NQ Verification 2016–17 Key Messages Round 1

01 ▶ Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	**Photography**
Verification event/visiting information	**Visiting**
Date published:	**March 2017**

National Courses/Units verified:

Unit code	Level	Unit title
H4KT 76	Higher	Image Making
H4KV 76	Higher	Contextual Imagery

02 ▶ Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

Visiting verifiers observed a significant amount of good practice in the centres that were visited. Good practice is outlined in the comments below.

All centres demonstrated that they had applied and implemented CfE principles in their approach to assessment. It is clear from the external verification (EV) reports that centres have developed resources and materials which offer personalisation and choice at an appropriate level of challenge for candidates. These resources helped to support candidates and enabled them to successfully generate evidence to meet the unit outcomes and assessment standards.

Both Image Making and Contextual Imagery units were presented for external verification by an equal number of centres.

The following unit assessment support packs (UASPs) were used by centres:

♦ Package 1: Unit by unit approach

♦ Package 2: Combined approach

♦ Package 3: Portfolio approach

Most centres used Package 1: Unit by unit approach, and Package 2: Combined approach. Some centres used Package 3: Portfolio approach.

Most centres used the UASPs effectively to deliver the units, however some centres used outdated UASPs from 2014. Centres are reminded that only the most recent version of the UASP must be used. The most recent versions were published in August 2016 and can be accessed via the SQA secure site.

Centres that used packages 1 and 2 reported that the structured approach was useful in ensuring their delivery met the requirements for each outcome and assessment standard. Some centres that used package 3 found difficulty in producing work which met the requirements of both outcomes. This resulted in centres either producing too much evidence for each outcome, or not enough.

Image making — outcome 1

Overall, candidates demonstrated a strong understanding of this outcome, in particular assessment standard 1.1. Most centres have adopted the use of a shortlist of suitable photographers, allowing candidates to select relevant influential image makers. This approach to assessment ensures that candidates research photographers that have relevant social, cultural, historical and scientific influences, while still allowing scope for personalisation and choice.

The quality of evidence produced for assessment standard 1.2 was inconsistent. Most candidates produced evidence that met the national standard, however some candidates failed to meet this assessment standard. In order to pass this assessment standard, candidates must analyse two pieces of work by each of their chosen photographers, with particular reference to the influences identified in assessment standard 1.1.

The general standard of evidence produced for assessment standard 1.3 was strong. Candidate responses included justified personal opinions on the work of their chosen photographers. In some instances, however, candidates failed to use appropriate language to convey their opinions. Centres are reminded that candidates must be able to use appropriate photographic language to describe their own work and that of other image makers.

Image Making — outcome 2

The evidence produced by candidates for this outcome was mostly of a very high standard and reflects the high quality of learning and teaching that has taken place prior to commencing the unit assessments.

All centres presented evidence digitally for the purposes of external verification. This approach helps to minimise delivery costs for the units and encourages candidates to make better use of their time. Most centres effectively presented evidence in Word documents and PowerPoint presentations.

Most work produced by candidates demonstrated a very strong technical understanding of digital photography. Final image selections were appropriate

and offered a range of different styles and genres. In particular, the quality of studio work, under controlled lighting was very good.

Some candidates presented evidence for this outcome that did not meet the national standard. In these cases, their images were often inconsistent in terms of quality, were out of focus and demonstrated a poor technical understanding of digital photography.

The majority of candidates produced evidence for assessment standard 2.2 that was very strong. Some candidates presented work for external verification that was inappropriately composed and did not demonstrate an understanding of effective compositional techniques.

The quality of evidence produced for assessment standard 2.3 was varied. Many candidates did not engage with their own work and offered no personal opinions or review of the images they had taken. The lack of appropriate technical language continues to be an issue within this outcome. This is an important aspect of both the unit assessment and course assessment; therefore, it is important that all candidates are encouraged to use appropriate technical language throughout. It was noted that centres that adopted the combined approach generally produced more suitable evaluations. Centres may wish to make use of Understanding Standards materials to assist them in this area. Materials are available on the SQA secure site.

Contextual Imagery — outcome 1

Evidence presented for the Contextual Imagery unit was of a very good standard. The quality of photographic work was strong and demonstrated candidates' ability to use appropriate photographic processes for creative effect.

Centres that adopted the combined approach produced evidence that strongly linked to the work of their influential photographers in the Image Making unit.

Most candidates selected styles and genres that were appropriate for their choice of equipment and level of technical skill. Some candidates had chosen styles and genres for assessment standard 1.2 which were too challenging for their current level of skill. Centres should always encourage candidates to pursue projects which are achievable and suitable for their level of skill.

Contextual Imagery — outcome 2

Evidence produced for outcome 2 was thorough, with most centres adopting a standardised approach by using both SQA and centre-devised pro formas. This approach to assessment ensures that all candidates have an understanding of the requirements of the outcome.

As with Image Making assessment standard 1.3, many candidates did not use appropriate subject-specific language which would be expected at Higher level. Candidates must be taught how to evaluate photographic images in preparation

for undertaking the unit assessment. This will ensure that they are equipped with the skills that they need to be able to achieve this assessment standard.

Many candidates did not meet the requirements of assessment standard 2.3 as they failed to evaluate the success of their work in relation to their original intentions. Centres are reminded that candidates must identify one valid strength and one area for improvement in their photographic work.

Assessment judgements

Most centres' assessment judgements were deemed to be accurate, consistent and reliable, in line with the national standard.

Assessment judgements were recorded clearly using either SQA-devised Candidate Assessment Records or an appropriately adapted version to suit an individual centre's approach.

The majority of centres demonstrated clear evidence of effective internal verification procedures.

Some centres that were new to presenting candidates for this course made use of colleagues from other centres to assist in the internal verification process and assist them with their own assessment judgements.

Centres currently without an internal verification procedure are reminded that all centres offering SQA qualifications should have an effective internal quality assurance procedure in place. More information on internal verification can be found at www.sqa.org.uk/IVtoolkit.

In some instances, centres submitted evidence for external verification that was marked as 'complete' when in actual fact the candidate had not successfully met, or produced evidence for, all assessment standards. Centres are reminded that 'interim' evidence is perfectly acceptable for the purposes of external verification; however, internal assessment must accurately reflect this.

Centres are advised to revisit candidate evidence periodically to ensure their judgements reflect the most up-to-date work for each candidate.

03 ▸ Section 3: General comments

Centre staff engaged well with external verification and found the process to be supportive and transparent.

Generally, candidate evidence and details of departmental learning and teaching were presented in a coherent manner, allowing the verification process to run smoothly.

There was strong evidence of candidate engagement and a high level of skill present in both units.

Centre staff should be commended for developing effective resources to support learning and teaching. The following ideas, techniques, strategies, policies and processes are examples of good practice which were observed in centres' delivery of both units:

♦ The overall quality of candidate responses indicates the effectiveness of the learning and teaching taking place prior to the commencement of the unit assessments.

♦ Candidates are provided with excellent resources in the form of centre-devised course handbooks, tutorials and workshops that support their understanding of the subject both creatively and technically.

♦ Some centres provide candidates with a list of photographers to investigate for Image Making outcome 1. This approach supports candidates in meeting this outcome successfully by vetting the photographers that they choose.

♦ Centres have made use of a variety of digital formats to present candidate unit work. This effective approach to assessment can reduce course costs without compromising the candidates' experience.

♦ The overall quality of evidence that was verified this year was markedly improved on previous years.