



**Higher National Qualifications
National Qualifications
Scottish Vocational Qualifications**

**Qualification Verification Summary Report 2017
Construction Technician**

Introduction

Verification Group 161, Construction Technician consists of a small team of six external verifiers (EVs). Their activities in the past session have not been restricted to external verification, but have included prior verification of assessment materials, approval of centres to deliver SQA qualifications as well as credit and levelling of proposed qualifications and awards. In addition, all EVs contribute to the management, delivery and development of qualifications through their liaison with the regular Qualification Support Team (QST) meetings.

In session 2016–17, 43 external verification events took place. In only one visit was it necessary to issue an action plan with detailed advice given to the centre staff in order to resolve the deficiencies.

The following units and qualifications were reviewed during session 2016–17:

HN Units verified

H72A	34	Construction Technology: Substructure
DW54	33	Construction Technology: Domestic Construction
DW4H	34	Building Science
H726	34	Building Measurement and Cost Studies
DW3R	34	Architectural Design Drawing and Sketching
DW53	34	Construction Materials and Specification
H72D	35	Sustainability and Modern Methods of Construction
DW4P	33	Building Services: Introduction
H728	34	Construction Industry Fundamentals
H39F	34	Architectural Professional Practice: Design Management
DW3M	34	Quantitative Building Studies: Substructure and Drainage
H726	34	Building Measurement and Cost Studies

HN Graded Units verified

DX21	34	Built Environment: Graded Unit 1
H732	34	Quantity Surveying: Graded Unit 1
H72R	34	Built Environment: Graded Unit 1
H72S	34	Architectural Technology: Graded Unit 1
H730	34	Construction Management: Graded Unit 1
H731	35	Construction Management: Graded Unit 2
H72V	34	Building Surveying: Graded Unit 1
H72Y	35	Building Surveying: Graded Unit 2

National Units verified

F3JC	12	Mechanics for Construction: An Introduction
F3JB	11	Construction Materials: An Introduction
H66G	45	Construction Calculations
H660	45	Sustainable Design for Architecture
H65X	46	Construction Technology: Substructure and Groundworks
F3J9	12	Construction Materials: Properties and Testing
F3JS	12	Sustainability in the Building Industry

F3J6 12 Civil Engineering Sitework
H65Y 46 Construction Technology: Superstructure and Finishes
D917 11 Construction Measurement and Costing
E9D4 10 Construction Drawing 1: Introduction
F3J8 12 Computer Aided Drawing in Construction
F3JB 11 Construction Materials: An Introduction

SVQs verified

GL27 23 Construction Contracting Operations: Site Technical Support
GC4J 24 Built Environment Design
GL26 24 Construction Contracting Operations Management: General
G95L 23 Construction Contracting Operations: Site Technical Support
GC2A 23 Construction Contracting Operations: Estimating
GL24 24 Construction Contracting Operations Management: Estimating
GL92 23 Built Environment Design
GJ19 24 Construction Site Management: Building and Civil Engineering
GJ1C 23 Construction Site Supervision:
GJ1D 23 Construction Site Supervision: Highways Maintenance and Repair
GF5N 23 Occupational Work Supervision
GJ19 24 Construction Site Management
GK7C 25 Construction Senior Management
GC4V 25 Construction Senior Management
GC4P 24 Construction Contracting Operations: Surveying
GC2C 23 Construction Contracting Operations: General
GC4M 29 Construction Contracting Operations: General
GL8Y 24 Built Environment Design
GJ1A 24 Construction Site Management: Highways Maintenance and Repair

Category 2: Resources

Criterion 2.1: Assessors and internal verifiers must be competent to assess and internally verify, in line with the requirements of the qualification.

(This criterion is completed for regulated qualifications only.)

Centres delivering SVQs

Almost all staff in all centres were suitably qualified and vocationally competent to deliver effectively the qualifications within the centres' portfolios. A very few recently appointed staff have yet to achieve the appropriate L&D awards for assessor or internal verifier. However, all of the new staff have already enrolled for these awards and have target dates for achievement. Many of the centres have appointed mentors to support new staff through their first session of delivery.

Staff in all centres took part in continuing professional development (CPD) activity appropriate to the vocational areas in which they operated. More than a few were also pursuing academic or professional CPD opportunities offered by chartered institutes. In some centres, there was active reflection and evaluation of CPD activities in relation to programme delivery. The evaluation of CPD activity within centres has been considered as an improvement on previous years and is being actively promoted by external verifiers during verification activities.

Centres delivering NQ and HN Qualifications

While this criterion does not apply to these centres, some have made the information freely available to the visiting external verifiers. In almost all of these cases, it was demonstrated that staff were competent and qualified to deliver the HN programmes. In addition, in almost all of these centres there was a robust approach to CPD activity.

Criterion 2.4: There must be evidence of initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials.

Almost all centres demonstrated a robust and consistent approach to the review of all aspects of the delivery of the qualifications within their Built Environment portfolios. The format of the initial and ongoing reviews varied from centre to centre. However, in almost all centres there was an observed routine of pre-delivery verification, regular meetings of the delivery and assessment team, standardisation processes and curriculum reviews. The latter also included feedback contribution from learner groups. In many centres, post-delivery feedback from candidates is used effectively to inform the analysis and evaluation review of unit delivery. In addition, for those centres delivering SVQs, there was clear evidence of review and risk assessment for almost all on-site assessment events.

Category 3: Candidate support

Criterion 3.2: Candidates' development needs and prior achievements (where appropriate) must be matched against the requirements of the award.

It was clear that all centres give due consideration to the knowledge and experience of the individual learner prior to enrolment and induction onto any qualification. In almost all centres, there is a routine of pre-enrolment interview during which the candidate's prior achievements are compared with the requirements of the selected award. Employers of those learners pursuing a Modern Apprenticeship (MA) or an SVQ are regularly involved in the vetting and selection processes. In many centres, there are interim reviews during the delivery of the qualifications to ensure candidates' understanding and progress.

Criterion 3.3: Candidates must have scheduled contact with their assessor to review their progress and to revise their assessment plans accordingly.

In all centres that deliver NQs and HNs, candidates have regular, scheduled contact with their respective assessors. The frequency of contact is dictated by the candidates' attendance regime — full-time, part-time or block-release — and associated subject timetabling. In addition to the formal, scheduled contact periods, many assessors offered supplementary review opportunities, normally in response to requests from candidates. Many centres were using Moodle or a similar learning portal to formalise and record candidates' reviews and assessment planning decisions.

In almost all of the centres involved in SVQ delivery, assessors establish and agree a schedule of meetings with the individual candidate and his or her employers. The frequency of the contact will be appropriate to the qualification being pursued, the centre's delivery model, the location of the candidate's place of work, (site location — local or remote; site accessibility — open, controlled or secure) and the available communications facilities. These scheduled contacts are supplemented by many of the assessors and candidates through e-mail exchanges and, in some cases, through Skype or FaceTime.

The past session has shown an expansion in the use of social media to facilitate communications between assessors and candidates in some centres. This has been seen mostly with candidates operating in locations remote from the centres. It has been observed that there has been no loss of rigour as a result of the use of this form of communication. Most assessors reported a perceived improvement in candidate performance because of the ease of accessibility of their assessor.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

Criterion 4.2: Internal assessment and verification procedures must be implemented to ensure standardisation of assessment.

In almost all centres copies of the relevant quality assurance policies and procedures are well-documented in master folders/control files. There was clear evidence that the assessment and internal verification processes were implemented effectively in all but one centre. Considerable

documentation was available in the master folders, control files and in candidates' portfolios which recorded standardisation activity throughout the delivery of the qualifications.

Many centres have moved over to electronic learning portals to enhance the management of delivery of the qualifications. The documentation relating to assessment, verification and standardisation and other quality elements is held within the portal with accessibility scaled to the role of the user. External verifiers have commended these improvements and their impact on accessibility and efficiency.

Criterion 4.3: Assessment instruments and methods and their selection and use must be valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair.

In almost all cases external verifiers noted that assessment instruments and re-assessment instruments met all of SQA's requirements. All centres delivering NQs and HNs were acutely aware of the assessment burden on learners and planned assessment activity to avoid overload of assessment at specific times during delivery. Assessment events were also considered to ensure that they were appropriate, equitable, robust and fair. Almost all centres had thoroughly documented pre-delivery checklists that confirmed the suitability of the assessment instruments and activity. In addition to the pre-delivery checklists, those centres offering SVQs also considered on-site assessment risks and hazards prior to any assessment activity.

It was noted that almost all of the assessors in centres offering SVQs spent time planning and agreeing assessment activity with each individual learner.

Criterion 4.4: Assessment evidence must be the candidate's own work, generated under SQA's required conditions.

All centres have very thorough malpractice policies in place with well-publicised sanctions appropriate to the scale of the infringement. The policy and procedures tend to be introduced to candidates upon enrolment and are regularly reinforced throughout the duration of the qualification.

In practice, most candidates complete a Candidate Declaration Form when completing and submitting an assessment script or portfolio of work. This particularly applies to graded unit submissions.

For those learners following an SVQ programme, much of the candidate evidence is produced under observed conditions in the candidate's own work environment (confirmed in an assessor's observation report). Authentication of the candidate's evidence in that circumstance is easily achieved. Nonetheless, the candidate would also complete a unit achievement or declaration form on completion of the award.

Criterion 4.6: Evidence of candidates' work must be accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements.

With the exception of one centre, all centres demonstrated that assessors' judgements were accurate and consistent and in accordance with unit evidence requirements and the

requirements of SQA. In almost all cases, standardisation and internal verification activities were fully documented.

Many centres avail themselves of SQA's prior verification facility to ensure that assessment instruments, associated marking schedules and conditions are appropriate and meet the required standards. This is particularly effective for graded unit assessment materials. The comprehensive marking schedules ensure consistency of judgement over a number of assessors.

In some centres in which there is only one assessor and one internal verifier, the assessor and internal verifier necessarily work closely together to maintain appropriate quality standards. Verification and standardisation meetings were formally documented to ensure consistency when reaching assessment decisions. Each sampled element of the qualification was concluded with a verification report confirming the validity of assessment decisions.

Feedback to candidates was comprehensive in most cases, but in a very few centres it was perceived as inadequate. Many centres have now adopted learning portals such as Moodle and SharePoint in order to communicate with learners on all elements of delivery, assessment and progress. However, it was found that these facilities, in many instances, supplemented oral and written feedback which was given at assessment review.

Criterion 4.7: Candidate evidence must be retained in line with SQA requirements.

All centres demonstrated a thorough knowledge of SQA requirements on the retention of candidate evidence and associated documentation. Almost all centres now retain documentation electronically and the candidates' hard copy scripts and portfolios are stored securely. In a few centres these storage facilities are located off-site. However, there were no issues reported relating to the retention of evidence for the purposes of external verification review.

More than a few centres responsible for the delivery of HN graded units require candidates to produce two copies of their final project. This allows the centre to retain one copy and return the second to the candidate, after marking and grading. The candidates use their copies of the graded unit submission when pursuing employment and/or further learning.

Criterion 4.9: Feedback from qualification verifiers must be disseminated to staff and used to inform assessment practice.

In almost all centres there are well documented team meetings where the outcomes of external verification activities are reviewed. If an action plan were to be issued, these centres would respond promptly completing the actions within agreed timeframes.

It is significant that only one action plan was issued in this session. The centre concerned had only recently been approved and had subsequently enrolled a very small number of candidates. There was a lack of appreciation by the assessor of the SQA requirements to index/cross-reference candidate evidence to the specific skills and knowledge requirements within the particular unit specification.

This would suggest that the standards of assessment and quality assurance within centres are improving year on year.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

The following good practice was reported during session 2016–17:

- ◆ Use of IT learning portals to manage and support the delivery of qualifications
- ◆ Evaluation of CPD in relation to programme delivery
- ◆ Accessibility of assessors outwith scheduled contact times
- ◆ High quality of documentation supporting the delivery of qualifications
- ◆ Quality of instruments of assessment for graded units
- ◆ Use of Skype and similar applications in order to support candidates operating in remote and/or secure locations.

Specific areas for development

The following areas for development were reported during session 2016–17:

- ◆ Recording and evaluation of CPD activity
- ◆ Development of alternate assessment materials, especially for graded unit assessment
- ◆ Compliance with consolidated assessment strategy and SQA's requirements for internal verification (one centre only)