

NQ Verification 2016–17 Key Messages Round 1

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Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Practical Technologies
Verification event/visiting information	Visiting
Date published:	March 2017

National courses/units verified:

Unit code	Level	Unit title	
H25G 73	National 3	Working with Tools	Practical Craft Skills
H25J 73	National 3	Making an Item	Practical Craft Skills
H25P 75	National 5	Bench Skills	Practical Metalworking
H25W 74	National 4	Carcase Construction	Practical Woodworking
H25W 75	National 5	Carcase Construction	Practical Woodworking
H25X 74	National 4	Machining and Finishing	Practical Woodworking
H25X 75	National 5	Machining and Finishing	Practical Woodworking
H25V 74	National 4	Flat-frame Construction	Practical Woodworking
H25V 75	National 5	Flat-frame Construction	Practical Woodworking

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Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

The majority of centres are praised for their diligence in taking on board the 2015–16 key messages. There is absolute confidence that the majority of centres will again make sure they read and follow the advice given below regarding approaches to assessment.

The majority of centres chose to follow a unit-by-unit assessment approach at all levels within the Practical Technologies suite of courses and units, with only a small number of centres using either the combined or portfolio approaches.

A number of centres had successfully developed their own valid approach to assessment, through assimilating and/or modifying the SQA unit assessment support packs (UASPs). A greater number of centres had adopted this approach

than in previous years. A minority of centres had used the prior verification service offered by SQA to ensure that centre-devised tasks were acceptable to use as approaches to assessment. Centres are strongly recommended to submit any centre-devised assessments for prior verification, which is a free service that ensures an approach to assessment is acceptable.

Any centres developing their own approach to assessment are reminded that all candidates must be given the opportunity to generate assessment evidence for all of the outcomes and assessment standards of the unit. It is imperative that candidates are given a sufficient amount of assessment task guidance, support and adequate time to complete the assessment task. In terms of Practical Technologies units, this will include:

- ◆ specific instructions of the task(s) the candidates need to attempt
- ◆ a copy of detailed working drawings for all joints and artefacts to be produced
- ◆ the tolerances that candidates need to adhere to
- ◆ the list of assessment criteria that they and the assessor will use to mark their work (which is listed in the 'Making assessment judgements' section of the judging evidence tables in the UASPs)
- ◆ a task checklist to document their progress through the task
- ◆ worksheets with specific instructions/questions
- ◆ any other relevant information the candidate may require

At National 3 level, a number of centres had tailored their artefacts to suit the needs of their candidates. There was an even split of centres using either wood or metal materials for their artefacts. This approach is to be commended, but central to success of this must be a clear focus on the information given above, in terms of approach, guidance, support and by the centre making clear references to the judging evidence tables to substantiate their assessment judgements.

Centres should make clear reference to assessment standards in their assessor comments. This shows a clear understanding of the requirements of assessment at unit level (and also for National 5 course assessment).

Assessment standards that refer to skills-based evidence were generally approached extremely well by all centres, eg National 3, Working with Tools — '2.3 Using tools, with guidance, to complete preliminary cutting and shaping of a supplied range of materials in accordance with the task'. Centres have an excellent understanding of generating evidence that demonstrates candidates' skills.

Centres generally approached assessment standards that refer to candidate knowledge and understanding similarly, eg National 3, Working with Materials — '1.3 Describing good practice in sustainability and recycling'. Centres are encouraged to develop a more investigative approach to knowledge-and-understanding-based assessment standards, which in turn will generate candidate evidence in this area.

Across all units, for both Practical Metalworking and Practical Woodworking courses at all levels, candidates and assessors are providing evidence of candidates' preparation for skills-based tasks, mainly through SQA-devised paperwork from the UASPs. A number of centres have developed their own recording and assessing documentation including various assessor checklists and candidate recording sheets.

Centres are encouraged to use this approach and to develop situations where all candidates can experience a range of diverse conditions in relation to preparation for skills-based tasks. For example, National 5 Flat Frame Construction — '1.2 Confirming that woodworking tools and equipment are in good condition and safe working order before, during and after use' — do all candidates get the opportunity to identify a tool that is faulty, such as a file with a cracked handle or a plane with a chipped blade? Comments relating to behaviour and/or following instructions are not sufficient to achieve this assessment standard.

For Practical Woodworking, details of joint types to be used are given throughout the course documentation. The majority of centres are using appropriate approaches for demonstrating candidates' skills to evidence all associated assessment standards eg National 5, Carcase Construction — '2.2 Constructing joints such that joint gaps do not exceed specified tolerance'. Centres should ensure that candidates have the opportunity to construct joints that may be a similar size to those within the National 4 added value unit or the National 5 practical activity, if they are to be presented for a course award.

Centres must ensure that candidates work on the materials specified in the course assessment specification (CAS) document. Centres are also reminded that Practical Woodworking joints in outcome 2 of Flat Frame Construction and Carcase Construction units must not be glued prior to both internal and external verification procedures taking place; however, the majority of centres are taking this advice on board.

For Practical Metalworking, the majority of centres are using suitable approaches for demonstrating candidates' skills in using a range of marking-out tools, machine tools and equipment across all relevant unit work, to evidence all associated assessment standards eg National 4, Machine Processes — 2.3 'Performing drilling and countersinking operations, with guidance, on a pedestal drill to within specified tolerance'.

For Practical Craft Skills, Practical Woodworking and Practical Metalworking, we would reiterate that machine/power tools, other than those specified in the CAS, are not valid for assessment purposes. The majority of centres are taking this advice on board but a few are still submitting candidate evidence that cannot be assessed because of invalid machine use.

For Practical Woodworking, assessment standard 2.3 at both National 4 and 5 involves the assessment of applying a surface finish. Finishes that obscure assessable candidate evidence must not be applied prior to both internal and external verification procedures taking place; the majority of centres are taking this advice on board. Similarly, within the Practical Metalworking unit, if a finish is

applied to an artefact, then the finish cannot obscure assessable candidate evidence. Details of the specific requirements of finishing can be found in the course documentation.

Assessment judgements

The majority of centres are making fair, accurate and above all reliable assessment judgements across the majority of assessment standards in all levels within the Practical Technologies suite of units. Centres are commended for their hard work in this area. Both internal and external quality assurance procedures are ensuring continued credibility of Practical Technologies National Qualifications.

Where centres had made use of UASPs, assessors had made effective use of the information on judging evidence tables to support assessment judgements for each candidate. On the whole, assessment judgements were clearly based on the assessment standards and candidates had been appropriately identified as pass or fail against these. From the evidence submitted, it was clear that most assessors have accurately and consistently applied the assessment standards and they not only have an excellent grasp of the standards, but are striving to ensure that candidates produce professional, high quality work.

In a minority of centres, assessment judgements were not accepted; in all of these centres they were judged to have been lenient in their assessment decisions for some or all candidates. The judging evidence tables within the appropriate UASP must be used to make reliable assessment decisions.

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Section 3: General comments

Evidence type

Just over half of the centres verified provided evidence that was complete. This means that nearly half of the centres provided evidence that was a combination of mixed and/or interim. There may be a number of reasons for this, but centres are reminded that any candidate presented for a final course award must have successfully passed all units within that course.

Verification cannot proceed

A minority of centres were issued with a 'verification cannot proceed' decision during round 1 verification. This was due to centres having insufficient candidate evidence to allow verification decisions (on both validity of centre approach and reliability of centre judgements) to take place by the visiting assessor. Centres are reminded to read the SQA document [Evidence required for external verification of units \(including added value units\) during visiting verification](#), and to refer specifically to the relevant subject before collating candidate evidence for visiting verification.

Internal verification

Having and applying an internal verification policy is a requirement of a centre's approval to offer SQA qualifications and, in the majority of visits, there was clear

evidence of such policies being applied. If centres require further information on internal verification, there is guidance available on SQA's website.

Centres are reminded that a 'common questions' document can be found on the subject web page on the main SQA website.