



**Higher National and Vocational Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2015
Construction Technician**

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

Throughout the sector, it is very clear that all centres have a thorough, clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of national standards relating to the current Built Environment suite of HN qualifications.

The entire suite of HN qualifications has been subjected to a major review and these updated qualifications became 'live' in August 2014. A very small number of centres initiated delivery of these new programmes in the 2014–15 academic session. Again, the staff in this small cohort of centres demonstrated a clear and accurate understanding of national standards and their implications for these awards.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The legacy of the past nine years of delivery of the Built Environment HN awards is that all staff are thoroughly familiar with the complete suite of Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and SQA-derived exemplar materials. Over this term, most centres have produced a comprehensive catalogue of alternate instruments of assessment which more than adequately meet the requirements of the Unit specifications.

The wealth of knowledge among the assessors and internal verifiers in the centres has informed the recent review and introduction of the updated HN qualifications and all associated Unit specifications and assessment support packs (ASPs). External verification activity in the minority of centres delivering the new awards has confirmed that the staff are completely familiar with the structure, content and principles of the Unit specifications and ASPs.

In one exception to the comments above, it was considered that one newly-appointed tutor/ assessor lacked full familiarity with the content of one Unit specification. The SQA External Verifier offered guidance and support and encouraged more effective mentoring in order to promote understanding and enhance delivery in the specific subject area.

Evidence Requirements

It is apparent from the external verification activities this session, that there is a clear and comprehensive understanding of the Evidence Requirements as laid out in the Unit specifications.

Administration of assessments

'Regionalisation' is still impacting on a few centres as they cope with the integration of a variety of quality systems that were present in their constituent campuses. However, all centres have presented, at external verification, robust systems that ably support the delivery of all aspects of the Built Environment HN programmes.

Many centres are continuing development of 'learner/ information portals' to aid and enhance the delivery of all qualifications. These give access to all elements and documentation that support delivery, learning, tutorial, guidance, assessment and verification activities. Accessibility for candidates is controlled through enrolment, but the facilities reinforce the learner–tutor relationship.

Most centres continue to support and attend the Built Environment Qualifications Support Team (QST). Through this forum, all centres benefit from the sharing of good practice and the critical review of the updated HN programmes as they are introduced and embedded across the sector.

The majority of centres, using SQA exemplar materials as their basis, have developed a wide array of alternate instruments of assessment. In all cases these have been found to be extremely robust, valid and appropriate.

General feedback

Almost without exception, feedback to candidates has been excellent. A balance must be struck with feedback on Unit submissions so that the individual expression is preserved and not overly diminished by a surfeit of tutor input. Tutor guidance has invariably been relevant, informative and supportive and has given candidates scope for interpretation to suit their individual submissions.

More centres/ tutors are using e-mail or recently-developed information portals to issue and record feedback on assessment submissions. These forms of communication are also used to enhance accessibility to tutors and candidates and the management of the assessment process. However, it was noted in one centre, that not all assessors used these centre-devised reporting and recording documentation and facilities.

Generally, feedback from candidates once again, has commended the sheer professionalism, support and guidance offered by tutors and support staff throughout their educational endeavours. Many spoke of the accessibility of tutors, even outwith programmed class and tutorial activities. There was considerable praise for the electronic forms of communication, especially the new learning portals that have been introduced.

No barriers to assessment were observed, but some comments on assessment burden were received. Wherever possible, most centres had clearly planned assessment activity to avoid conflict and offered some flexibility of assessment activity. In addition, integration of assessment was observed in some centres.

Areas of good practice

The most significant example of good practice recorded this session was the introduction and onward development in many centres of learning/ information portals through which the many aspects of programme delivery are managed.

Several other examples of good practice were also recorded as follows:

- ◆ Regular programme meetings with staff and class representatives
- ◆ EV reports held on information portal, accessible to all staff
- ◆ Feedback to learners — relevant, informative and supportive
- ◆ Structure and content of master folders were exemplary
- ◆ Design of alternate instruments of assessment were innovative, topical and related to known development proposals
- ◆ Candidate support has been commended almost without exception across the sector
- ◆ Accessibility of tutors/ assessors outwith programmed class and tutorial sessions

Specific areas for improvement

A few issues were identified in a very small minority of centres as follows:

- ◆ Lack of consistency in reporting and recording of feedback to learners
- ◆ Alternate instruments of assessment not prepared
- ◆ Lack of consistency in assessors' judgements
- ◆ Standardisation activities not recorded and documentation not available for audit purposes
- ◆ Internal verification process irregular and ineffective
- ◆ Lack of support/ mentoring for new member of staff

Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

DX1X	34	Architectural Technology Graded Unit 1
H72R	34	Built Environment Graded Unit 1
DX20	34	HNC Construction Graded Unit 1
DX21	34	Construction Management Graded Unit 1
DX26	35	Building Surveying Graded Unit 2
DX23	35	Quantity Surveying Graded Unit 2

General comments

It is quite clear that all centres have a complete and comprehensive understanding of the requirements of national standards. There is considerable evidence across centres in the structure and design of instruments of assessment, marking schemes and, in particular, the content of the candidates' portfolios that national standards are being observed and maintained.

Within the Built Environment Qualifications Support Team (QST), most centres have taken the opportunity to discuss and share 'best practice' in terms of Graded Unit delivery. In addition, centres and External Verifiers are invited to 'end of year' graduation shows where candidates' Graded Unit presentations are displayed. This promotes 'standardisation' of assessment decisions and observation of national standards.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Since Graded Units were introduced into the Built Environment suite in 2006, a considerable wealth of expertise has been developed by assessors across the entire sector. All current assessors are thoroughly familiar with Graded Unit specifications and the associated SQA exemplar materials. This is clearly apparent in the number and variety of alternate instruments of assessment that have been produced by the majority of centres. Many of these centre-designed instruments of assessment are based on the skeleton of SQA exemplar materials, but relate directly to local 'live' or viable construction proposals.

All of these alternative assessment materials have either been subjected to prior verification process or external verification review thereby ensuring standards are being maintained.

Evidence Requirements

It is apparent from the quality of presentation observed in candidates' portfolios (and in centres' graduation shows), that all assessors and internal verifiers have a clear and thorough understanding of Evidence Requirements laid out in the Graded Unit specifications.

External verification activities this session have identified no instances of misinterpretation or misunderstanding of Evidence Requirements in any of the Graded Units reviewed.

Administration of assessments

'Regionalisation' is still impacting on a few centres as they cope with the integration of a variety of quality systems that were present in their constituent campuses. However, all centres have presented, at external verification, robust systems that ably support the delivery of all aspects of the Graded Unit programmes.

Many centres are continuing development of 'learner/information portals' to aid and enhance the delivery of all qualifications. These give access to all elements and documentation that support delivery, learning, tutorial, guidance, assessment and verification activities. Accessibility for candidates is controlled through enrolment, but the facilities reinforce the learner-tutor relationship.

Most centres continue to support and attend the Built Environment Qualifications Support Team (QST). Through this forum, all centres benefit from the sharing of good practice and the critical review of the updated HN programmes as they are introduced and embedded across the sector.

In most centres, delivery and assessment of the Graded Unit is managed by the tutor who is the subject expert in the specific discipline to be examined. In the majority of centres, double or cross-marking is applied to the Graded Unit portfolios thus applying both standardisation and internal verification processes at the same time.

The majority of centres, using SQA exemplar materials as their basis, have developed a wide array of alternate instruments of assessment that are based on live construction projects which have local relevance or significance. In all cases these have been found to be extremely robust, valid and appropriate.

General feedback

Almost without exception, feedback to candidates has been excellent. A balance must be struck with feedback on Graded Unit submissions so that the individual expression is preserved and not overly diminished by a surfeit of tutor input. Tutor guidance has invariably been relevant, informative and supportive and has given candidates scope for interpretation to suit their individual case studies.

More centres/tutors are using e-mail or recently-developed information portals to issue and record feedback on assessment submissions. These forms of communication are also used to enhance accessibility to tutors and candidates and the management of the assessment process.

Generally, feedback from candidates once again, has commended the sheer professionalism, support and guidance offered by tutors and support staff throughout their educational endeavours. Many spoke of the accessibility of

tutors, even outwith programmed class and tutorial activities. There was considerable praise for the electronic forms of communication, especially the new learning portals that had been introduced.

No barriers to assessment were observed, but some comments on assessment burden were received. Wherever possible, most centres had clearly planned assessment activity to avoid conflict and offered some flexibility of assessment activity. In addition, integration of assessment was observed in some centres.

Areas of good practice

The most significant example of good practice recorded this session was the introduction and onward development in many centres of learning/information portals through which the many aspects of programme delivery are managed.

Several other examples of good practice were also recorded as follows:

- ◆ Regular programme meetings with staff and class representatives
- ◆ EV reports held on information portal, accessible to all staff
- ◆ Feedback to learners — relevant, informative and supportive
- ◆ Structure and content of master folders were exemplary
- ◆ Design of Graded Unit instruments of assessment were innovative, topical and relevant to local community
- ◆ Double/cross-marking of learner submissions
- ◆ Harvard referencing adopted as 'industry standard' for learner submissions
- ◆ Candidate support has been commended almost without exception across the sector
- ◆ Accessibility of tutors/assessors outwith programmed class and tutorial sessions

Specific areas for improvement

A few issues that were considered unsatisfactory were identified in a small minority of centres as follows:

- ◆ Access to CAD facilities was restricted at crucial times which hindered efficient portfolio development
- ◆ Alternative instruments of assessments had not been developed to facilitate re-assessment opportunity
- ◆ Internal verification activity was not up to date and was unverifiable
- ◆ Master folder was incomplete with missing documentation and historic internal verification evidence

SVQ awards

General comments

A considerable number of SVQ awards were subjected to external verification audit once again. It was quite apparent, in all centres, that all staff had a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Evidence from External Verifiers' reports confirms that all assessors and internal verifiers are very familiar with the Unit specifications and the guidance and support materials prepared by SQA.

Evidence Requirements

Many of the centres that were subjected to verification audit this session have successfully delivered SVQ awards for several years. It is obvious from verification reports that within those centres, there is a comprehensive understanding of the Evidence Requirements laid down in the Unit specifications.

Administration of assessments

Each centre has its own well developed approach to assessment activity. Much of this activity takes place on active construction sites where individual candidates are located. As a result, assessment events are planned and executed to suit individual candidate's needs with full observation of health, safety and welfare requirements.

Most centres have adopted a monthly review of candidate activity and progress as a baseline. However, considerable flexibility is obvious in all centres as candidates respond to the ease of access to assessors during evidence production and portfolio compilation.

An increase in the use CD and DVD recording of professional discussions and observation of work activities has been noted again this session. Full transcripts of discussions were produced in a small number of centres. None the less, in most cases, there was clear indexing and cross-referencing of this evidence to the performance requirements of the awards.

Most centres apply internal verification processes at pre-delivery, mid-delivery and completion stages of each award with routine sampling of each Unit on a two or three-year cycle.

General feedback

Generally, feedback to candidates has been very good indeed and has been comprehensively documented in candidates' portfolios and in the centres' forms of documentation. As assessment activity is on an individual basis, feedback was

observed to be targeted to the candidate, valid, relevant, appropriate and supportive.

Feedback from candidates praised the assessors and the centres for their professionalism, accessibility, flexibility and support and guidance offered by them.

There were no observed barriers to assessment. In fact, most assessors positively encouraged assessment activity with sound forward-planning strategies that supported and guided the candidates through their evidence production.

Areas of good practice

As usual, some of the reported elements of good practice that have been broadly observed in most centres this session have also been identified as areas for improvement in a small minority of centres. However, that minority is reducing each year.

Considerable good practice was observed by External Verifiers as follows:

- ◆ Planning and implementation of targeted CPD activity
- ◆ Annual summary of CPD activity for each member of staff
- ◆ Excellent feedback to candidates, fully documented
- ◆ Internal verification annual report and summary — valuable document summarising internal verification activity and identifying good practice and action points/improvement opportunities for the following session
- ◆ Accessibility to assessors offering flexibility in assessment activity
- ◆ Sophisticated centre-devised documentation that facilitates management of assessment and internal verification activities
- ◆ The recording of professional discussions on CD and/or DVD is highly effective and provides a permanent, contemporary record of activity
- ◆ Integration of NC/ HN Units to confirm compliance with Knowledge and Understanding Performance Criteria
- ◆ Refined indexing and cross-referencing of evidence systems to enhance effectiveness and transparency

Specific areas for improvement

As noted earlier, good practice observed in some centres proves challenging in others:

- ◆ Indexing and cross-referencing of evidence in some circumstances was ineffective in linking evidence to standards
- ◆ Recording of Knowledge and Understanding evidence was ineffective
- ◆ Indexing and cross-referencing of integrated Knowledge and Understanding evidence was inadequate
- ◆ No candidate evidence available for external verification

- ◆ CPD evidence relating to discipline was inadequate and occasionally, non-existent
- ◆ Reports on assessor and internal verifier activity not available for External Verifier audit