



**Higher National Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2016
Further Education**

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 2015–16

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

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

G8GC 49 PDA in Inclusiveness: Facilitating Strategies to Support Learners with Additional Needs (Two units at SCQF level 9)

- FW57 36 Promoting Inclusiveness for Learners with Additional Support Needs
- FW58 36 Facilitate Inclusive Learning Strategies

General comments

PDA Teaching Practice in Scotland's Colleges

This session, ten centres were visited and both units were externally verified in all centres. The information gathered from these centres will be very useful for the verification group to discuss at its next standardisation meeting. Over the past few years this has not been possible because of the small number of centres that were visited.

Although both these units are based on the Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland Colleges, refreshed in 2012, they are still relevant today for both new lecturers and existing lecturers. The centres visited are demonstrating that the purpose of each of these units is very well understood and is put into practice by their teams to encourage the development of fundamental teaching skills.

A frequent comment made by the candidates who were interviewed was:

'[This is] a well-structured programme that has influenced my practice.'

Most of the centres were in their first year of delivering these units and were aware of the need to reflect on their delivery and to enhance it — for example, by making better use of their VLE and contact opportunities with their candidates. This maps well with the professional standards particularly in the way new technology (such as VLEs) is used to enhance sharing of practice, independent learning and reflective thinking.

PDA in Inclusiveness: Facilitating Strategies to Support Learners with Additional Needs

Only one centre was visited for this PDA and this was the first time they had delivered the two units. The centre demonstrated, through the evidence they produced during the visit, that they were very familiar with the national CPD professional standards as it relates to inclusiveness. The small, experienced

delivery team work closely together to provide a stimulating learning experience for their candidates.

Candidate's comment:

'Pre-course arrangements were supportive and useful — including resources, delivery and assessment schedules.'

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 both PDAs. There was evidence available that the centres carry out regular reviews of assessment materials (in line with quality criterion 2.4 in the visit reports). They were using SQA's assessment support packs and where modifications had taken place these were subject to internal verification. One centre submitted assessments where old checklists had been used to record the assessments. These did not cover all the knowledge and skills required in the new unit, but the centre quickly rectified this.

Evidence requirements

Visit reports do not suggest that there are any difficulties with the interpretation of the evidence requirements for the units in both PDAs. All evidence is generated in the candidates' workplace.

In the assessment support packs for the PDA Teaching Practice units, the evidence requirements are clearly reiterated and, where appropriate, there are templates for forms that can be used — for example, the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan, Learner Profile and Lesson Plans. These packs and the templates support the candidates to gather evidence for the units and give marking guidelines for the tutors. Nearly all the centres have made use of these templates and occasionally have made appropriate additions to the templates.

Administration of assessments

The centres visited all use a VLE such as Moodle, or a shared drive to store learning and assessment materials, and encourage candidates to be independent learners. This gives the candidates valuable experience which they can then use with their learners.

One centre in particular, for the PDA Teaching Practice, has adopted an integrated/holistic approach to the delivery of the two units with a focus on the observations. They require the candidates to fix dates for the first observation when they have just started the programme. The centre has found that this adjustment to the order of the assessments has meant that the candidates are then focused on producing all the relevant assessment evidence for the observation date, rather than in isolation, and they can then cross-reference the evidence between the two units.

For the PDA in Inclusiveness, all candidates have fair and equitable access to secure online instruments of assessment.

All the centres have robust internal verification systems with standardised paperwork, and usually a quality procedure to back it up. The centres all have procedures for standardisation of judgements through formal and informal meetings of the delivery teams.

General feedback

These are a sample of the comments made by the qualification verifiers about the general practice within the centres visited:

PDA Teaching Practice

'All [candidates] agreed that they had benefited from the timely feedback they had received throughout the PDA and that they always had a clear idea of their progress.'

'[There is] regular feedback and support through e-mails.'

'There is a good deal of detail in the feedback from one of the internal verifiers and the comments reflect a consistent approach throughout the session.'

'They [the candidates] confirmed that this [support and feedback] had been very effective and that they felt that their own particular development needs had been taken into consideration.'

PDA in Inclusiveness

'Effective use of virtual classrooms, forums and chat rooms. Use of guest presenters who also informed course review and development.'

'Extensive pre-course communication/resources to identify and support candidates' development needs.'

'Effective use of recorded professional dialogue using criteria-referenced check sheets used by both candidate and assessor.'

'Extensive feedback from the assessor to PDA candidates is a demonstration of good practice and role modelling.'

Comments from candidates

Twenty-eight candidates were interviewed across the 11 centres. Here is some of their feedback:

- ◆ Most of the candidates indicated that they had made changes to their practice as a result of the PDA.
- ◆ All the candidates interviewed were very positive about the level of support, feedback and encouragement.

- ◆ Some stated they had mirrored some of the activities in their own classes (such as involving the learners in the delivery of lessons).
- ◆ Seeing how the theories related to their practice was interesting and they would be keen to take further teaching qualifications on completion of the PDA.
- ◆ A candidate emphasised how helpful it was to have a chance to ‘try out’ new pedagogic techniques as part of the weekly sessions.

Access to assessment has been shown to be equitable and fair across all the centres, with the timing of assessments set to spread out over the course of the programme.

Other area of significance

Some centres queried the low word count — that it is too low and does not enable candidates to fully describe their findings for a topic. The evidence requirements set the word count for the assessment. This is to focus the candidate’s writing on the topic to a reasonable length in practice for assessments during the Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE).

Areas of good practice

- ◆ Regular face-to-face sessions with follow-up summary via e-mail.
- ◆ Use of ‘Learning journey review and forward planner’ to record student progress and aims/goals for future activity.
- ◆ Use of ‘integrated assessment’ across the two PDA units using resources developed/presented by candidates in H416 as part of H417.

Specific areas for improvement

Centres should consider delivering the two units in the PDA Teaching Practice holistically as the assessments for each unit require an overlap of teaching practice evidence — for example, Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan, Group Profile, Lesson Plans.

‘Lecturers will also evaluate and reflect on the impact of their practice and their professional development on learning’, from Professional Standards for Scotland’s Lecturers, March 2012. Centres should consider encouraging candidates to maintain an online ‘reflective journal’ (eg within Moodle) and use this to help identify and examine aspects of their learning.

Assessors might consider using electronic feedback (for example, using the ‘add-comment’ facility in Word) when providing assessment feedback. This allows for targeted feedback at a particular point in the assessment evidence rather than just feedback at the end. In some cases further feedback could be offered to candidates, for example, oral electronic feedback.

Version control is required on candidates' submissions to easily confirm what is marked first and what is re-marking.

Centres could consider developing a team decision log to capture all course review and verification/standardisation decisions — with access for all team members.

Some centres are looking to enhance their delivery and content of the PDA in Teaching Practice through considering:

- ◆ extending their use of Turnitin (possibly making use of the 'rubric' feature)
- ◆ alternative forms of teaching observation, including video recording of lessons
- ◆ peer observation of lessons