationnext.org/the-flipped-classroom
http://www.knewton.com/flipped-classroom-2/

College Development Network's Professional Standards Profiler
http://professionallearning.collegedevelopmentnetwork.ac.uk/course/format/eportfolio/result.php?p=1&c=11&comp=1

College Development Network's Webinar Series: Delivery of PDA Teaching Practice in Scotland's Colleges
http://www.collegedevelopmentnetwork.ac.uk/events/pda-teaching-practice-in-scotlands-colleges-webinar-series