



NQ Verification 2015–16 Key Messages Round 1

Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Psychology
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	March 2017

National Courses/Units verified:

Psychology National 5 and Higher — all units

Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

The majority of centres used SQA-provided assessments from the unit assessment support packs (UASPs).

The majority of centres used Package 1: Unit-by-unit approach although there were a few centres using Package 2: Combined or Package 3: Portfolio approach. It is possible that using the portfolio or combined approach could reduce the amount of assessment for candidates. If centres do choose the portfolio approach, it is recommended that the tasks used for gathering candidate evidence be included in the verification sample.

While it is encouraging to see centres devising their own approaches to assessment, it is strongly recommended that these be sent for prior verification before use with candidates. There were a number of centre-devised assessments that did not enable candidates to generate evidence to meet the assessment standards. Centres are advised to make use of all documentation and the verification team to support their writing of assessments. It is also advised that a judging evidence table be written where centres have devised their own assessments in order to support assessors in making appropriate assessment judgements.

Centres should note that assessing a whole unit using a closed-book approach increases the level of demand for their candidates and as such they are potentially being disadvantaged.

Centres are advised to develop a more secure understanding of the differences between unit assessment and course assessment; the purpose of unit assessment being to assess skills whereas course assessment aims to assess content and skills. Centres might find it helpful to review their unit assessment tasks to ensure that these are aimed at gathering evidence of minimum competency in the assessment standards.

Assessment judgements

The verification team was able to confirm assessment judgements in three-quarters of presenting centres. Where this was not the case, assessment judgements had either not been securely based on the published assessment standards of the units, or centres had used alternative approaches to measuring success.

In some instances centres were lenient in judging application of knowledge. This occurred predominantly for unit H262 76 Higher Psychology: Social Behaviour assessment standard 1.3 'Applying understanding of social psychology to everyday behaviour' where candidates had explained an everyday behaviour using concepts but not research.

In addition, some centres were lenient in judging the stages of the research process for assessment standard 1.1 'Explaining the stages of the research process' for the unit H260 76 Higher Psychology: Research. Centres are directed towards pages 3 and 8 of the SQA-provided UASP Package 1: Unit-by-unit approach where the required eight stages of the research process are listed. There were some instances of inaccuracies in assessment judgements and centres are reminded to use the judging evidence table when making assessment judgements if using an SQA-provided UASP.

Many centres had good practice in checking assessment judgements, eg cross-marking. In addition, many centres had good practice with respect to the activities of the internal verifier who sampled scripts in an agreed manner and recorded the details and decisions from this activity.

Most centres were correctly entering candidates for the appropriate level. Many centres provided clear checklists or grids indicating where assessment standards had been achieved which was helpful during the verification event. Identifying where assessment standards were met on candidates' scripts was noted as good practice as it provided very clear, supportive feedback for candidates to measure their own progress.

Section 3: General comments

It is important that centre-devised assessment materials relate clearly to the assessment standards for each outcome. Prior verification of centre-devised assessment materials should ensure this and is recommended.

Centres should ensure that assessments devised internally address all the relevant assessment standards for the unit outcome and give candidates full opportunity within the task to be able to demonstrate their performance against the standards.

The verification team was encouraged to see evidence of personalisation and choice in some approaches to assessment, particularly in candidate posters and presentations. Candidates seemed engaged with the subject and demonstrated ownership of their learning. It was also encouraging to see some centres adopting a themed approach, giving candidates the opportunity for deep learning and understanding of psychology. Candidates given a focused question for unit assessment also produced insightful responses.

Centres are reminded that candidate evidence should be viewed holistically in relation to assessment standards. Assessment approaches should enable candidates to achieve the minimum standard and as such there is no requirement for the use of time limits.

Annotating candidate evidence with an indication of where assessment standards had been met was extremely useful during the verification event.

It was also encouraging to see centres adopting the use of systems to ensure authenticity of candidates' responses, and where this had been used, the verification team was able to see detailed, supportive and developmental feedback specific to each candidate.

Centres are required to submit an indication of the internal verification approaches adopted. A clear context of the conditions of assessment and internal verification procedures is extremely helpful and supports verifiers in confirming assessment judgements. The [SQA Internal Verification Toolkit](#) provides advice on the development and maintenance of an effective internal quality assurance system.