



Higher National Qualifications

Senior Verifier Report

2007

Subject: Mathematics and Statistics (CG 142)

Sector Panel: Engineering, Science and Mathematics

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification which has taken place within Higher National Qualifications in this subject.

HIGHER NATIONAL UNITS

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

General comments:

- Thirteen centres were subject to external verification; only one centre experienced a hold on certification. Most visits focused on three HN units and, over all centres visited, a total of sixteen different units were scrutinized.
- The team of external verifiers found that, for the overwhelming majority of centres, there was (continued) evidence of a high level of consistency with national standards in assessment. Nearly all centres showed a sound awareness of the need for internal verification procedures, a rigorous attitude to their implementation, and accurate recording of this essential ongoing aspect of delivery. In general, sound practice by staff was seen to lead to effective learning by students.
- Where any adverse comments were made in reports, they were mainly concerned with lack of completeness or lack of clarity in IV procedures. In a couple of cases, several discrepancies were found in staff judgement of candidate performance – these could have been identified and addressed by centres at an early stage if IV had been more robust.
- Several of the centres used the EV visits to emphasize feedback on three recently introduced units:
DE3M35 Statistics for Business,
FO2P34 Mathematics for Construction Engineering,
DW4F33 Mathematics for Construction.
The concerns expressed about some aspects of the unit specifications (and assessment exemplars) have been addressed and are now resolved, with revised unit specifications on the SQA website (and a revised assessment exemplar for the first on the secure website).

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

Good Practice

- Nearly all instruments of assessment presented for verification were not only in precise agreement with unit specification but also, where appropriate, sensibly and effectively contextualised. This underlines to candidates the valuable applicableness of the unit content to their course of study, and encourages additional motivation. The emphasis on contextualisation was also seen in several samples of teaching materials.
- On the whole, mark schemes for assessments were clearly-structured and well-detailed, enabling assessors to achieve accuracy and consistency in assessment decisions.
- Transparency of marking, along with suitable annotations where appropriate, was seen to provide candidates with positive support, particularly in the event of reassessment.

Areas for Further Development

(Points below apply to some centres, not all.)

- Because rigorous IV almost always leads to successful and straightforward EV, it is to the advantage of centres if they ensure that not only are all relevant procedures in place but also that they can be evidenced in a user-friendly framework. Although rigour is essential, and whilst each centre has flexibility of operation, all possible streamlining as well as maximum clarity should be incorporated into the mechanisms.
- For optimum effectiveness, IV activities should be scheduled on an ongoing basis rather than concentrated into separate short timespans. It should be noted that if IV is left near to closure of unit results, potential adjustment of assessment decisions may not be possible.
- When instruments of assessment are constructed according to the unit specification by sampling of Knowledge and Skills, they must satisfy the requirement that 'different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion' – centres should ensure that they adhere to this condition.