



**Higher National Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2016
Personal and 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
DVOM 34 Work Experience
D7H J 34 Employment Experience 1
D77H 34 Employment Experience 2
F786Y 35 Developing the Individual within a Team

General comments

HN visiting verification reports confirmed that centres do have a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards. Centres continue to meet the requirements of the national standards in HN units and external verifiers' reports highlighted the good standards and the effectiveness of internal quality assurance systems. The recent merger of further education colleges has contributed to the sharing of good practice. High standards are being maintained and candidate feedback was very positive about the PSD experience.

Centres were well organised for external visiting verification events and external verifiers' reports indicated that centre systems and procedures and HN unit delivery fully met the requirements of the national standards and that the level of risk associated with this was very low.

Verification reports were extremely praiseworthy of centres, assessors and internal verifiers for the high standards in HN course provision and subject-based units in: Personal Development Planning; Work Experience, Developing the Individual within a Team, and Employment Experience.

Internal quality assurance systems and procedures are well established within centres. HN units are delivered as part of a high quality learning experience in HN course frameworks. Learning and teaching materials provide a rich breadth of evidence and underpin the delivery of robust assessment instruments using SQA exemplification materials.

External verifiers continue to highlight how centres are well prepared and provide easily accessible documentation for the EV visit which includes:

- ◆ staff qualifications documentation and records of CPD
- ◆ candidate recruitment, induction policy and procedures
- ◆ internal support systems including individual learning plans
- ◆ assessment frameworks/assessment evidence, marking guidelines and result matrices
- ◆ 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 internal verification records
- ◆ internal decision records and action points relating to HN qualification requirements and external communications with SQA and other relevant funding/awarding bodies

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Assessors are familiar with the unit specifications, assessment instruments and exemplification materials and evidence was consistently of a high standard.

Master teaching packs were made available during visits complete with current unit specifications, exemplification materials, instruments of assessment, learning and teaching resources, assessment schedules, and internal verification checklists.

Assessors are very familiar with exemplification materials and instruments of assessment and are confident in their use. Some exemplar materials are a bit dated and centres need to be encouraged and supported to produce their own versions. Assessors like to have security in the knowledge of using SQA HN exemplification assessment materials. However, assessors need to be more confident and adapt the assessment exemplification materials to suit their own style of delivery.

SQA continues to support the prior verification of centre-devised assessment instruments. Centres 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 up to date assessment instruments to support in-house programme delivery.

HN assessment approaches tend to be delivered on a unit-by-unit basis but more consideration is being given to a contextualised delivery within course programmes.

Evidence requirements

Verification activity in 2015–16 re-affirmed that centres continue to have a very good understanding of HN unit evidence requirements and are very successful in the delivery of HN programmes.

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

SQA exemplification materials were in use and it was clear that centres are comfortable with the interpretation of HN standards. Further exemplification of the national standards was evident using 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.

SQA continues to provide support in the form of development visits to centres and to provide information as centres seek advice by e-mail and phone calls.

In centres where the evidence met the standard, internal quality assurance systems and procedures are proactive. Centres need to support new assessors and to be reflective in their judgement of candidate evidence. The following questions can be used as prompts:

- ◆ 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?
- ◆ Should I ask for an SQA development visit as we are still unsure?
(This costs £100 but is well worth it as the external verifier will attend the centre and discuss how you can move things forward with assessment evidence and internal verification.)

Standardisation activities are being recorded but assessors and internal verifiers need to provide detailed responses and explain to candidates where the shortfall is and how to remediate this. More frequent internal sampling and cross-sampling should be undertaken to standardise the assessment decisions taken by assessors across units and 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 revealed that centres were consistent in the judgement of candidate evidence and that internal verification supported this. There were excellent examples of comprehensive induction programmes, on-going support for candidates with scheduled progress reviews, and recorded guidance sessions.

Administration of assessments

Many centres that deliver HN programmes have been long established and they are examples of good practice in the scheduled delivery of HN assessment frameworks.

The administration of assessments is a credit to centres. Schedules are provided and the candidate is aware of the cycle of assessment activity. This usually forms part of the induction process where information is provided for HN candidates on the delivery of the programme itself so they know exactly what to expect. Every year colleges review and evaluate their course programme design and adapt the programme to reflect the needs of the candidate.

Assessment is structured according to the assessment instrument, eg closed/ open book/ project/ assignments/ practical. Many centres are beginning to utilise electronic secure systems, eg Moodle, as it suits the candidate and can be more flexible, eg allowing candidates to upload assignments when they are not in college.

Internal assessment procedures are stringent and adhere to the centres' internal verification policies and procedures. An external verifier praised one college system this year as it was so well organised and a model of good practice.

HN programmes are well organised and well established in centres where assessment schedules and week-to-week lesson plans provide an excellent framework for the delivery of HN units.

HN 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 does vary across and within centres especially where the delivery of the same unit is sampled across a range of subject areas. Centres need to encourage and support subject specialists to share their model of delivery and best practice.

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.

General feedback

Assessor feedback was consistent and supportive throughout the assessment process. External verification was consistently praiseworthy of the high standards of candidate evidence and the internal systems and procedures which are available to support candidates, eg candidate induction, pre-entry interviews, course guidance reviews, and candidate feedback evaluations.

The use of a front page candidate feedback sheet for HN unit assessment evidence provides an excellent tool for the assessor to provide direct candidate feedback on assignments and folio tasks. This should be signed and dated by the assessor.

Candidates interviewed during external verification activity events clearly had a very positive learning experience and were fully supported throughout the HN assessment process.

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.

Access to assessment is generally by means of a secure password-protected internal system for both assessors and candidates. Centres are well aware of the criteria relating to any malpractice or candidate plagiarism and the procedures for this. Some centres make good use of Turnitin but not everyone has access to this facility.

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

In general, good practice was highlighted in external reports regarding centre systems and procedures. External verifiers were very impressed with the good practice in relation to:

- ◆ candidate pre-entry interviews and identified support issues
- ◆ scheduled one-to-one initial and on-going reviews of candidate progress
- ◆ the effective delivery of SQA assessment instruments
- ◆ the reliable and consistent judgement of candidate evidence
- ◆ proactive internal quality assurance systems and procedures
- ◆ the dissemination of information following external quality assurance activities and the recording of appropriate developments and action planning

DE3R 34 Personal Development Planning

Good practice was evident in centres where there was a well co-ordinated approach to the systematic evidencing of PDP using the 7-step cycle approach. This was further exemplified in the use of Moodle which allowed candidates to generate folio evidence using appropriate templates and assignment tasks. One excellent example of good practice was revealed in the way one centre had taken the three stages of the assessment approach and had assigned all the assessment tasks to each stage. The folio pages were cross-referenced to this which made the marking and the external verification sampling much easier to navigate.

DVOM 34 Work Experience

The delivery of Work Experience (DVOM 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. Good practice was evident in candidate folio evidence, eg work placement logs, placement arrangements, employment legislation, CV reviews, and evaluations.

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

Employment Experience delivery continues to be successful with high standards being achieved in work placements especially in-house commercially run hairdressing and beauty training salons. Project tasks were relevant to the current work of the salon and fitted into organised events which were taking place as part of the commercial set up. Evidence was linked to specific events which were organised by the candidates.

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Folio evidence was described by the verifier as '*outstanding*'. Candidate folios revealed '*a high standard of work both in their write-up and in their evidence*'.

Specific areas for improvement

Specific areas for improvement relate to the findings in the external verification reporting activities and to specific criteria within the report. Compliance levels were generally high and indicated a sufficient level of confidence in systems, procedures and verification activity. In a small number of centres there was reason to indicate that there was insufficient evidence and some non-compliance but this was very minimal.

- ◆ Assessor feedback was 'patchy' and even in centres where a high standard of good practice was indicated feedback was inconsistent. This is evident where an assessor feedback states '*Well done!*' which really does not help to inform the process or the judgement of candidate evidence.
- ◆ Some assessors were making good use of assessment checklists and feedback whilst others were providing minimal evidence. This is clearly both a standardisation and internal verification issue which needs to be addressed and should be picked up as a follow-up action point from the findings indicated in the external verifier report.
- ◆ Report criterion 2.8 states the following: '*There must be evidence of initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environment(s); assessment procedures, equipment, learning and assessment materials.*' It is important that centres understand the need to provide evidence for this which provides good coverage of the whole criteria, eg initial and on-going reviews of learning and assessment materials and procedures can be evidenced through minutes of meetings, teaching pack checklists, standardisation activities, and agreed assessment procedures signed and dated for the current activity. The initial and on-going reviews of the assessment environments and equipment might be documented in health and safety and risk assessment procedures.
- ◆ Report criterion 4.3 states '*Evidence of candidates' work must be consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements*' — there were one or two examples in international verification activity where there was inconsistent marking of assessment evidence. This arises mainly due to poor and

inconsistent assessor feedback, a shortfall in candidate evidence and inconsistent feedback from internal verification.

- ◆ Centres must provide evidence of assessment judgements for all candidates. It is not acceptable to indicate that there is no work when the unit has been running for one, two or three semesters. The candidate should be marked as withdrawn or a re-assessment period indicated. 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 sample.
- ◆ External verifiers continue to highlight that the SQA exemplar for Personal Development Planning (DE3R 34) identifies a scoring system. The exemplar is just *one example* of how PDP can be assessed and 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 7-step cycle. Whilst PDP aims to develop personal, educational and career goals as a structured and supported process, centres need to adopt a more detailed analytical approach to the development of the candidate portfolio. This means that assessors need to ensure that candidates at this level are using effective critical thinking, planning and organising, and reviewing and evaluating skills in the write-up of the portfolio.