Higher National and Vocational Qualifications Internal Assessment Report 2012

Introduction to Tutoring Adult Literacies Learning (ITALL)

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 Professional Development Award (PDA) entitled Introduction to Tutoring Adult Literacies Learning (ITALL) is well embedded in the cross-sectoral development of adult literacies. Continued verification indicates a robust and consistent level of national standards, both geographically and in the variety of centres offering the qualification.

Standards continue to ensure that each candidate is working towards a level of literacies training that meets the needs of those in Scottish communities and learning environments who require literacy support.

The national standards continue to inform development within the framework of government policy. The PDA forms a benchmark for the new Professional Standards in Literacy provision and in this context should be part of the developing landscape.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

All assessors are familiar with the Unit specification, which has not changed over a period of time. The continued use of the generic teaching pack for all candidates has supported a clear and shared understanding for assessors and those directly involved in PDA delivery. The willingness to share and disseminate good practice in a cross-sectoral framework has had a positive impact on the status of the PDA and the consistency of standards.

Centres have continued to use exemplar materials to inform marking schemes and the instruments of assessment being used by all centres were as detailed in the Higher National Unit specification. An integrated response question was available from some centres to candidates; however, few of the candidates chose this option.

Evidence Requirements

Candidates' written answers are presented in various formats but generally there is a move towards portfolio format, in keeping with the PDA concept of recording all activity referenced as evidence of learning and development.

In many centres, the evidence available was a copy of the assessment questions and instructions for answering the questions, including word count, how to cite quotes, signing and dating of assessments.

The timing of external verification visits and the extended period of time offered by centres to allow candidates to complete are noted as challenges when evidence is required/requested.

Administration of assessments

Marking schemes from the Unit assessment feedback form were collated with candidates' answers.

Centres were using prompt-type questions on the marking scheme that assessors also had to answer. For example:

♦ Has the candidate answered the question?
♦ Has the candidate addressed two knowledge and skills?
♦ Is the account in clear language?
♦ Is the account within word count?

Internal verification processes still vary from centre to centre and across the sector. Minutes from meetings were robust and demonstrated a clear focus: the advantages of close working relationships between assessors and the Internal Verifiers. It continues to be noted that, in less formal outreach delivery, internal verification responsibility can be a shared experience with less qualitative emphasis. Within the further education sector, internal verification processes are embedded into quality procedures specific to each institution.

Centres evidenced that written feedback was given to candidates on a standardised feedback form. If remediation was required, this was presented as:

♦ Highlighted questions annotated on electronic response
♦ Queries/guidance on the assessment answer
♦ Electronic annotation via e-mail
♦ E-mailed comments

General feedback

Agreed timescales for submission should be adhered to when possible.
All candidates should have access to an ALN learner from the outset of the programme.

Agreed standards for pre-entry requirement at PDA level need to be made explicit. There continues to be challenges when candidates access the PDA ITALL to supplement ESOL learning/training.

The option of an integrated response should be made available. Candidates could generate a portfolio of developmental evidence with all evaluative processes recorded as a matter of good developmental reflective practice.

Stricter timescales for submission should be adhered to when possible. Candidates should be encouraged to identify a learner at the early stages of the PDA to ensure context for literacy practice and to prepare for the observation requirement (Unit 4).

Delivery staff should engage in using software to identify plagiarism.

Areas of good practice

Some centres are developing weekly summary forms which encourage candidates to highlight the important/pertinent points of specific lessons, detailed lesson plans and an assessment booklet. This process is supporting critical reflection.

Centres are all developing very good learner handbooks, which are issued to all candidates outlining the course, induction checklist, a learning contract, staff contact lists, staff CPD details, and general information including the appeals process, correct use of the internet and health and safety issues. An assessor induction agreement and checklist and Internal Verifier checklists, which were all signed and dated, was also evidenced. In some centres, master folders also contain information regarding staff involved in the delivery.

There is evidence of very good practice in centres that customise materials and standardise resources with personalised logos to indicate all aspects of partnership working.

In many centres, there was extensive evidence of clear, concise course content and excellent candidate induction packs.

Development points were addressed across all centres.

In those centres that encouraged portfolio generation, the learners' portfolios were also good as they contained an index showing the contents; initial assessment information, a personal statement of why they wanted to undertake the course, core skill preparations and a copy of the learning contract.

Minutes from meetings between assessor, course tutor and Internal Verifier show close working to ensure a consistently good standard is achieved. Queries and development points were acted upon and responsibility for action is clear.

Very robust feedback is given to candidates and this has been noted as a significant improvement. A standardised feedback form is passed to candidates and signed by the Internal Verifiers.

The assessment checklist facilitates extended feedback opportunities and candidates are encouraged to actively reflect on comments made. Feedback is often part of a reflective diary which is integrated into each candidate's evaluation process.

There appears to be good pre-course planning carried out at centres. Not only are candidate interviews held, but written assignments and group activities are held with the assessors and Internal Verifier before candidates are offered places on the programme.

Recording evidence is very good. All recording evidence is to a high standard with very good assessment candidate instructions clearly stating what is required. Feedback provided for candidates is personalised, noting good practice, and guidance is given where necessary by all centres visited.

Centres have implemented the suggestions from the previous external verification and candidates' answers now have questions at the top of pages

instead of numbers and comments are now written for the observed practice rather than a tick box.

A staff portfolio was presented containing a quality assurance agreement, induction procedures and materials, session-by-session course information, internal verification procedures and information. Post-course staff and candidate evaluations were also present. Any relevant suggestions were implemented. Assessors and Internal Verifiers' CPD was also presented as continuous and relevant.

Candidate portfolios were also in evidence, though not a specific requirement.

External verification processes indicate:

♦ Excellent collaborative working between colleges and CLD
♦ Innovative assessment methods being used for Unit 3
♦ Centres are using a presentation so that active learning outcomes can be assessed in a more practical/active way
♦ Effective internal verification system and good evidence of pre-course planning and ongoing cross-marking/professional discussion

Evidence was generated to show how staff induction for new staff coming into the literacies team facilitates ease of transition for teaching staff from other disciplines who are moving into the field of literacies.

Colleges showcase embedded quality systems and the recording of internal verification activity linked to sampling processes.

Many centres had an excellent end-of-course evaluation, as well as reflective sections for each Unit.

One centre uses Moodle as alternative access for learners. The entire course can be accessed online which made the learning process easier for many ITALL tutors who are in full-time employment.

This access for all candidates through the college virtual learning environment (VLE), dovetailed with face-to-face delivery, ensures maximum support in terms of resources.

Candidates are also encouraged to keep a reflective diary which embeds a culture of improvement and can be shared on the virtual environment.

All e-mails between candidates and staff are recorded as part of the learning process and provide excellent evidence when feedback/remediation is required.

All assessments note word count and are dated with standard feedback forms.

Specific areas for improvement

It was agreed that course recording and feedback was good and should continue at that level. It was also agreed that the level of instruction given to candidates should be maintained. It was suggested that, as cross-marking takes place by

assessors, a signature box on the front sheet of the feedback from could be included to show this has occurred.

It was also suggested that all candidates should ensure a word count is appended to answers to aid marking.

Centres have agreed to:

♦ Develop an integrated assessment option for candidates and engage with existing centre processes for checking plagiarism
♦ Monitor word count and record as a footnote on assessment evidence
♦ Embed all reflective activity into portfolio format
♦ Update Unit 1/Outcome 1 instrument of assessment and marking scheme (as well as course handouts relating to this Outcome) to reflect the most up-to-date research and strategic guidance, ie less emphasis on IALS and ALNiS and more emphasis on SSAL 2009 and ALiS 2020
♦ Incorporate a check for genuine reflection into the marking scheme for Outcomes when reflection is called for in the Unit specification
♦ Consider including random sampling to ensure consistency in the internal verification activity

Centres are encouraged to maximise the use of the feedback form to make pertinent comments relating to progress or challenges for each individual student, rather than solely recording development using boxes on the form.

♦ Centres will address fundamental spelling errors as a point for remediation
♦ Encourage candidates to develop a formalised portfolio for all aspects of CPD
♦ Develop an opportunity for integrated assessment
♦ Introduce realistic target dates for submission and completion of Units