National Qualifications

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2017
Education Support Assistance

Introduction

The following units were verified this year:

Group Award: G9G4 46 — PDA in Education Support Assistance			
Unit No	**Unit Title**	**Mandatory or Optional**	**Number of Centres**
F7HR 12	Supporting Children and Young People from Birth to 18 Years	M	5
F7HY 12	Supporting Children and Young People in an Educational Setting	M	4
F7HV 12	Professional Practice in an Educational Setting	M	2
F7HS 12	Supporting the Behaviour of Children and Young People	M	1
F7HW 12	The Rights and Entitlements of Children and Young People	O	1
F7HX 12	Supporting Information Communication Technology (ICT) in an Educational Setting	O	1

External verifiers visited five centres around Scotland. They verified a mixture of the units above in each centre; in all centres, the first two units were the most popular among new cohorts in their first year. The approaches to unit delivery varied from centre to centre, mostly due to candidates' placements or employment situations, thereby demonstrating centres' adaptability and accessibility.

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.

In all centres, staff confirmed that they reviewed all aspects of delivery of the qualification at the beginning of any new session or delivery period. This was usually carried out during a standardisation meeting of all staff involved, and usually involved the completion of a pre-delivery checklist for each unit. Minutes of these meetings covered reviews of equipment and its suitability, learning resources, and assessment materials being used. These forms and minutes were discussed with the external verifier during the visits.

During these staff meetings and discussions with the external verifier, it became evident that all centres use SQA National Assessment Banks (NABs) for all the units. Concerns were raised about the conditions of assessment specified and consequently centres were advised that they could produce their own assessment for each unit (see note under 'Specific areas for development' at the end of this report).

Almost all the centres use a virtual learning environment to make learning and teaching materials available online. Most also extend this to cover the availability of assessment materials and verification paperwork.

Of particular note is the almost 80% candidate-retention rate in each centre over the past session. This is likely to be in great part attributable to the delivery teams who, at the beginning of each session, diligently review and standardise their practice in preparation for the new session. Almost all the candidates to whom the external verifier spoke noted how well they were supported by the staff — not only in the classroom, but also during the placement visits.

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 the centres verified demonstrated robust candidate interviewing and induction processes, in which they match candidates' previous experience and achievements with the qualification. Candidates' individual needs are discussed at this stage and throughout the course, and learning support is available, if required.

Candidates' achievements are mostly as expected, and retention is good in almost all centres. This is likely to be in part attributable to the care taken at the interview stage to match candidates with the most suitable qualification.

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

All centres have put a variety of extra measures in place to ensure that their candidates are well supported and that they have the best chance to succeed in their chosen qualification.

Examples of good practice in this area as are follows:

- organising a weekly three-hour slot with the class tutor, which gives the candidates the opportunity to receive feedback on assessment
- providing a weekly one-hour guidance slot
- visiting candidates in their placement to review their progress and assessment
- seeking candidate feedback on the support provided
- offering homework clubs for anyone wishing to refer themselves for help
- maintaining regular contact with placement staff for progress updates on candidates

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

All centres demonstrated rigorous internal verification practices and let the external verifier view all the completed documents online. It was noted that all the internal verifiers give 'practical, supportive and constructive' feedback to the assessors.

All centres are using SQA NABs to assess candidates. Assessment activity follows the unit specification and NABs instruction. Assessors also follow their centres' assessment paperwork procedures and the external verifier viewed the completed paperwork. Assessors provided good feedback to their candidates, both written and oral.

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

All centres used SQA NABs for all units verified this session. The standardised use of the NABs means that effective selection and use of the assessment instruments is consistent over all centres and candidate cohorts. Almost all centres interpret and assess the NABs correctly. Some centres allowed candidates to go over the word count limit or exceed the time limit to give a fuller explanation for their answer (see note under 'Specific areas for development' at the end of this report).

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

A variety of candidate authenticity forms is used in almost all centres; these are either signed by the candidate at induction, or attached to each assessment submission. All centres have an anti-plagiarism policy and this is discussed with candidates, usually at their induction. In some centres, assessment evidence is signed by the candidates' placement supervisor or mentor to authenticate that it was undertaken within the placement.

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

The external verifier found that, as the centres had all been delivering this qualification for a number of years, they were now at a stage where almost all their assessment judgements were accurate and consistent.

This finding is supported by the fact that all centres use SQA NABs to assess all units, ie they use SQA pre-prepared assessments and marking schemes. The finding is further supported by all centres having strong and consistent internal verification procedures. All centres have procedures for standardisation of judgements through formal and informal meetings of the delivery teams.

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

All centres visited this session effectively retained evidence as requested by the external verifier. They were also all aware of SQA's retention policy and in some cases this policy formed part of their internal verification procedures.

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

In all centres, the results of qualification verification is always discussed either at standardisation meetings, cognate meetings, or during two-way professional discussions. In some instances, all staff in a centre will each receive a copy of the feedback, or it will be shared by e-mail, or uploaded onto Sharepoint. The discussions are always minuted with action points.

Areas of good practice report by qualification verifiers

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

- Detailed verification forms with action points and extensive feedback to assessors
- Good constructive feedback given to candidates with action points from assessors
- Lots of contact made with schools to discuss candidates' progress
- Monthly meetings to discuss learners who are deemed to be 'at risk' or struggling, through the use of a traffic light system
- candidates' effective use of the Harvard Referencing System
- Encouragement given to learners to continue their studies
- The Higher project being embedded into the course enabling learners to progress smoothly onto the HNC in Childhood Practice

Specific areas for development

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

- Unit F7HY 12: it was recommended that if the word count for the NAB is not being followed precisely, then a centre should produce their own assessment and send it to SQA for prior verification.
- Unit F7HX 12 is a closed-book assignment, but if a centre feels the time allotted to complete this is insufficient, the centre should again produce their own assessment and send it to SQA for prior verification.
- Any assessment produced should clearly state the measure of performance required to fully ensure standardisation and reliability.