



**Higher National Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2014
Sociology**

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

Higher National Units

General comments

Units verified included:

Sociology A (FK8R 34 and DP3R 34)

Sociology B (FK8T 34 and DP3T 34)

Sociology C (FK8V 35) and

Sociology D (FK8P 35)

From visiting verification undertaken at centres, there is evidence that centres have a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards. Internal verification is well documented (pre-, ongoing and post-delivery). There was also good evidence of standardisation within centres, which provided good support to new assessors. Centres make good use of assessment exemplar packs, and there is evidence of centre-devised alternative assessments. All centres visited had master teaching packs in place (paper or electronic) and these were kept up to date by pack holders / internal verifiers.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

There was evidence from centres that assessors were using correct Unit specifications and instruments of assessment were appropriate.

Not all centres submitted instruments of assessment for prior verification and where this was the case it was advised they should do so.

Some centres did not make alternative closed-book assessments available.

Evidence Requirements

The centres visited had a clear understanding of the evidence requirements for the Units sampled. However, the balance between appropriately preparing students for progression to university and not over-assessing is a fine one and centres should be careful not to ask for evidence that goes beyond the evidence requirements of the Unit.

Administration of assessments

Where assessments were at the appropriate level there was evidence of good quality assurance procedures. For instance, instruments of assessment that had been prior verified by SQA and an overall internal verification process that was well managed and administered with available records of meetings for verification and standardisation between assessors.

With college mergers taking place across the sector the issue of standardisation across campuses has come into focus with the need to ensure rigorous internal verification and standardisation across campuses as merged colleges become single centres.

Although internal verification process appeared to be well managed in centres, very few assessors or internal verifiers held HN Assessor or Internal Verification qualifications.

General feedback

Overall, centres provided feedback to all candidates.

Where feedback to candidates was good, comments were included on a section of a student checklist that identified where evidence requirements were met. Comments were found to be generally positive, supportive and clear where advice on improving candidate performance was specified.

Candidate feedback is generally very good and students appear to be getting a positive experience from studying these Sociology Units. In some centres where assessment is more 'traditional', candidates were asked how they felt about the opportunity for more diverse assessment methods and the response was receptive and positive. In centres where a diverse assessment was used, eg academic posters, students enjoyed the task and were conscious of new skills being developed.

There appeared to be no barriers to assessment and centres made adjustments and additional requirements for assessment where they were needed.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ Good, organised administration and record keeping of the whole assessment process — prior, during and post-assessment
- ◆ The use of Turnitin software providing candidates with supportive feedback and/or checking the authenticity of candidates' work and the development of appropriate referencing conventions
- ◆ Documented feedback after internal verification to allow action points to be identified for future assessments
- ◆ Effective personalisation and choice around use of theories and studies
- ◆ Diverse and dynamic teaching approaches where candidates are encouraged to develop and demonstrate a range of skills
- ◆ The effective use of social media to support the learning and assessment process and to engage learners
- ◆ The effective use of an overall class assessment report focusing on common themes for improvement

Specific areas for improvement

Many centres still seem reluctant to embrace the opportunity for a more engaging and diverse approach to assessment under the new framework. Planning of diverse assessment could be managed if assessment was planned at the programme level and not in isolation of assessment across subjects and the programme.

In terms of fair access to assessment for younger candidates, this could be addressed during induction by ensuring learning support is put in place and maintained through the duration of the course with regular contact with the Learning Support area of the college.

Centres could be more proactive in providing opportunities for staff to acquire suitable qualifications that support the internal verification process.