



Higher National and Vocational Qualifications Internal Assessment Report 2012

Economics

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

The majority of centres are now using the new Units from the new frameworks. This extends their uptake from the last academic session, and centres have a good appreciation of the requirements of the new Units. A small number of centres are still offering the old Units, sometimes in parallel with the new ones.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Almost all of the centres visited used the exemplars or an adapted version of them. The centres were familiar with the Unit specifications and assessment exemplars. However, there was an indication that in some centres the focus of attention was still directed at the exemplar assessments. While this is understandable, it is important that those involved in the delivery and assessment of SQA HN Units are very familiar with the Unit specifications, on which the exemplars are based.

Evidence Requirements

As per the previous section, it is essential that those involved in the delivery and assessment of SQA HN Units are familiar with the Unit specifications, so that they are aware of and continue to remind themselves of the Evidence Requirements.

Administration of assessments

Centres are generally well practised at administering assessments. There needs to be a continuing awareness of the challenges that are faced in administering a variety of different assessments across different Units.

Some centres use the pre-delivery internal verification process to rigorously check the assessments and to confirm the expected standards. However, this was not universal and in some cases there appeared to be a limited scrutiny in the internal verification process.

Even when assessments have been used for an extended period, errors or improvements may be identified. Internal verification is also an important vehicle in reminding staff of the standards that are expected in each Unit.

General feedback

The trend for providing detailed feedback where appropriate has continued this year. This is particularly valuable in helping candidates identify their strengths and weaknesses. Feedback from candidates during external verification visits was very favourable and positive about their subjects and the delivery of those subjects.

Candidates appreciated the relevance of the content and the benefit of the different approaches to assessment across the Units. Candidates appeared to have equal access to assessment, with special arrangements being made as appropriate.

Areas of good practice

In recent years good practice from the past has generally become embedded and is now becoming established practice. Genuinely innovative and creative practices as a result tend to be relatively rare, as centres have continued to adapt and improve their delivery, assessment and support of candidates.

The area where centres have continued to demonstrate good practice has tended to be in the area of communication, both in terms of the way that feedback is provided to candidates and in the information provided about their subjects. Providing good feedback in an accessible manner to candidates is vital in helping them understand how they can improve, and centres are using an increasing variety of modes of communication.

Specific areas for improvement

There are a number of areas where centres need to continue to focus their efforts. Centres need to continue to give careful consideration in distinguishing between situations that merit remediation versus ones that should result in re-assessment.

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

Some centres should make greater use of the pre-delivery internal verification process to check the assessments and to provide a forum for staff to establish the requirements of Units, the appropriate standards, and a consistent approach towards assessment.