



**National Qualifications 2016
Internal Assessment Report
Core Skills: Problem Solving and
Working with Others**

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

National Qualifications (NQ) units

Titles/levels of NQ units verified:

F3GD 08 Problem Solving SCQF level 2 (40 hours)

F3GD 09 Problem Solving SCQF level 3 (40 hours)

F3GD 10 Problem Solving SCQF level 4 (40 hours)

F3GD 11 Problem Solving SCQF level 5 (40 hours)

F3GE 09 Working with Others SCQF level 3 (40 hours)

F3GE 10 Working with Others SCQF level 4 (40 hours)

F3GE 11 Working with Others SCQF level 5 (40 hours)

F3GE 12 Working with Others SCQF level 6 (40 hours)

General comments

External verification activity in 2015–16 sampled a wide range of NQ Core Skills units in schools, colleges, local authorities and private training providers.

Centres continue year on year to develop their understanding of the requirements of the national standards in the delivery of Core Skills Problem Solving and Working with Others.

External verification activity indicates positive levels of compliance across reporting criteria. The level of risk was low and clearly indicates that centres do have a good understanding of Core Skills and are working to the national standards. Candidate evidence reveals a high standard of assessment exemplification. Visiting verification activity confirmed that internal standards were being maintained and centres continue to build on the good practice which is highlighted in the internal assessment report on an annual basis.

Centres make good use of SQA assessment exemplification materials. Assessment and internal verification procedures are robust and fit for purpose. The delivery of NQ Core Skills is well established and contextualised within programme designs. Verification activity revealed areas of good practice and highlighted some development issues which will be detailed within this report.

Visiting verification activity highlighted how successful centres were in their exemplification of the national standards and in providing high quality learning experiences.

The verification team continues to carry out a wide range of visiting and postal approvals as centres seek to implement Core Skills units.

External verifiers were extremely praiseworthy of the high standards and excellent good practice featured in visiting verification activity.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Centres were well organised for external visiting verification visits and provided robust assessment materials, assessment tasks, appropriate unit checklists and internal verification documentation. Centre documentation and discussions with assessors revealed that they are very familiar with the unit specifications, instruments of assessment and SQA exemplification materials. Centres routinely use SQA exemplification materials and make good use of SQA exemplar tasks. NQ Core Skills are routinely contextualised within programme designs with excellent levels of success, eg Employability; Enterprise; Travel and Tourism; Customer Service; Scottish Studies; Routes to Careers; STEM; Plumbing; Social Care; Hair and Beauty; and Early Years.

Assessor/verifier meetings and standardisation activities are scheduled and support the assessment process and the exemplification of national standards in Core Skills Problem Solving and Working with Others.

External sampling revealed evidence of well organised teaching and learning materials; unit specifications, exemplification materials, instruments of assessment; internal verification records; minutes of meetings; standardisation activities; and reviewing of learning and teaching delivery.

SQA continues to support the prior verification of centre-devised assessment instruments. Prior verification supports the use of internal assessment approaches and the assessment instrument is verified by a subject specialist external verifier. The prior verification application form is available on SQA's website.

Core Skills assessment approaches continue to evolve to include integration within the programme itself and the tasks associated with different units. Some centres have provided good examples of the mapping of Core Skills units to associated assessment tasks.

Verifiers continue to highlight how one project activity can provide evidence of more than one Core Skill with carefully planned assessment tasks.

Evidence requirements

External verification activity clearly indicates that centres do have a clear understanding of the evidence requirements for Core Skills Problem Solving and Working with Others units.

There were some instances which highlighted the need to understand the standards at different levels. This is important in problem solving, eg the difference between simple straightforward routine problems and more complex familiar and non-familiar variables associated with non-routine problems.

Centres responded appropriately to external verification visit requests and candidate evidence was completed to a high standard, well organised and

generally fit for purpose. Internal assessment records and folio checklists were readily available and supported the external sampling process.

Candidate evidence was clearly marked in accordance with the evidence requirements and recorded on internal checklists.

Evidence was accurately judged against exemplar marking guidelines.

Folio evidence was outstanding as centres used naturally occurring assessment tasks to evidence Core Skills at different levels.

External verification reports revealed a high level of successful visits especially in schools and colleges where different levels of Core Skills are being delivered across a wide range of subjects.

Some levels of non-compliance were recorded where there was little or no evidence of initial and on-going reviews; no scheduled contact to review candidate progress; out of date instruments of assessment; and inaccurate judgements of candidate evidence.

Administration of assessments

Verification reports and external sampling confirmed that a significant number of centres are delivering assessments to a high standard and in accordance with the national standards.

The assessment delivery is generally very well organised, eg easy to track and the assessment evidence is gathered in accordance with the unit/award requirements.

Centres are familiar with the national standards and are consistently making valid, reliable, fair and safe judgements.

Centres continue to make good use of SQA exemplification materials. Some centres did not have the most up to date assessment instruments and/or unit specifications. Unit specifications and assessment instruments are accessible on the SQA public and secure websites respectively.

Administering assessments on a unit-by-unit basis is a common approach as candidate evidence can be matched against the requirements of specific units. Integrated assessment approaches included the mapping of several unit requirements to specific assessment tasks.

Internal verification systems and procedures are well established and working effectively. Good practice was highlighted in the use of online Sharepoint which promotes secure shared access. Centres continue to build on good practice and external verification feedback highlighted the following:

- ◆ Assessment decisions are valid, accurate, reliable, current and safe.
- ◆ Centres had robust internal verification policies and procedures in place and assessors and internal verifiers were working effectively to these standards.
- ◆ There was good evidence of standardisation activities, eg minutes of meetings; action points/development points; internal sampling records of assessment judgements; records of discussion and decisions reached.
- ◆ Internal and external events to support the sharing of good practice and understanding standards.
- ◆ Internal verification sampling should occur at the beginning, mid-point and/or end point of the assessment process. Candidate evidence may not be appropriate to the level entered and it is best to sample early on so that adjustments can be made and to ensure that candidates will gain credit for the appropriate level of work undertaken.

Areas of good practice

External verification reports indicated a range of good practice across centres and these form the benchmarks for continued improvement to raise the national standards.

- ◆ Meeting schedules and standardisation activities ensured consistency in understanding standards and promoted the sharing of good practice.
- ◆ Individual learning plans are routinely implemented and provide good evidence of initial and on-going reviews of both the learning and assessment process.
- ◆ Core Skills evidence was exemplified through a wide range of programme delivery. It was clear that candidates were extremely positive about their individual learning experiences and understood the value of Core Skills related to: Employability; Enterprise; Travel and Tourism; Customer Service; Scottish Studies; Routes to Careers; STEM; Plumbing; Social Care; Hair and Beauty; and Early Years.
- ◆ Learning and teaching resources are accessible on secure intranet shared drives for easy access by learners, assessors and internal verifiers.
- ◆ Centres continue to provide inclusive support from pre-delivery through to post-exit.
- ◆ Candidate progress and success is being recognised and showcased at centre award ceremonies.
- ◆ Centre induction and pre-entry enrolment systems and procedures were inclusive, supportive and transparent.
- ◆ Systems and procedures are in place to provide systematic learner reviews to support academic progression and positive destinations.
- ◆ Internal verification systems and procedures are robust and fit for purpose.
- ◆ Learner feedback was consistently positive about the learning experience.
- ◆ The assessment process makes good use of natural Core Skills evidence linked to real work situations.

Specific areas for improvement

External verification reports highlighted the following specific areas for improvement:

- ◆ The level of candidate evidence was not sufficient for the level being claimed. This was only identified in the external sampling process. Internal verification sampling needs to identify where evidence has not met the required level and indicate the required action to be taken.
- ◆ Centres need to ensure they use a separate workbook for each level.
- ◆ More thought must be given to the types of problems selected. In some instances, the problem selected did not provide enough depth and complexity at the higher level of Core Skills delivery.
- ◆ It was not always clear how the candidate had selected the criteria to review and evaluate the problem scenario.
- ◆ Unit checklists were current and up to date and clearly documented candidate progress. However, in a small minority of centres, checklists were not current for the most up to date unit specifications, assessment decisions had not been recorded, and assessor feedback was not provided.
- ◆ Internal verification procedures were generally robust and fit for purpose. However, this should not be a tick-box process and internal verifiers need to provide more robust feedback on the assessment decisions made.
- ◆ SQA provides guidance on the role of the internal verifier and internal verification. Centres need to encourage and support staff to read this information.
- ◆ Some centres are not making use of signed candidate declaration statements ensuring authenticity of candidate evidence.