



**Higher National Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2015
Personal Social Development**

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

Higher National Units

DE3R 34 Personal Development Planning
F870 34 Developing the Individual within a Team
DV0M 34 Work Experience
DH21 34 Working within a Project Team
D7HJ 34 Employment Experience 1
D77H 34 Employment Experience 2

General comments

External visiting verification activity continues to re-affirm year on year that centres do have a very clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards in the delivery of HN Personal and Social Development Units.

HN visiting verification reports confirmed that national standards were being maintained. However, centres are as a matter of routine keen to seek advice on the delivery and implementation of HN Units during External Verifiers' visits. This is partly due to changes in staffing as a result of college mergers across the FE sector and as centres continue to implement HN Units across a variety of Group Awards. Staff may not be PSD subject specialists and are keen to speak about and interpret the standards.

Centres are generally well prepared and understand the external verification reporting, based on criteria referencing to the analysis of systems and procedures and outcome statements based on the level of risk associated with visit reports.

HN external sampling was undertaken in:

- ◆ further education colleges
- ◆ international verification in China (covered in a separate IAR report for China)

Verification activity was generally very positive indeed and reflected a good level of standards across a number of centres. Systems and procedures are well established and are very robust and fit for purpose. Centres have master folders which contain generic information relating to the external verification visit and some have even gone as far as documenting evidence directly in relation to the reporting criteria. This is very often accompanied by a short discussion and background information about the centre before the verification activity begins and helps to provide that all-important overview. Centres are generally very well organised and this includes providing detailed information relating to the external quality assurance criteria for example:

- ◆ Staff qualifications documentation and records of CPD
- ◆ Candidate recruitment, induction policy and procedures
- ◆ Internal support systems including individual learning plans

- ◆ Assessment folios, marking guidelines and assessment frameworks
- ◆ Learning and teaching materials including course frameworks and assessment schedules
- ◆ Internal quality assurance documentation, eg policy and procedures; minutes of meetings, standardisation events, sampling and IV records
- ◆ Records and action points relating to qualification requirements and enquiries

HN Unit delivery is well established within centres at home and overseas and standards are generally very good. Centres are becoming more adept at asking for information from SQA and this is evident in the increasing requests for development visits and in the prior verification of centre-devised assessment instruments.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Assessors are familiar with exemplification materials and instruments of assessment but less so with Unit specifications. There seems to be a misapprehension that the exemplar assessment materials are the only instruments that the centre needs to be aware of. Time and again External Verifiers continue to explain to centres the importance of looking at the national standards as specified in the Unit specification.

Assessment evidence is well co-ordinated with centres providing master packs which contain Unit specifications, exemplification materials, instruments of assessment, learning and teaching resources, assessment schedules and internal verification checklists.

Assessors seem to feel secure in the knowledge that they are using SQA HN exemplification assessment materials. However, assessors need to be more confident in their ability to adapt the assessment exemplification materials to suit their own style of delivery.

The external verification team continue to highlight how SQA supports the prior verification of centre-devised assessment instruments. It is important that centres understand how they can submit their own assessment instruments which can support the internal assessment delivery of HN Units. This will help centres to move away from SQA exemplification materials especially where there is a real opportunity to create more current assessment instruments to support in-house programme delivery.

Assessment approaches tend to be delivered on a Unit by Unit basis and there is a need to consider integrated assessment approaches across Units.

Evidence Requirements

Centres do have a very good understanding of HN Unit Evidence Requirements and continue year on year to deliver a range of successful HN programmes and contextualised HN Unit delivery:

SQA exemplification materials were predominantly in use and further exemplification of the national standards was evident in the use of detailed course assessment/assignments and excellent course design. HN programmes are well structured and provide a wealth of opportunities to generate folio evidence, eg project/assignments/placements/simulated work environments/team building and group work activities.

Centres were fully compliant with external verification visits especially in the preparation and lead up to the activity itself. External Verifiers were able to view master teaching packs, assessment and internal verification documentation, learning and teaching resource materials and documented minutes of meetings.

Centres continue to seek advice and support on HN Unit Evidence Requirements and development issues are routinely discussed during the visit itself. This provides reassurance and clarification regarding Unit delivery.

External Verifiers continue to provide feedback about the need to build the necessary depth of evidence into folio work using analysis and justification of findings. Centres need to consider the following questions which can be used to address where there is a shortfall: Is the evidence sufficient? Are there any gaps and what steps could be taken to address this? Is the evidence at the right level? Is the judgement across various occurrences standardised? Does the marking guideline support consistent judgement of the evidence requirements?

Standardisation activities need to be more fully documented in relation to assessment decisions. More needs to be done in relation to internal sampling and cross-sampling to standardise the assessment decisions taken by assessors across Units within the centre.

Assessors need to ensure that they provide an interim results matrix for the partial completion of HN Units and that this is made available when external verification is carried out.

External verification highlighted the need for assessors themselves to be more consistent in the completion of Unit assessment checklists and in providing comments to justify the assessment decisions taken. These were inconsistent across the sample and there is clearly a need within centres to improve the standardisation of assessment procedures. In some instances the internal verifier had simply ticked the box with no reasoning for the assessment judgement made. This is not acceptable and puts the internal quality assurance system at risk within the centre.

Administration of assessments

HN Unit assessments tend to be folio-based evidence gathering which follows a PSD cycle of self-evaluation, action planning reviewing and evaluation.

It is important at HN level in the delivery of assessments/assignments to focus on analysis and justification providing a good depth of evidence at the various levels.

Candidates must not be allowed to use downloaded questionnaires without providing an analysis of the results, eg learning styles, Belbin team roles, SWOT analysis and Tuckman group work theory.

HN programmes do tend to be well organised and are very well established in centres where assessment schedules provide the detailed framework of the lesson plans and the effective delivery of HN Units.

HN national frameworks determine the level of HN mandatory and optional Units that can be delivered. Centres do comply with the HN framework principles and guidelines and assessments are at the appropriate level.

The administration of HN assessment delivery varies greatly across and within centres especially where the delivery of the same Unit is sampled across a range of subject areas, eg childcare, business administration, sport and recreation, hospitality. Good use is made of VLE approaches especially Moodle where HN candidates can access assignment tasks and information through an internal secure system. Assessment is stored securely using individual candidate username and password protection systems and procedures. In other instances, assessment is mainly paper based.

Assessor judgements across the sample were consistent, fair, valid and reliable. It was evident throughout external sampling that assessor advice, guidance, support and direct feedback contributed greatly to the successful achievements/outcomes.

Internal verification systems are generally robust and fit for purpose. However, despite well-established internal quality assurance systems and procedures, assessors need to record assessment feedback and support comments more consistently on Unit checklists. In addition, internal verifiers need to be more robust with their sampling and ensure that action points are fully documented and followed up before the final assessment decisions are resulted.

Assessment instruments consisted mainly of SQA exemplification. Centres are familiar with the standards and continue to make good use of assessment checklists.

Master teaching packs provided a wealth of learning and teaching resource materials and held records of internal verification meetings. This process can be enhanced if documentation relating to internal verification is fully robust and relevant action points, standardisation activities and internal sampling is more rigorous.

General feedback

Candidates clearly had a very positive learning experience and were fully supported throughout the HN assessment process (formative and summative).

Candidates were highly motivated in the pursuit of their own personal development objectives and HN studies helped to promote increased confidence in the attainment of individual goals.

Assessor feedback was consistent and supportive throughout the assessment process. External verification was consistently praiseworthy of the high standards of folio evidence and the development of underpinning knowledge and understanding.

There is an over-reliance in the use of SQA exemplification materials especially where these have been in use for some time. Centres are encouraged to submit their own internal assessment instruments for prior verification.

Centres had robust systems in place to assess candidate Core Skills and prior learning experiences. Induction programmes were highly relevant and aimed at supporting pre-entry and access to appropriate HN study programmes.

Areas of good practice

DE3R 34 Personal Development Planning

Good practice was evident in centres where there was depth of analysis and justification when using the 7-step cycle approach. The combined use of a VLE approach on Moodle allowed candidates to generate evidence using appropriate templates and investigative research which underpinned assessment approaches.

F870 34 Developing the Individual within a Team

Good practice was evident in the assessment of knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to effective team participation skills. Candidates need to be able to apply the knowledge, skills and understanding of effective team participation in a practical task, eg project or case study approach.

Centres are using a holistic assessment approach to assess all the outcomes and to fully explore the consequences of a poor application of consultation, communication and interaction skills.

DV0M 34 Work Experience

The delivery of Work Experience (DV0M 34) continues to reveal a wide range of contextualised work experience placements and high levels of learner satisfaction with positive outcomes in relation to obtaining and securing permanent employment in related contexts, eg hospitality/business administration/sport/ horticulture/ and visual arts. Good practice was evident in candidate folio evidence, eg work placement logs, placement arrangements, employment legislation, CVs reviews and evaluations.

DH21 34 Working within a Project Team

Working within a Project Team continues to excel in the use of a wide range of project proposals and for the direct subject relevance to candidates, who clearly enjoy planning, implementing and evaluating the project tasks. The contextualisation of the reading task ensures the relevance of the tasks associated with the embedded Core Skill of Communication within the Unit delivery.

D7H J 34 Employment Experience 1 and D77H 34 Employment Experience 2

Employment Experience delivery was exemplary. Hairdressing and beauty curriculum teams continue to excel in the delivery of the Employment Experience Units. External Verifiers reported seeing portfolios with a wealth of information regarding the identified team task in a work setting. There was a real attempt to consider tasks which would prove useful to the candidate and the organisation when implemented, eg customer card record system, stock control and marketing initiatives.

Employment Experience 1 and 2 exemplify a range of good practice through the delivery of Moodle utilising commercial beauty salons, work placement opportunities and themed fundraising events.

Specific areas for improvement

Assessors need to ensure that they refer to the national standards as detailed in HN Unit specifications. There is a tendency to use the national exemplars without referring to the Unit specification.

The SQA exemplar for Personal Development Planning (DE3R 34) identifies a scoring system and is one example of how PDP can be assessed. Some centres like the scoring system whilst others do not. This is not a mandatory requirement and centres can choose to mark the folio using an internal scoring system or simply mark as a pass or fail.

The delivery of Personal Development Planning (DE3R 34) continues to make good use of the seven step cycle. Whilst PDP aims to develop personal, educational and career goals as a structured and supported process, centres need to adopt an analytical approach. PDP in some centres was an exhaustive process which impacted adversely on the HN study programme itself and became over-burdensome.

HN Unit assessment evidence must be differentiated across SCQF levels 6, 7 and 8. Candidates must provide detailed analysis and justification throughout the levels. It is not good enough to download skills questionnaires and provide no analysis and justification of the findings.

Careful consideration should be given to the use of a team project and/or case study approach to the delivery of the HN Unit: Developing the Individual within a Team (F870 34).

Centres must provide evidence of assessment judgements prior to external verification. This is just as relevant mid-cycle as it is at the end of the Unit delivery. An SQA External Verifier must be able to see a partially completed result matrix and/or completed matrix during the external sampling.