



Higher National Qualifications

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2018

Biology

Introduction

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

The units externally verified were as follows:

H92G 34 Microbiology: Theory and Laboratory Skills

H91Y 35 Applied Biological 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 and 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 were taken into consideration. Most 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 of the units that 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. All centres provided feedback to candidates on their completed assessments.

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. In addition to routine internal verification, most centres held course team standardisation meetings. In the case of graded units, all centres held grade review meetings before the allocation of final grades.

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 was universally applied by all centres verified. SQA assessment support packs, where available, are used by all centres verified, and specific re-assessment instruments had been submitted to SQA for prior verification.

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.

All centres visited had arrived at clear, consistent and accurate judgements of candidate performance. In the case of graded units, grading decisions were based on the relevant Understanding Standards document.

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.

Most centres visited had policies and procedures to ensure that feedback from qualification verifiers was disseminated to staff and used to inform assessment practice.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

The following examples of good practice were recorded during session 2017–18:

- ◆ Colleges used the Understanding Standards documents.
- ◆ Candidates were supplied with valuable information via Moodle: how to complete risk assessments; COSHH; effective writing skills; and how to read scientific papers.
- ◆ A college created an external verification quality assurance folder that contained comprehensive information for the delivery of all units.
- ◆ A meeting was held, prior to the delivery of the unit, to discuss and agree on changes to the delivery of the unit to meet the needs of the current cohort of candidates.
- ◆ A pre-delivery standardisation meeting and checklist ensured that the current unit specification was always used.
- ◆ Assessors discussed their equipment requirements for forthcoming practical sessions with candidates.

- ◆ A centre ensured that there were good opportunities for candidates to receive support from their assessors outside laboratory sessions, where it may not always be possible due to constraints of carrying out practical work within a limited time allocation.
- ◆ A college collaborated with another institution to allow some candidates to undertake specialist practical work which would not have been possible in the college.
- ◆ The assessor completed a log book that recorded candidate progress each week.
- ◆ Candidates were given extensive feedback from the assessor and internal verifier
- ◆ Assessors provided extensive useful information to candidates in the preparation stages of the graded unit to enable them to meet the project brief.
- ◆ Assessors carried out formative assessment at each stage of the graded unit to ensure candidates understood the task required of them at each stage.
- ◆ A college carried out 100% internal verification of assessments.

Specific areas for development

The following areas for development were reported during session 2017–18:

- ◆ Centres should use anti-plagiarism software to authenticate candidate submissions.
- ◆ Centres should review the delivery of unit specifications and, where necessary, alter delivery approaches to meet the needs of candidates.
- ◆ Centres should ensure they are using the most recent version of the unit specification and Understanding Standards document.