



Higher National and Vocational Qualifications Internal Assessment Report 2012

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

The evidence presented in the External Verifiers' reports confirms that there is clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards in all centres that were subjected to external review. Inevitably, a few queries of interpretation arose, but these were very minor and the External Verifiers responded appropriately with consistent, coherent and co-ordinated direction.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

All assessors are thoroughly familiar with the full array of Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplar materials. This is clearly demonstrated in all centres by the quality of the design and content of alternate instruments of assessment and associated marking guidelines which have been prepared and internally verified by the centres' staff.

Evidence Requirements

Throughout the entire external verification process this session, there has been no significant instance of misunderstanding or misinterpretation of any of the Evidence Requirements of any of the Units.

Administration of assessments

Each centre has its own robust structural system in place to support a range of quality issues, including planning for assessment, reviewing learning practice, curriculum team support, standardisation and internal verification.

Most centres give careful consideration to the assessment programme to avoid issues of conflict and excess workload for the candidates. Where appropriate, some assessment exemplar materials have been modified to reflect local situations. However, there has been no loss of rigour or validity.

In several centres, the Internal Verifiers take a pivotal role in the development and administration of assessment materials. This ensures a common thread runs through delivery and a sound mechanism exists for standardisation.

General feedback

In nearly all cases, feedback to candidates was good; indeed, in some cases it was exemplary. There was ample evidence of feedback recorded in students' portfolios. In all circumstances, that feedback was relevant, valid and informative. In a small minority of cases, feedback was very brief and poorly recorded.

All students interviewed commended the dedication and professionalism of the teaching staff. Many spoke of the excellent advice, guidance and support that were given by the teaching staff throughout their academic ventures. There was

some comment about workload and assessment burden, but the affected centres had already instigated reviews of the teaching and learning processes to reduce identified conflicts and integrate assessment elements where appropriate.

Areas of good practice

In the past several years so many examples of good practice have been identified and disseminated that these are mainly deemed the acceptable standards that are expected now.

However, much emphasis is now being placed on developing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships between assessors and candidates. As a result, there has been a thoroughly professional approach to meeting qualification standards and the aspirations and abilities of the various client groups.

Most centres in these Verification Groups (161, 163, 164, 117 and 316) are represented on the Built Environment Qualifications Support Team. As a result, there is considerable sharing of experience and processes, which benefits the centres and the broader sector.

Specific areas for improvement

There were no widespread deficiencies identified in the EV audit process this session. Feedback to candidates by a very small number of assessors (two) was inadequate. This was identified during the EV process and remedial action was recommended, agreed and instigated accordingly.

Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

DX20 34	HNC Construction Graded Unit
DX27 35	Construction Management Graded Unit 2
DX25 35	Architectural Technology Graded Unit 2
DX23 35	Quantity Surveying Graded Unit 2

General comments

It was clear from all the evidence reviewed that each centre had a clear, accurate and thorough understanding of the requirements of the national standards for all of the graded Units embraced by the Built Environment suite of awards.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

In general, assessors are extremely familiar with all aspects of the various Graded Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplar assessments. Many of the assessors have designed the alternate instruments of assessment, which in turn have successfully traversed the SQA prior verification processes. In addition, many of those alternate assessments were the subject of this session's successful EV review.

In two centres that were presenting a Graded Unit for the first time, the assessors lacked full familiarity with the instruments of assessment and the exemplar materials. As a result, during the External Verifier audits, some development points were identified. Fortunately, these referred to the management of the assessment process rather than interpretation of assessment requirements. There was no significant impact on students' performance.

Evidence Requirements

Throughout the entire external verification process this session, there has been no significant instance of misunderstanding or misinterpretation of any of the Evidence Requirements of any of the Units.

As indicated above, there was minor misinterpretation in only two instances. The situations were identified during the external verification process and discussed with the relevant assessors and internal verifiers, and remedies agreed with the respective External Verifier before the completion of any candidates.

Administration of assessments

In nearly all cases, centres administer the assessment process in strict accordance with the philosophies outlined in the Graded Unit Specifications and exemplar materials.

Most centres have prepared a very comprehensive project brief for each Graded Unit, which explains to the candidate the structure and content of the assessment instrument. In addition, there are clear references to the quality and quantity of evidence that is required and the standards that have to be achieved.

General feedback

In all cases, feedback to candidates was good; indeed, in some cases it was exemplary. There was ample evidence of feedback recorded in students' portfolios. In all circumstances, that feedback was full, relevant, valid and informative.

All students interviewed commended the dedication and professionalism of the teaching staff. Many spoke of the excellent advice, guidance and support that were given by the teaching staff throughout the presentation of the Graded Unit.

All students commented positively on the relevance and value of the Graded Unit project in their chosen discipline, whether pursuing employment or further academic study.

Areas of good practice

In one centre, the subjects of the Graded Unit assessments have been co-ordinated across all disciplines. This emphasises to the candidate the intimate relationships and interaction of the professions. In addition, the staff are involved in marking and grading the candidates' work within their own specialist discipline. This enhances the rigour and standardisation of assessment decisions to the benefit of the candidate.

Two centres have developed digitised systems of information delivery, candidate support and evidence storage, which was felt by candidates to be a positive enhancement of the learning experience through sophisticated information transfer.

That same electronic storage and administration provision allows for efficient navigation between information sources and greatly facilitates the verification process.

Specific areas for improvement

No endemic deficiencies were identified during the external verification process this session. Direction was given to two centres to advise candidates of the pitfalls associated with online materials when included unedited in portfolio submissions.

SVQ awards

General comments

The evidence presented in the External Verifiers' reports confirms that there is clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards in all the centres that were subjected to external review.

Two 'holds' were recommended this session. However, in both cases these were issued because of internal administrative failures. As a result, personnel and evidence were not available for review at the appointed times. The External Verifiers were unable to carry out the audit processes and followed the correct procedures thereafter.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

It is clear from the External Verifiers' reports that all assessors are thoroughly familiar with the Unit specifications and instruments of assessment across the broad range of SVQ awards that have been the subject of this session's review.

Evidence Requirements

Many of the centres audited this session have been delivering a range of SVQ awards for a number of years. As a result, there is considerable evidence to demonstrate a clear understanding of the Evidence Requirements for the broad array of Units and awards.

This is further confirmed by the quality and quantity of evidence presented in the candidates' portfolios.

Administration of assessments

Nearly all centres could demonstrate a clearly structured approach to assessment events embracing planning, assessing, review and feedback processes. These were clearly recorded in candidates' portfolios and in assessors' reports.

Many of the assessment events are designed specifically to suit the individual candidate's circumstances, but offer no loss of content or rigour.

A few centres make use of self-employed consultants as Internal Verifiers. This offers more opportunities for standardisation of assessment decisions and enhances the national aspect of the SVQ process. However, this does not dilute the external verification scrutiny.

General feedback

Generally, feedback to candidates is very good. Most centres have produced documentation in their own corporate style, and this is used consistently throughout the assessment process to give and record feedback to candidates. Copies are kept in the candidate's portfolio and held centrally by the assessor/administrator.

Without exception, candidates have commended the support, guidance and accessibility of their assessors and mentors.

Most candidates spoke of their initial apprehension when first enrolled in the award and their subsequent enjoyment and appreciation of the value of their award.

Areas of good practice

All centres have designed and developed a range of quality documentation to support candidates effectively and efficiently, from induction to completion.

All centres are to be commended for the quality of support offered by the assessors and their accessibility.

One centre has developed a very effective learning portal providing documentary evidence of candidates' submissions and performance, assessors' feedback, progress, achievement and standardisation. The learning portal also assists greatly with mapping, cross-referencing, internal verification and external verification of candidates' evidence.

Specific areas for improvement

It was noted that one or two centres had candidates whose locations were quite remote (eg Outer Hebrides or abroad). It was recommended that records of phone discussions and e-mails confirming support and guidance should be made and held centrally, to be added to the candidate's portfolio on submission. Allied to this, a concurrent record of progress should be introduced for each candidate, to be maintained by the assessor or administrator so that progress can be easily monitored and reviewed.