



Higher National and Vocational Qualifications Internal Assessment Report 2012

Business Management

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

Centres are predominantly using the new Units from the new frameworks although there are still Units offered that do not have a new version. The vast majority of centres are well established and familiar with SQA awards, and have a good appreciation of the requirements of the Units in the verification group. A small number of centres are still offering the old Units, sometimes in parallel with the new ones and sometimes because a Course was being run for the last time or on a distance learning basis.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Most centres are using the assessment exemplars, or an adapted version of them. The centres were familiar with the Unit specifications and assessment exemplars. Some centres are considering adapting the exemplars and extending case studies, which is a positive sign and provides evidence that they are increasingly confident in claiming greater control over how candidates are assessed. It is important that centres study the Unit specifications to guide them on what must be evidenced, to identify the appropriate standards, and to see what possibilities there are in terms of the assessment format and integration.

Evidence Requirements

The external verification visits were very positive about the degree of understanding that centres have about the Evidence Requirements and the Units in general. It is important that those involved in internal verification, delivery and assessment continue to refresh themselves of the content of the Unit specifications.

Administration of assessments

The centres were all well practised at administering assessments. Continuing care needs to be taken in the area of plagiarism, and some centres employed a plagiarism checking tool. This is an area that may need more vigilance as there is now greater scope for plagiarism as a result of greater flexibility in how some Outcomes and Units are assessed.

There was evidence that centres are using the internal verification process in a less mechanistic fashion and are recording debate about assessments, problems, standards and delivery, and this is to be encouraged. This is very important and it is also valuable in helping identify ambiguities, errors and difficulties in assessments, allowing for revisions to be made that benefit centres and candidates alike.

General feedback

Providing detailed feedback was commonly reported by the external verification team. This is very valuable in helping candidates identify their strengths and weaknesses, and it is recognised that such feedback can be time-consuming to produce. Feedback from candidates during external verification visits was very favourable, and they recognised the relevance of the theory and general content of the subjects that they were studying.

The candidates also commented positively on those delivering the Units and the support and guidance that they were provided with. Candidates appeared to have equal access to assessment, with special arrangements being made as appropriate.

The Units in the Business Management verification group require a good level of written communication, and where English is not the first language some centres identified this as a barrier. Centres need to look at possible solutions such as additional language classes, or place a greater focus on communication as part of the selection process.

Areas of good practice

Genuinely innovative and creative practices tend to be relatively rare, as centres have adopted what was previously considered good practice into mainstream delivery and assessment. Centres continue to strive to adapt and improve delivery, assessment and support for candidates.

Centres continue to demonstrate good practice in terms of the level of feedback provided to candidates and in the provision of Course information. Many centres are now using a VLE and also provide feedback electronically, allowing candidates easy and flexible access to information that can assist them in the completion of a Unit in a manner that most suits their circumstances.

Specific areas for improvement

Rather than specific areas for improvement, there needs to be maintenance of the existing efforts at implementing good practice that has already been adopted.

There needs to be vigilance in discouraging and identifying plagiarism, which is particularly important with the increase in the amount of out-of-class assessment.

Centres should continue to discuss different ways that Outcomes may be assessed, and continue to seek integration opportunities.

Overall, it is critical that centres continue to revisit the Unit specifications to judge the standards that are required in each Unit, and the nature and level of candidates' evidence that is required.