



# **Higher National and Vocational Qualifications Internal Assessment Report 2015 Learning and Development**

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

### HN Assessor/Verifier Units

The HN Assessor and IV Units (H290 35 and H291 35) remain suitable for those who are assessing or internally verifying in contexts other than the candidates' workplace, eg in classrooms and training rooms.

The Knowledge and Skills for these Units can be found on SQA's Learning and Development website. The Evidence Requirements and Support Notes can be found on SQA's secure site.

The purpose of these Units is generally well understood as the competences contained within them are reiterated in one form or another in the internal assessment and verification procedures operated by SQA-approved centres.

### Training and Development Units

The Planning and Delivering Learning Session to Groups (PDLSTG) Unit is targeted at those who are seeking their first 'off-the-job trainer' qualification.

This Unit is based on a traditional and well known 'train the trainer' model that has been in existence for a number of years. The delivery of the Unit is flexible and a number of centres opt to deliver it over three to four consecutive days, making it a practical option for employers and candidates with limited time availability. As such, the L&D centres that come forward to deliver it usually already have a sound understanding of the principles and practices of the Unit, having had previous exposure to it as candidates or trainers.

The Unit is built on a three-stage structure covering planning, delivery and evaluation. Each stage has a distinct marking scheme with competence statements, making the required standard clear for assessors and candidates.

The marker reports, based on candidate observations, are generally well completed by assessors as are the accompanying products (session plans and evaluations).

## Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

External verification reports do not suggest that there are any difficulties with the interpretation of the Evidence Requirements for the HN Assessor/Verifier Units. Feedback gathered from centres offering the HN Assessor/Verifier Units generally shows that less development time is required for those undertaking the Assessor qualification. This may possibly be because many assessor-candidates are already assessing before they embark on their award whereas internal verifier-candidates, often selected based on their assessor competence, in many cases have to learn the IV role before they engage with the assessment process, impacting on achievement time.

In response to the need to make more internal verification guidance available to centres, SQA has very recently produced an Internal Verification Toolkit which offers centres, internal verifiers and IV-candidates comprehensive guidance and supports the competences in the HN IV Unit very well.

The *Planning and Delivering Learning Sessions to Groups* Unit includes a structured marking scheme with an in-built scoring system covering all Outcomes. This assessment documentation provided by SQA, is widely used by all centres and evaluation of its use confirms it is used consistently.

External verification reports confirm there is an emerging trend for candidates to be given the option of being assessed when delivering sessions to groups of learners in simulated environments or being assessed delivering to groups in real learning situations. Both approaches are acceptable and in line with Unit requirements.

### **Evidence Requirements**

The Evidence Requirements for the HN Assessor/Verifier Units relate to a complete section of SQA's Quality Assurance Criteria which is applied each time an external verification visit to a centre takes place. The Evidence Requirements are, therefore, being discussed with centre assessors and internal verifiers on a frequent basis which helps promote a working understanding of the Unit requirements.

L&D external verification reports confirm that centres generally have no difficulties in interpreting or gathering suitable evidence for these Units.

SQA now provides Evidence Trackers for these Units on the secure website to facilitate the cross-referencing of Knowledge and Evidence Requirements.

### **Administration of assessments**

Approved centres tend to manage the administration of the HN Assessor/Verifier Units fairly well as assessment and verification is an integral part of an approved centre's operation and there is an abundance of naturally occurring evidence available based on each centre operating their assessment and internal verification procedures.

### **General feedback**

Assessors/Internal verifier-candidates are generally satisfied with their experience of being assessed for the Assessor/Internal Verifier Units.

At times, centres are unsure of which assessor/internal verifier qualifications they should offer candidates. The most important starting point is to first of all establish the type of assessment environment that the potential assessor/verifier-candidate intends to use to gather their evidence. To ensure access to assessment for the HN assessor/verifier-candidates, they must be able to assess candidates in non-workplace environments eg in class/training room

environments. SQA provides comprehensive guidance to centres in relation to selecting the most appropriate assessor and verifier qualifications in the publication entitled: *Choosing Appropriate Assessor and Verifier Qualifications*.

SQA continues to offer newly inducted external verifiers with the opportunity to achieve *Externally Verify the Assessment Process*. This Unit confirms the candidate-verifier has the skills and knowledge to operate as a qualified external verifier with SQA. The internal assessment and verification of this Unit is contracted out to an SQA-approved centre and is subject to external verification.

## **Areas of good practice**

Some centres taking candidates through the assessor/internal verifier qualifications link their learning and reference materials to relevant SQA websites. This provides candidates with access to the most up-to-date information on assessment and internal verification ensuring attainment is based on currency.

A number of centres carry out a self-evaluation of procedures in relation to SQA's Quality Assurance Criteria on a cyclical basis. This has many advantages for approved centres, but this practice is especially beneficial for internal verifier-candidates to adopt (where they have the opportunity to become involved) as it makes the connection between centre procedures, which all assessor and internal verifiers are duty bound to follow, and awarding body requirements.

# SVQ awards

## General comments

This report relates to SVQS in Learning and Development and the single Unit Professional Development Awards (PDAs).

The current Learning and Development (L&D) National Occupational Standards (NOS), encompass thirteen standards. These individual standards were used to develop two SVQs in Learning and Development:

GA2C 24 SVQ Level 4 Learning and Development

GA29 23 SVQ Level 3 Learning and Development

and four single Unit stand-alone Professional Development Awards:

FD40 04 Assess Workplace Competence Using Direct Methods

FD41 04 Assess Workplace Competence Using Direct and Indirect Methods

FD43 04 Internally Monitor and Maintain the Quality of Workplace Assessment

FD44 04 Externally Monitor and Maintain the Quality of Workplace Assessment

The SVQs and PDAs have been in place for nearly five years. Centres have welcomed the changes; namely the reduction of performance criteria and the plain English used in all of the Units.

Overall, queries concerning the interpretation of Unit specifications are minimal. A number of centres have felt that the disappearance of single-training method Units eg those devoted to coaching, instruction demonstration, etc has restricted take-up. In response, SQA has developed a workplace coaching Group Award.

## Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The purpose of the SVQ Units is broadly understood.

There are now exemplification materials in the form of support packs on SQA's secure site for all Learning and Development SVQ Units. The materials have been well received by centres. The packs, which can be used as session support materials by lecturers/trainers, can also be used as self-study materials in their own right.

SQA's Professional Development Workshops (PDWs) for the Assessor/Internal Verifier Units are still proving very popular with centres and run every month throughout the year. Centres can book these workshops online.

Both PDWs have been updated this year to include a stronger CPD component and the final part of the workshop now covers SQA's Quality Assurance Criteria and its relationship with the functions of assessment and internal verification.

Centres attending these workshops are provided with exemplification materials.

## **Evidence Requirements**

Centres are generally familiar with the evidence required in the Learning and Development SVQ Units (including the workplace assessor and verifier Units).

The most common queries from centres relate to ensuring the assessment environment meets the L&D Assessment Strategy requirements. However, these types of queries have been on the decline specifically in relation to the Assessor/Verifier Units since the release of the SQA publication: *Choosing Appropriate Assessor and Verifier Qualifications*, which is available on a number of SQA websites.

An analysis of external verification activities reveal that there is a small number of centres each year assessing candidates in relation to the Workplace Assessor/Internal Verifier Units where the assessment should really be in relation to the non-workplace Assessor/Internal Verifier Units. Should centres have any queries concerning offering the most appropriate assessor/verifier qualification(s), we recommend they refer to the SQA document above on SQA's Learning and Development subject web pages.

## **Administration of assessments**

Almost all centres were found to be assessing SVQs/SVQ Units at the appropriate level. Those centres that use initial assessment as part of their assessment procedures reduce the possibility of placing candidates on an inappropriate level of SVQ or starting the assessment process too early for particular Units.

There have been a small number of occasions where candidates have been placed on a qualification that is either not at an appropriate level or where the context that the candidate works in prohibits achievement of part or all of the qualification. An example of this being where a candidate has been placed on an SVQ Level 4 based on the fact that they have relevant delivery experience (a number of Units in Level 4 relate to delivery), but the mandatory requirement to plan and develop programmes has been overlooked.

These instances occur very rarely but sometimes come about because less attention is paid to the matching of mandatory and optional Units to job roles, which can sometimes be skipped-over when candidates wish to progress to the next SVQ level.

We advise centres to look closely at Unit specifications prior to assessment as they include important information about the type of performance evidence required. An example being in *Internally Monitor and Maintain the Quality of Workplace Assessment (FD43 04)*, Element 3, where actual records of assessor monitoring is required — sometimes IV-candidates provide a hypothetical account of how they would monitor assessors which does not meet the Evidence Requirements.

An explanation for this could be the lack of centre systems (therefore, no natural opportunities for monitoring assessors exist) or monitoring is just taken to be signing-off of completed Units. Both of these situations could be resolved by more closely studying the Evidence Requirements ahead of assessment.

This is particularly important for L&D SVQ Units where the Evidence Requirements pertaining to Units sit on SQA's secure site and the Performance Criteria and Knowledge sit on SQA's general website.

### **General feedback**

Candidates appear to have no significant difficulties with interpreting the requirements of SVQ Units. They generally find the support materials on SQA's secure site to be of real benefit.

The majority of candidates felt they had fair access to assessment. The quality of recording candidate contact and progress has seen steady improvement from centres over time.

Where candidates have re-qualified to the L&D9/L&D11 standard, some have mentioned that the current Assessor/Verifier Units now have more of a practice focus rather than a portfolio focus which they feel give the current qualifications more relevance.

SQA continues to offer newly inducted external verifiers with the opportunity to achieve *Externally Monitor and Maintain the Quality of Workplace Assessment*. This Unit confirms the candidate-verifier has the skills and knowledge to operate as a qualified external verifier with SQA. The internal assessment and verification of this Unit is contracted out to an SQA-approved centre and is subject to external verification.

### **Areas of good practice**

Centres are starting to use organisational procedures such as their appraisal systems to plan and prioritise CPD activity. This kind of arrangement helps provide evidence that centre staff are working in line with Unit L&D10 which is an Assessment Strategy requirement.

A number of centres are using their standardisation meetings as a way of identifying, prioritising, planning and undertaking generic CPD for the complete assessor/verifier team. This does not preclude individual CPD being undertaken/maintained (this can be an Assessment Strategy requirement). It does, however, have the advantage of ensuring that important CPD is being planned for and undertaken.

Standardisation logs are being more consistently used either in conjunction with conventional standardisation meetings or in their own right as and when the need for recording an agreed approach to assessment arises.

## **Specific areas for improvement**

A number of e-portfolios only include the Performance Criteria and Knowledge Requirements for each of the Units they contain. This means that the Evidence Requirements need to either be loaded by the centre or the e-portfolio provider. It does not matter who does the loading, the most important point is that it happens before assessment takes place, so that the evidence generated by the candidate is capable of being referenced to all three parts of the Unit, namely the Performance Criteria, Knowledge and Evidence Requirements. E-portfolios that are not capable of clearly referencing all three parts will fall short of meeting SQA Quality Assurance Criteria requirements.

Assessors and verifiers assessing and verifying the L&D SVQs and Assessor/Verifier Units are required by the L&D Assessment Strategy to provide CPD evidence in line with Unit L&D10 requirements. At times, centres only provide standard CPD evidence which falls short of this Assessment Strategy requirement. There are guidance documents and templates on SQA's secure site that can assist centres with this.