**Higher National Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2012**

Information Systems

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

Within the centres seen there was sufficient knowledge of the national standard requirements.

Overall the assessors' judgement of candidates' performance was appropriate, and assessors' decisions recorded were in line with national standards across centres. The judgement of competence was accurately made in relation to the Units seen.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

There was increased familiarity with the revised Unit specifications this year, compared to last year when they were introduced.

Availability and use of exemplars by centres was discussed and there is now greater awareness of what is available.

Generally, centres were using up-to-date and current assessment specifications; and had correctly followed the assessment specifications in the Units. Assessment guidelines and the Evidence Requirements defined in Unit specifications were correctly specified in assessments.

Evidence Requirements

The overall assessment procedures were to a suitable standard in meeting the requirements of the Units undertaken.

Evidence presented was generally well marked, with checklists maintained and records clearly showing attainment to date.

Administration of assessments

Centres were using a mix of centre-devised assessment instruments and the assessment exemplars which are available. These had been internally verified, and in most instances were recorded on the appropriate internal verification form.

General feedback

Feedback to candidates was usually carried out verbally, although there were some instances seen of direct feedback on candidates work folios which provided guidance on their performance and comments containing positive encouragement. There was also some evidence of feedback on candidates' progress checklists in a few centres.

Feedback from candidates interviewed by External Verifiers with regard to awards, centre approaches to assessment and general relations with assessors was very good.

Most candidates were very happy with the support received from centre staff.

Access to assessment arrangements were very well organised with firm procedures documented, eg identified at Personal Learning Plan stage. Details of candidates who have disabilities or additional support needs are held centrally and provision of resources such as accessibility software and hardware made available.

Additional assessment opportunities are normally provided in tutorial slots and set remediation sessions.

Areas of good practice

Assessors were integrating assessments between Units, where these Units involve naturally similar tasks. This gives candidates a much better view of vocational practices that are rarely separated out in the workplace in the way they are in Units. It also provides a vehicle for candidates to explore more creative individualised solutions that better reflect the candidate's skill level and the amount of effort the candidate puts into the assessment exercise.

Specific areas for improvement

Centres were not always including incorrect rejected marked candidate evidence alongside the subsequent remediated attempts to demonstrate candidate progress and boundaries of assessor judgement.

Candidate evidence scripts were not always clearly presented. In some cases there was little or no annotation on candidate scripts to show what was being accepted. In some cases, scripts were not cross-referenced to other Unit, Outcome or candidate documentation.

In some cases, there was no clear mapping of assignments to Outcomes, Evidence Requirements or knowledge and skills values. Clearer 'labelling' of Evidence Requirements being met on each assessment would have aided the external (and internal) verification process.

Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

F21G 34 Interactive Media: Graded Unit 1(Exam)
F6V6 35 Interactive Media: Graded Unit 2

General comments

The central verification event which looked at examination-based HN Graded Units was overall successful, with only one of the centres chosen for sampling being 'Not Accepted' (held).

The judgement of candidate performance by assessors was mostly in line with the standard required and there were only a few candidates presented whose marks required adjustment and grades changed. Otherwise, any disagreements were within acceptable boundaries.

The visiting verification took place mainly in late May and June. Verification on projects can take place when the planning and developing stages have been completed and preliminary marks awarded. Centres were now aware of this.

The project-based units seen indicated, in most cases, that there was a reasonably accurate understanding of the national standards.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

In the examination-based Units, the centres were using the SQA published exemplars as their instruments of assessment.

Recent amendments to the project-based Graded Unit 2 had been applied, although one centre visited was still using the previous Unit specification, which had not yet lapsed.

However, for that centre the following comment was made about the (previous) Interactive Media Graded Unit 2 materials: 'Above all, the centre should be commended on their interpretation of the SQA exemplar pack which was discussed at great depth during the visit. The centre has correctly interpreted the requirements of the specification'.

Prior verification activity had taken place on most instruments of assessment for the project-based Graded Units. This helps to ensure familiarity and proved most useful when visits were taking place, both for centre staff and the External Verifier.

Evidence Requirements

In project-based Graded Units, the technical content of the candidates work was appropriate, acceptable and, in most cases, well done. However, there was some evidence of a lack of clarity in marking candidates' work, with few annotations or comments to provide information and feedback as to where and why marks were awarded.

Overall; candidates were showing a good grasp of requirements and demonstrated skills at an appropriate level to potential grades awarded. This indicated that most assessors had a good understanding of the levels of complexity of tasks to be set and achieved.

Administration of assessments

For the central verification event, presentation of materials was fairly good, although some centres had incorrectly completed submission forms.

Almost all centres were using the published SQA exemplars. Where a centre had used/constructed its own paper, these had been prior verified. It was also useful to note that any assumptions made about the exemplars had been included in the documentation supplied. This is most helpful when carrying out the process.

In one centre's central verification submission, the candidate scripts had all been completed electronically using the centre's VLE and a printout of both exam sections for all candidates was included. The benefits of this are that section 1 was marked automatically, and therefore to a consistent standard, and in section 2 all candidate answers were easy to read.

However, on checking it was found that in Section 1 the setup for marking the multiple response questions on the VLE had an error which resulted in incorrect assignment of marks. Therefore the centre had used an invalid instrument of assessment (marking scheme). It was also noted that the following were not provided for central verification:

♦ details of internal verification methods
♦ details of invigilation and invigilators
♦ details of methods used in authentication on the e-assessment system (VLE)
♦ security measures taken to ensure that there was no access to external information which may assist candidates, eg stored locally or on the internet

Overall, there was evidence of internal verification in the form of double marking taking place in most centre submissions. This is to be encouraged. One major point to note is that in a few of the submissions there was a lack of clarity in identifying precisely where and why marks were awarded on candidate responses by centres.

General feedback

Interviews with candidates showed that most centres were operating an effective induction process onto the Graded Units and those candidates were aware of what they needed to do to achieve the different grades.

The Graded Unit candidate feedback was usually comprehensive and thorough. Access to assessment arrangements was very good: the same as for standard Units.

Areas of good practice

It is encouraging to see that some centres are manipulating the facilities of a standard VLE to help meet the requirements of SQA internal assessment processes. The following is comment from an external verification report:

The extensive use of the VLE for submission and storage of internal assessment and subsequent feedback to students was impressive and works very well. The marks awarded all reflected the standard of work produced. Judgement of candidate performance was appropriate. Comprehensive and extensive assessment feedback was available for each candidate through the VLE.

Specific areas for improvement

Administration in centres of examination-based Graded Units showed some issues, including where it was partially or fully carried out electronically. Therefore, for examination-based Graded Units, centres should review all questions systematically prior to delivery and record this on an internal verification form. If they have done an IV check on the exemplar then that should be sent. Any assumptions made and deviation from the exemplar should have been documented and supplied.

It is strongly recommended that centres take note of the SQA publication *Guidance for the Implementation of Graded Units* (publication code CA4405), particularly the sections on examination procedures and marking, and that they follow this guidance.

A major issue at central verification this year was that not all requested documents were sent with scripts and the process could not continue until these were received.

There were instances where internal verification activities had not been applied, eg lack of indications of double marking, clear indications on scripts, resolution of disagreements and follow-through actions.

Assessors must clearly indicate in candidate evidence where marks are awarded and how many for each section/element. This would also provide a basis for feedback to candidates and verifiers.

Marking scores should be double checked on all materials and records before final grading submissions.

If a centre is going to use e-assessment, then the system should comply with SQA requirements, as published on SQA's website (SQA requirements for e-assessment V.3.) The completed checklist for this should have been supplied for central verification.