



**National Qualifications 2016
Internal Assessment Report
Horticulture**

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

National courses

There were eight verification visits carried out for National units in verification group 146. Some were delivered as part of the NC Horticulture group award (GF3C 45) and the NC An Introduction to Horticulture (GF7Y 44) while others were delivered as standalone units.

General comments

A total of 20 different units in the verification group were verified:

H1JB 11 Plant Identification
H1YL 10 Horticulture: Prepare an area for Landscaping
H1KB 11 Soft Landscaping: Herbaceous Perennials
H1K9 11 Soft Landscaping: Specialist Plantings
H1JV 11 Setting out Landscape Areas
H1K8 10 Laying Slabs and Paving
H1JC 11 Basic Botany
H1K5 11 Soft Landscaping: General Plantings
H1JD 11 Planting and Maintenance
H1JG 11 Horticultural Fence Construction
H1X9 10 Plant Health
H1YM 10 Horticulture: Landscape Aftercare
H1JA 11 Soils and Growing Media in Horticulture
H1X4 10 Allotment Gardening
H1YL 10 Horticulture Prepare an Area for Landscaping
H1YF 10 Bedding Plant Production
H1JF 11 Plant Nutrition
H1K4 11 Use of Hand Tools in Horticulture
H1JE 11 Horticultural Machinery: Operation and Maintenance
H1JN 11 Plantsmanship

The centres visited included colleges, rehabilitation centres and organisations providing return-to-work programmes. The return-to-work programmes include horticultural practical skills such as laying paths and paving plus other additional qualifications, eg the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card. Centres report a high level of success in getting candidates work or volunteering opportunities following completion of the courses.

In this verification group the choice of units available to centres is large and covers all aspects of horticultural education including plantsmanship, plant production, maintenance, and hard and soft landscaping. Centres are able to choose the speciality that best suits their staff expertise, the client group and the job opportunities available in the area.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Where the units verified had an assessment support pack (ASP) available the assessments in the pack had been used. (ASPs are available for the mandatory units in the NC Horticulture award.) For second versions, and where no ASP was available, centres had devised their own assessment. All centres had produced assessments in accordance with the unit specification. Marking schemes were also provided to ensure consistency in assessment marking. Qualification verifiers found all of these to be appropriate and to meet the requirements of the unit specification.

Evidence requirements

All centres met the evidence requirements for all units and awards verified. No visit resulted in a hold on certification.

Administration of assessments

Record keeping was good in all centres and assessments were carried out in accordance with the requirements of the unit specification.

Areas of good practice

There were a number of areas of good practice identified at visits:

- ◆ Timetabling: the timetabling of practical units such as Soft Landscaping, Planting and Maintenance and Water Features together on one half day for the full academic year allowed easy integration of the subjects and was of benefit to the candidates.
- ◆ Facilities: the facilities used by centres were wide ranging and in most cases provided an excellent working environment for delivery and assessment of the units. Many centres used off-campus/site facilities to enhance the students' experience and complete the practical aspects of the units in real-life situations, eg laying paths in a community woodland. The use of live plant material for identification tests was common practice at each centre where the Plant Identification unit was delivered.
- ◆ Access: smaller, more remote centres used video conferencing for theory delivery which worked well and allowed learners, who otherwise would not have been able to access provision, to undertake units.

Specific areas for improvement

There were a few areas for improvement identified on visits:

- ◆ Standardisation: There was considerable variation in the practice of re-assessment for unit H1JB 11 Plant Identification. All centres followed the 5 groups of 10 approach to identify the 50 plants as defined in the standards. However, if a learner is unsuccessful in identifying any particular group of plants some centres give the same group of 10, others only the incorrect

ones, and in one centre they are given an entirely different group of 10 to identify. While this will be discussed further at the EV standardisation meeting it is suggested that where only a few plants are incorrectly identified that only these require to be identified as part of the reassessment process.

- ◆ Standardisation of assessment in the unit H1JE 11 Horticultural Machinery: Operation and Maintenance. This is something to be discussed at the next team/standardisation meeting.
- ◆ Facilities: in a few cases there was room for improvement in the facilities available for some aspects of the practical work, eg for unit H1YL 10 Horticulture: Prepare an Area for Landscaping. In order to record the achievement of outcome 3(b) when access to a site with underground services may be limited better use could be made of incorporating exercises such as a simple drawing to allow the learners to record their findings (locating the services) whilst completing the exercise.