



Higher National Qualifications

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2017

Biology

Introduction

Eight external verification visits were carried out by the team this session. Centres had a clear understanding of the standards required and the visits were successful.

The units externally verified were as follows:

H921 35	Animal Biology
H922 34	Biochemistry: Theory and Laboratory Skills
DH2J 34	Biochemistry: Theory and Practice
H927 34	Cell Biology: Theory and Laboratory Skills
H929 34	DNA and Genetics
DJ6X 35	DNA Molecular Techniques: Theory and Practice
DJ6Y 34	DNA Structure and Function
H92F 35	Microbiological Techniques
H92G 34	Microbiology: Theory and Laboratory Skills
H92J 35	Protein Structure and Function
DP9M 34	Science Industry: Key Issues
H91Y 35	Applied Biological Sciences: Graded Unit 2
DR1P 35	Biomedical Sciences: Graded Unit 2

Category 2: Resources

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

All centres visited had established internal quality control procedures. These were robust, effective and routinely applied. Centre staff demonstrated a good understanding of the resources required for each of the units verified, and there was documented evidence of effective, ongoing reviews.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

All centres visited had processes in place to ensure that candidates' development needs and any prior achievements are taken into consideration. All centres visited have a consistently high level of candidate achievement/satisfaction.

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

All the units which were externally verified are delivered in-house, through regular formal class contact. Candidates had scheduled contact with assessors to review their progress and, where appropriate, to revise assessment plans.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

All centres visited have developed robust, effective and routinely applied internal quality control procedures. These are generally documented on centre virtual learning environments (VLEs) and are freely available to all.

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

Internal verification of assessment instruments is universally applied by all centres verified. SQA assessment support packs (ASPs), where available, are used by all centres verified, and specific re-assessment instruments had been submitted to SQA for prior verification. In those instances where SQA ASPs were unavailable, most centres had devised valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair assessment instruments.

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

Centres verified have adopted a variety of procedures to ensure the authenticity of candidate submissions. Almost all centres routinely applied anti-plagiarism software to authenticate candidate submissions.

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

Most centres visited have clear, effective and routinely applied policies that ensured standardisation across delivering centres/campuses.

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

All centres visited complied with SQA policies and procedures regarding the retention of candidate evidence.

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

All centres visited had policies and procedures to ensure that feedback from qualification verifiers is disseminated to staff and used to inform assessment practice. Most centres verified now host such feedback on a VLE specifically dedicated to the qualification in question.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

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

- ◆ A lecturer hosted weekly evening online sessions offering 'live' help in science, where candidates could ask questions and get course advice.
- ◆ Candidates signed their assessment scripts to show that they had received and understood their feedback.
- ◆ Candidates were offered extra laboratory sessions if they wanted to do any additional laboratory work.
- ◆ Candidates were issued with centre-devised logbooks in which they very briefly recorded what they did during each scheduled laboratory session.
- ◆ Candidates who lack a science qualification are required to complete an online summer course to get them up to speed.
- ◆ Candidates were supported by a core skills team that helped them to develop skills such as report writing.

Specific areas for development

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

- ◆ Centre-devised assessment instruments must meet the criteria specified in the evidence requirements.
- ◆ All candidate responses, whether correct, incorrect or no response, should be marked clearly and appropriately. This will help to ensure that final assessment decisions are fair and it will assist in giving feedback to candidates where remediation and/or re-sit is required.
- ◆ Assessors should mark candidate assessments in ink to provide a permanent record of assessment and internal verification.
- ◆ Centres should develop a standard cover page for candidate assessments, which could include information to assist in the assessing and verification recording process.
- ◆ It is highly recommended that centre-devised assessment instruments be submitted to SQA for prior verification.