



Qualification Verification Summary Report

NQ Verification 2019–20

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Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Modern Studies
Verification event/visiting information	Verification Event
Date published:	August 2020

National Courses/Units verified:

Modern Studies National 3
Modern Studies National 4

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Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

The most common assessment approach used by centres was SQA-generated unit assessment support packs. Some centres did submit adapted or centre-generated assessments which corresponded to the appropriate assessment standards for the level being assessed.

Some centres had produced very effective support booklets, for both N3 and N4, that clearly outline the tasks undertaken and the level of candidate performance needed to achieve the assessment standards. These tended to be effective in giving guidance to the candidate in how to access the assessment standards.

Within the submissions the most common approach was in the form of written responses to assessment questions. However, some centres allowed candidates to create posters, PowerPoint presentations and information leaflets to help them access and achieve the assessment standards and overall outcomes. All of these were considered to be acceptable ways of allowing the candidates to achieve each of the assessment standards. These were often effectively annotated at the specific point where candidates achieved particular assessment standards.

The approaches to assessment were mostly valid and accurate. However, some centres continue to use outdated assessments with there being a necessity for some of the information to be updated.

Some centres did not include judging the evidence tables. Centres are reminded that these should be included with their overall submissions even if the assessment used was generated by SQA. Where more than one assessment is being used for candidates, centres should ensure that they submit all judging the evidence tables for all candidates and across all levels.

Some centres continue to over-inflate the assessment standards for some of the outcomes. The impact of this is that centres apply their own standards and incorrectly judge the candidate to have not achieved an outcome/assessment standard when they may have actually achieved the national standard. Some centres are assessing at a standard comparable to National 5 and not National 4, particularly for the knowledge-based questions, which require straightforward and not detailed descriptions or explanations. Centres are reminded that they should follow the specific assessment standards and apply the relevant judging the evidence table when assessing candidate performance, and that it is these standards that the candidate should be judged against in terms of outcomes.

If centres are amending an SQA unit assessment support pack, they should state which specific unit assessment support pack is being amended. Centres are reminded that they should aim to use the most up to date SQA unit assessment support packs.

Overall, in terms of approaches to assessment, most of the evidence submitted was valid and in line with the national standards. Centres are reminded that if they are devising their own approaches to assessment, they can use the SQA's prior verification service to validate their centre submissions.

Assessment judgements

There is strong evidence from centre submissions of the national standards being applied across candidates and between colleagues for each of the levels sampled.

Centres are continuing to make appropriate and valid assessment judgements of candidates' evidence for each of the assessment standards and outcomes. These judgements are also being correctly verified as part of the centre's internal verification procedures.

There was evidence from centres that the SQA documentation (assessment and judging the evidence table) was being applied effectively. In some cases, centres were successfully adapting the judging the evidence table to meet the specific demands of the centre's assessment tasks. This personalisation should ensure consistent assessment judgements being made between colleagues and across candidates within centres.

Centres used the judging the evidence table very effectively in articulating the assessment standard to markers and verifiers. The judging the evidence table should be used by centres to ensure consistency of assessment judgements.

There was evidence of centres continuing to use annotation effectively on scripts at the section in candidate submissions where they have achieved the relevant assessment standard. This is considered to be good practice as it can facilitate consistent judgements between colleagues and across candidates.

There was also evidence of cross-marking and random sampling of candidate evidence tied to robust and consistent internal verification policies and procedures. These measures ensure assessment judgement consistency across not just all candidates but also between markers and the centre's assessment judgement verifier.

Where candidates' submissions were in the form of a poster or booklet, centres were effectively annotating on the submission at the specific point where it was judged that the candidate had achieved the outcome. This judgement was then countersigned by the centre verifier. This is a highly effective practice for ensuring consistency of centre judgement across all candidates and between all colleagues. Centres are encouraged to adopt this approach.

There was strong evidence of continuing professional dialogue taking place within centres on judging of assessment standards in line with a robust internal verification process and procedure. Some centres produced and made good use of workbooks/logbooks in effectively supporting candidates to achieve the assessment standards. These approaches highlighted the high level of dialogue and discussion occurring between colleagues and candidates, particularly where remediation was necessary to allow candidates to achieve assessment standards and overall outcomes.

There was strong evidence of the candidate assessment record being used very effectively when recording candidate progress and achievements. There was evidence of very detailed feedback being given to candidates in some centres. The candidate assessment record was used very well when recording verbal follow-ups of candidates who just fell short of the assessment standard. However, some centres should consider using the candidate assessment record more thoroughly and effectively, particularly where the candidate may have narrowly failed to achieve the assessment standard.

Centres appear to be more familiar and confident in using verbal remediation when re-assessing candidates. Centres should note that when this is the case, they should still follow their own internal verification processes and ensure that the candidate's verbal response is noted and assessed and that the assessment judgement agreed by the centre's verifier. If a positive outcome is agreed during this two-stage process, this should be recorded, and paperwork amended.

To assist with external verification, centres are encouraged to annotate candidate evidence at the specific point in the candidate submission where it was deemed that they have achieved each assessment standard.

Centres should be reminded to submit original candidate evidence and not photocopies. It is best practice to ensure cross-marking has taken place using different

coloured pens — original evidence helps make this clear to the external verification team.

Some centres still appear not to have in place an internal verification statement or policy. Or, if they do, it wasn't apparent from their submission that it is being applied. Centres are reminded that a policy statement and procedure is a very effective way of outlining next steps and ensuring consistency of judgement. It should also be submitted with other materials during SQA verification events.

Centres are reminded that the threshold approach for re-assessing candidates, which was introduced for session 2016–17, remains valid and should be applied where relevant.

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Section 3: General comments

Overall, the standard and quality of centre submissions was high. There appeared to be good understanding of the requirements of the verification processes, including strong internal verification processes and the range of evidence to be submitted. There was good evidence of national standards being applied consistently across candidates and centres, with pupils being presented at the appropriate level.

Centres clearly understand the assessment standards, and there was clear evidence of consistent application of these standards between colleagues. There was also evidence of a partner-based approach between colleagues and centres in sharing and maintaining assessment standards. Some centres provided very effective task booklets which offered support and guidance to candidates on how they should approach each assessment standard.

There was also evidence for the majority of centres of thorough and effective internal assessment and verification procedures. These procedures were robust, with evidence of cross-marking and annotation of candidate scripts by both marker and internal verifier. Centres appear to be having detailed discussions about candidate performance and the consistent application of assessment standards. Centres are effectively recording candidate performance and progress through detailed and specific candidate assessment records.