



**Higher National and Vocational Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2016
Sport and Fitness**

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

HNC Fitness, Health and Exercise GH07 15

HND Fitness, Health and Exercise GH0F 16

General comments

Whilst centres delivering units within this verification group have been involved in the delivery of Higher National units and awards for a considerable period, this year has seen some significant changes in delivery patterns and standardisation methodology as a result of mergers. This has not been an easy transition, however in the majority of cases visits have identified that (merged) centres are adopting a common approach.

The HNC/D Fitness, Health and Exercise, which was revised for the session 2013–14, has now become firmly embedded in centre delivery patterns. Since the HN has become recognised for entry to the Register of Exercise Professionals, college delivery of the SVQ programme has seen a slight contraction at Levels 2 and 3. Many centres are now incorporating the PDA in Personal Training into their course portfolio. The majority of centres had a clear understanding of the national standard and maintain an effective and interactive working relationship with SQA and the QST for support where required.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

HNC/D: There have been minor revisions made to some units, and exemplars produced for two of the applied units in the HND year 2. Graded unit 2 has been subject to an overhaul in order to clarify the minimum evidence requirements and marking guidance. SQA continues to update centres as new or revised materials are produced. A small number of unit comment forms were submitted, all of which have been acted upon. Additionally, general discussion and feedback with centres (during qualification verifier visits, at best-practice events, and via e-mail/phone with the SEV) regarding the content and presentation of the units has continued to provide a positive forum for continual improvement, clarification, and review.

A number of centres have developed their own instruments of assessment, which in some instances have been prior verified by SQA. This is particularly important in the case of resit or second attempt papers: qualification verifier visits have identified a number of instances where centres were simply using the original paper for a resit — this has resulted in sanctions and holds on certification. Centres should note that it is required in some instances (generally, in the case of closed-book assessment) to produce alternative assessment materials for learners' further attempts. A well-attended development/best-practice day was run on this theme at the Optima Building in March 2016, and a number of centres have requested development visits along this theme. As in previous years, verifiers have commented that centre staff are not familiar with the arrangements

documentation for the awards, and increased recognition of the importance of this material would greatly aid effective assessment.

Evidence requirements

It is not always apparent when discussing unit assessments with staff that the importance of the evidence requirement statements is fully appreciated. This was touched on during the previously mentioned development/best-practice day, and has come up on multiple occasions during the programme of qualification verifier visits undertaken this session. Centres are reminded that where new staff are delivering material it is important that they are given an appropriate induction into assessment practice. In the merged college, there is a high likelihood that there will be two or more assessors delivering a unit, and it has been noted by qualification verifiers that assessments, expectations, and recording methodology for assessment are not always standardised. This will be critical in the next academic session where qualification verifier visits will look at material from multiple campuses of merged centres. Centres should therefore ensure that all staff are aware of the importance of understanding fully the evidence requirements (and interpreting those at the appropriate SCQF level).

Administration of assessments

During the programme of qualification verifier visits this session, it was apparent that most centres demonstrate good practice in their ongoing review of delivery patterns, course materials, resources, and assessment. Where previous visits have taken place, qualification verifiers have been able to observe documented dissemination of feedback to staff teams, along with appropriate action points. Where staff have attended SQA update events for this group award, materials (for example, those relating to the best-practice day highlighted above) have been used and developed effectively within centres. The internal verification processes observed in centres generally show effective use of pre-delivery checks and in-year verification: where this has been carried out there are rarely problems. In some instances the minutes of standardisation meetings and associated actions have been somewhat brief, correlating strongly with areas where qualification verifiers have had to impose sanctions. See also the comments above under 'evidence requirements'.

General feedback

Qualification verification reports from the past session indicate that centres are moving steadily towards a standardised approach to ensure that SQA requirements have been met. The revised report form gives clear guidance to centres on the critical aspects of the assessment process, and qualification verifiers have worked hard to ensure consistent and evaluative commentary. In the vast majority of cases, centre internal verification procedures had been applied appropriately, with judgement of learner evidence appropriate (though see also the comments above under 'evidence requirements', and below in the 'graded units' section). Problems were usually encountered where, as in previous years, standardisation was not carried out in consistent format. Where this was coupled with a less than comprehensive knowledge of the SCQF levels the resulting difficulties were magnified.

Where centres had taken the time to consider carefully the delivery pattern, it was evident that cross-referencing of assessments and increased contextualisation meant that the assessment load was effectively distributed. Feedback from assessors (and internal verifiers) covered a wide spectrum — best practice showed effective, evaluative feedback enabling learners to reflect and develop. Worst case scenarios showed a plethora of ticks (or crosses) with no comment other than a subjective ‘good’.

The use of marking guidance as shown in the exemplar materials is becoming more widespread, and centres should bear in mind that an effective marking guide aids standardisation. In recent years it has become apparent that marking guidance should contain clear competence statements (aligned to SCQF level) rather than simply sample answers, which are easy to misinterpret and difficult to write.

Centres once again were generally well prepared for visits, with a full range of learner work available, centre internal verification policy being effectively implemented, and enthusiastic staff.

Areas of good practice

Whilst it is always encouraging to see specific good practice identified, it should be noted that some centres had conspicuous gaps in the report. However, the following provides a summary of comments:

- ◆ The internal verification procedure has picked up a number of issues, including the importance of recording oral feedback detail.
- ◆ It was clear that feedback from a recent SQA best-practice event had been disseminated to staff and actioned.
- ◆ Regular contact between campuses has clearly helped assessment decisions to be agreed upon.
- ◆ Students are encouraged to use formal research referencing — whilst not an assessment requirement of the unit, it is relevant at this level of study.
- ◆ Diverse use of assessments methods: written, presentation, group-based assessment, role play, and video observation, research.
- ◆ Effective use of integration of assessments to complement other units within the group award. This is an effective method of adding value to overall group award assessment and helps learners to understand how individual subjects within the group award interlink. Robust and innovative use of IT to introduce new media platforms into the learning and assessment process.
- ◆ The use of Turnitin for student submissions allows the assessor to record their feedback and in the same comment section the internal verifier is able to document feedback and illustrate standardisation.
- ◆ Delivery and assessment demonstrated a diverse approach, and also demonstrated effective use of online-based learning and electronic assessment submission, with integrated plagiarism checking.

- ◆ The centre has integrated an agreed action plan with timeframes in the internal verification form in use. This is then reviewed and updated as the actions are achieved.
- ◆ Recognition of clearly presented and detailed work was noted in feedback to the students. This is supportive and encouraging to students.

Specific areas for improvement

As stated above, there is not always a clear vision of the requirements at different SCQF levels. Assessors should be vigilant when marking assessments that evidence requirements are met at the appropriate SCQF level (see also comment above regarding competence statements). This is particularly important with centre-developed material, and centres are reminded of the prior verification service offered by SQA.

- ◆ Internal verification should be carried out regularly and in line with any assessment strategy. Qualifications of assessors and internal verifiers should be monitored by the centre and appropriate CPD carried out where required. Information relating to assessors and verifiers (qualifications and CPD) should be made available to the qualification verifier. (This is critical for SVQ awards.)
- ◆ It is important that assessors familiarise themselves with the minimum competence statements relating to performance elements of the course. The use of observation checklists which simply comprise pass/fail or satisfactory/unsatisfactory statements with no guidance on what this might mean is not appropriate. Clear guidelines for achieving minimum evidence requirements will enhance learner understanding and achievement
- ◆ Assessors should give appropriate constructive feedback to learners. This should be in line with SQA and centre policy.
- ◆ Centres should ensure that the internal verification process is conducted to the standards set out in both SQA and centre policy. This includes ensuring that assessment material is fit for purpose, and providing accurate feedback on the assessment process.
- ◆ Minutes of standardisation meetings should be available to qualification verifiers.
- ◆ The centre should have a defined procedure whereby internal assessment and verification procedures ensure standardisation of assessment. Re-assessment procedure should be clearly documented.
- ◆ Assessment evidence presented must be accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements under the conditions specified in the award documentation.

Higher National graded units

Fitness, Health and Exercise Graded Unit 1 H4VL 34

Fitness, Health and Exercise Graded Unit 2 H4VM 35

General comments

The majority of centres are familiar with the format of the graded units in the Fitness, Health and Exercise award, including the marking guidance. For the academic session 2015–16 a number of centres were visited, almost all demonstrating high quality delivery and assessment practice. Staff were complementary regarding the units, and have made a number of constructive suggestions — this has resulted in work being done to clarify the minimum evidence requirements particularly in graded unit 2. It should be noted that the previous internal assessment report drew attention to the demanding delivery and assessment timeframe for graded unit 2.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

As stated last year, there are some fundamental differences in the structure and brief of the graded units when related to comparable units (for example, those in Sports Coaching, which many centres deliver in addition to the Fitness, Health and Exercise award). It was observed by qualification verifiers that the scope of research in both graded units underlines the wide spectrum of interests and study areas covered by the award. Exemplification of marking in the graded units has been the subject of a number of development visits requested by centres.

Evidence requirements

In the previous internal assessment report it proved difficult to comment on the administration of graded unit 2 due to the small number of centres delivering, however this year there are significantly more entries. It is encouraging to re-iterate, however, that many centres have developed considerable expertise in the delivery and assessment of graded units in general, and that the scope of interventions undertaken in graded unit 2 was comprehensive. In terms of evidence requirements, the main comment made by external verifiers is that centres are on occasion over generous with the awarding of additional marks. Centres are reminded that a 'C' pass (50–60%) means that the requirements of the brief have been fulfilled. Any marks awarded over and above this need to have a clear rationale for inclusion — the development of exemplification covering the award of additional marks is vital to a standardised and reliable process. In one or two cases the feedback given to learners did not identify where or why extra marks had been awarded, resulting in the imposition of sanctions.

Administration of assessments

See also the 'Evidence requirements' section above.

The majority of centres provided clear guidance for learners on the administration of assessments, and this was reflected in centre paperwork. Centres' internal verification processes in some instances (see above comment regarding the award of additional marks) appeared to be less than robust. Whilst learner feedback and marking was generally clear, evaluative, and supportive in terms of learner reflection, there were isolated instances where improvement was needed. (See also comments in the 'General feedback' section for HN awards above.)

General feedback

It was observed by the qualification verifier team that (in some centres) whilst learners who were interviewed were enthusiastic about their results and the unit delivery, the paperwork, feedback and internal verification did not offer clarity as to why such results had been achieved.

Centres are reminded that the exemplars for both graded units contain pro forma paperwork for recording learner/assessor interaction. This is particularly important when defining 'reasonable assistance'. (See also '*Guidance for the Implementation of Graded Units in Higher National Certificates and Diplomas*').)

Areas of good practice

The following provides a summary of good practice noted by qualification verifiers over the past academic session:

- ◆ Very robust and useful reflections within the learners' learning plans. Reflection and evaluation is an important aspect of graded unit delivery, and there was a lot of very useful information noted here. It was positive to see the quality of student feedback noted within the internal verification paperwork.
- ◆ Particularly clear and detailed marking guides were available and used to ensure standardisation.
- ◆ The use of formal research referencing (eg Harvard) — whilst not an assessment requirement — is particularly relevant for learners wishing to progress to higher study.
- ◆ Turnitin and other electronic means for submission are being used effectively.
- ◆ All students were positive about the graded unit: its purpose and in particular its delivery. Online learning platforms such as Moodle and e-portfolio have been used effectively, and students highly valued the one-to-one sessions with the assessor.
- ◆ The internal verification process has been thorough — any actions that have arisen are dated and have people identified to complete them. The process picked up not only on procedure, but also language and grammar which are important when considering the awarding of additional marks.
- ◆ The detail contained within the feedback provided to students by the delivering lecturer was of a high standard. Recognition of good work is recorded along with the rationale for awarding additional marks. Effective use

is made of the 'quality improvement' recording document and the action plan contained within the internal verification document at this centre.

Specific areas for improvement

The following provides a summary of potential problem issues noted by qualification verifiers over the past academic session:

- ◆ Assessors and internal verifiers should familiarise themselves with the minimum competence statements relating to the three different elements of the graded units. Clear guidelines for achieving minimum evidence requirements and the rationale for the award of additional marks should underpin the assessment process.
- ◆ Assessors should give appropriate constructive feedback to learners, bearing in mind the requirements of the evaluation stage. This should be in line with SQA and centre policy (and should be taken into account when learners need to remediate or resubmit).
- ◆ Centres should ensure that the internal verification process is conducted to the standards set out in both SQA and centre policy. This includes ensuring that assessment material is fit for purpose (see also bullet point 1 above), and providing accurate feedback on the assessment process.
- ◆ It is important that assessors consider the phrasing of feedback as, although helpful, it was primarily focusing on the negative.

SVQ awards

GD2N 22 SVQ2 in Instruction Exercise and Fitness

GA6T 23 SVQ 3 Personal Training

General comments

There was a limited programme of SVQ visits over the past academic session, but in general terms the standard of learner work and assessment practice was of high quality. Since the HN has become recognised for entry to the Register of Exercise Professionals, centre delivery of the SVQ programme has seen a slight contraction at Levels 2 and 3. Many centres are now incorporating the PDA in Personal Training into their course portfolio.

The SVQ awards are delivered by a minority of centres, and it should be noted that the National Occupational Standards were revised in February 2015 — this may result in changes to assessment strategies and delivery over the coming sessions. Centres delivering SVQ programmes are reminded to ensure that they have appropriately qualified staff in the roles of assessor and internal verifier.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Unit specifications mirror the National Occupational Standards (available from the Sector Skills Council SkillsActive). Centres have developed effective assessment methodologies based on and compliant with the appropriate assessment strategies. No exemplar materials have been developed.

Evidence requirements

All learner work seen showed clear cognisance had been given to the evidence requirements, and assessors were familiar with the requirements of the assessment strategy. Centres should consider carefully the requirements of the relevant assessment strategy when appointing assessors and internal verifiers.

Administration of assessments

Assessment was conducted effectively for all awards seen. See also comments above with regard to assessment strategies. Assessment administration was effective and clearly communicated to learners. Paperwork was clear and easy to understand for both internal verifier and qualification verifier.

General feedback

Learner feedback indicates a high level of satisfaction with centres in terms of both delivery and assessment.

Areas of good practice

Learners have personal development and learning plans which are reviewed on a regular basis. Regular meetings for assessors/verifiers are particularly important when working with SVQ learners, and centres demonstrated a high level of awareness of this requirement.

Specific areas for improvement

Centres should consider carefully the requirements of the relevant assessment strategy when appointing assessors and internal verifiers.