



Higher National Qualifications

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2019

Marketing, Sales and Advertising

Verification group: 399

Introduction

The following units were selected for verification:

- ◆ F7BX 34 Marketing: An Introduction SCQF level 7
- ◆ H8PD 34 International Marketing: An Introduction SCQF level 7
- ◆ FK93 34 Digital Marketing Communications: An Introduction SCQF level 7
- ◆ DV8N 35 Marketing Planning Process SCQF level 8
- ◆ HC49 35 Public Relations: Strategic Analysis Planning and Application SCQF level 8
- ◆ HX47 34 Marketing Communications: Graded Unit 1 SCQF level 7
- ◆ HC2P 34 Public Relations: Principles and Practice SCQF level 7
- ◆ HC2M 34 Advertising Media Sales SCQF level 7

The units selected for verification have in some cases been available for a number of years, while others are more recent additions. HC49 35 was altered in 2017 to require group working. HX47 34 was updated in 2018 with changes to the conditions of assessment. The 2016 unit HC2P 34 received an update in 2019 to an evidence requirement. The majority of verification activity during the 2018–19 session was undertaken through visits. One international visit had been planned, but this event was postponed due to the tragic events in Sri Lanka.

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 had systems in place to ensure ongoing reviews. These systems included formal cyclical reviews where necessary changes are made to the learning environment and materials etc. All centres have an internal verification process that was generally used well, and included pre-delivery stage checking of assessments and learning materials. Staff revise or add to learning materials on a regular basis, this being particularly important in subjects where technology and the business environment are rapidly changing. All centres use electronic resources which can be quickly supplemented or altered — and candidates can access them easily on a VLE. Centres mainly used the SQA ASPs with some updating assessments to include up-to-date industry practices. Records of meetings provided further evidence that reviews of resources and materials were regularly being made.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

Centres had their own selection processes for recruiting candidates who had applied for the awards within which the units sit. All centres held an induction that varied in length and format, but generally covered similar topics including course and centre information, candidate responsibilities, etc. The application and induction processes provided centres with the opportunity to gain background information on candidates and to assess their suitability for the overall award applied for. Centres usually interviewed potential candidates with some holding group interviews while others interviewed applicants individually.

All centres had processes in place to care for candidates' development needs using a dedicated student advisor/mentor system. Some centres have regular timetabled guidance slots while others have less formal arrangements. All centres provide access to specialist support services where candidates need additional support, and all used some form of learning support plan when required.

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

Centres timetabled formal slots for the units within VG 399 and candidates were able to contact assessors by email and other online means outside class times. Staff were also often available at their staff bases, although access to these varied from one centre to another. Assessors provided verbal feedback and often provided written feedback that varied in length and detail, and was in some cases provided in electronic format. There were some excellent examples of feedback that provided guidance on submissions and how to improve future work. Some centres invited firms to participate within a unit, and industry feedback was then provided to participating candidates. The level of support, contact and quality of feedback are important factors in helping candidates to improve. All centres hold staff team meetings at varying intervals where discussions take place regarding candidate progress.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

Assessment procedures for the units in VG 399 are generally well understood. Centres were generally very good at the way they have moved forward in the implementation of their internal verification policies. Many centres are using the internal verification process in a development manner as an integral part of a wider standardisation process as well as being a quality assurance check. This is particularly important for less experienced staff, where units are new and also where a subject is dynamic and rapidly evolving. Internal verification records and minutes were in some cases detailed and provided valuable insights into how assessment decisions were arrived at. There is a shift from the basic checklist approach where assessment decisions are accepted with a 'yes' or 'no' with little if any additional comment being recorded, to a more reflective approach which aims to improve the consistency and validity of assessment decisions. This is particularly important because of the often rapid change to subjects within VG 399, and also because units are commonly delivered at a number of different sites within a centre by different staff.

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

The centres generally used SQA-devised ASPs, with a small number of instances where some were updated to incorporate changes to industry practice. The centres completed pre-delivery internal verification checks to ensure that the assessments were valid, reliable, equitable and fair. Centres provided the up-to-date unit specification for each unit and an assessment. Where candidates had justifiable cause, assessment conditions could be adapted to meet those specific needs, and candidates usually could access specialist support. The pre-delivery check is an important part of the quality assurance process as it should ensure that the up-to-date unit specification and assessments are being used, but will also provide an opportunity to refresh the assessor and internal verifier with the requirements of the unit and the assessments. This helps both experienced and new staff, and better ensures that standardisation will take place through understanding the unit, its requirements and how it is assessed.

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

Centres all have a plagiarism or malpractice policy. A widely used practice is for candidates to sign an authenticity declaration or honesty statement when submitting work. Sometimes the statement contained details about the penalties that could be incurred, while others referred candidates to course handbooks for further details. The use of electronic similarity checkers is now widespread and it is expected that their use will continue to grow in coming years. They are particularly useful where work is completed on an open-book basis and are increasingly being used to impose submission deadlines and to provide feedback.

Centres all knew the assessment conditions for each of the units selected for qualification verification.

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

Assessors and internal verifiers arrived at reasoned and appropriate assessment judgements. Assessors are familiar with the units and the assessments for the units within VG 399, but need to remain alert to the changes that can be made at any time to unit specifications. Where work was judged deficient, candidates were asked to remediate or to be re-assessed. The internal verification system helps in arriving at assessment decisions through discussion about marginal cases, and in identifying standards and requirements. This was encouraging and helped assure the successful outcomes of the qualification verification events. It also demonstrated that there is a more robust use of standardisation by assessors and internal verifiers.

Assessors provided feedback sometimes on the scripts, using checklists or in electronic format sometimes using Turnitin. There were examples of excellent feedback to candidates. This takes time but will help with candidate performance.

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

Centres provided a retention policy and some provided details on data management and destruction. All centres provided the necessary records and candidate evidence that was required at the visiting qualification verification events. All had procedures and retention periods that met the SQA requirements. All recognised the need for security during storage.

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

All centres have formal communication channels and processes in place to disseminate feedback from qualification verifiers. Centres demonstrated they are communicating the feedback from qualification verification activity. This was evident within internal verification records, course team minutes and in standardisation meeting records. There were examples where references were made to past qualification verification reports and in some cases changes being made as a result of guidance and recommendations. Almost all centres make reports available in electronic format where they can readily be accessed and incorporated within the quality assurance process.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

The following good practice was reported during session 2018–19:

- ◆ Very clear guidelines for undertaking standardisation activities and how best to achieve appropriate and consistent assessment decisions.
- ◆ The incorporation of real-life industry case studies within courses.
- ◆ Cross-campus quality events to improve standardisation of assessment decisions between different sites within a centre.
- ◆ Excellent feedback to candidates.
- ◆ Feedback to candidates from industry partners participating in awards.
- ◆ Excellent CPD opportunities for staff to allow updating of knowledge.
- ◆ Updating assessments to incorporate current industry practice.
- ◆ Providing a 'Prepare me' programme for applicants.

Specific areas for development

The following areas for development were reported during session 2018–19:

- ◆ Provide opportunities for staff to update industry skills and knowledge.
- ◆ Continued effort in teaching candidates how to reference.
- ◆ Better co-ordinate and enforce candidate deadlines for submissions.
- ◆ Candidates should demonstrate an understanding of theory when answering case study based questions.