



Professional Development Award

**Qualification Verification Summary Report 2019
Further Education**

Verification group: 338

Introduction

The following units were sampled during the external verification activity:

H416 36	Plan and Prepare the Learner Experience
H417 36	Learning and Teaching
H418 36	Plan and Prepare the Learner Experience — Guidance and Support
H419 36	Learning and Teaching — Assessment and Quality Standards
H41A 36	Professional Development

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.

Not verified for these qualification types.

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 there was evidence of effective and appropriate initial and ongoing reviews of the teaching and assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials. Records of the reviews were contained within course team minutes and were provided in electronic and hard copy by all the centres visited. Standard SQA assessment support packs were used and there was evidence that these were confirmed as being up to date.

One centre's ongoing review of methods of delivery was evident from their move towards a blended learning approach. Some centres presented well-developed pre-delivery checklists as evidence that appropriate reviews were taking place.

Some centres also documented initial and ongoing reviews of assessments and the assessment environment in their internal verification forms.

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 had appropriate approaches to ensuring the development needs and prior achievements of candidates were explored with prospective candidates as part of the recruitment and selection processes. In the majority of cases, a candidate's line manager recommended them for the award. The manager would notify the assessor or mentor team of any additional support needs.

In a few centres, candidates completed a prerequisite course to familiarise themselves with the ICT materials required for the coursework. In other centres, activities were planned as part of

the induction sessions to allow assessors to observe candidates and note any individual needs that may need to be considered. Candidates were also provided with a one-to-one opportunity with their assessor to discuss any specific support that they may require to complete the programme.

There was evidence in a few centres that candidates' prior learning needs were considered throughout the application and induction process. This included evidence of recognition of prior achievement, which helped to reduce the assessment burden for candidates. A number of centres indicated that staff candidates had access to the full range of support services from the outset and it was clear in the course handbook that they had the same entitlement to support as their own learners.

Many candidate groups were spread across several campuses. In a few centres, candidates met regularly with an onsite mentor to check on any support required. This support was very much appreciated by the candidates concerned.

In one centre, good pathway routes for development were identified alongside a confidential Core Skills/dyslexia assessment. There was also access to an Open University course to develop academic writing skills.

In all centres, alternative assessments had been developed and were available if required. There was evidence in some centres that candidates who might have additional needs had the opportunity to submit work for formative feedback on assessments two weeks before final submission.

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

There was evidence in all of the centres visited that candidates had regular access to their assessor to discuss assessment and to review progress. These sessions were typically highlighted in the delivery schedules for the award. Additional one-to-one sessions were available to any candidate on request.

There was evidence throughout centres that assessors were extremely flexible in accommodating the needs of candidates, who were generally part-time and often working remotely at other sites. The timing of course activities usually reflected this, with the early assessment deadlines timed to coincide with the regular teaching sessions. Candidates had input into the timing of the final pieces of assessment post-observation, which gave them control over their learning. Generally, assessors were flexible and accommodating of candidates' needs in relation to timetabling observations.

Candidates, generally, indicated that they felt well supported. They particularly appreciated the supportive feedback provided by their mentors.

Some centres made very effective use of electronic resources, including the VLE. This allowed centres to track candidate progress and monitor candidates' engagement with online materials.

The online forum and discussion tools within the VLE combined with face-to-face meetings, emails and telephone calls from assessors ensured that candidates had access to frequent and ongoing support.

The normal delivery schedule of the award was often self-directed with most of the learning completed online by candidates. Candidates' progress and their use of the online course materials was robustly monitored by the assessors and the internal verifier.

Additional evidence of scheduled contact with candidates was contained in the learning, teaching and assessment plans for the course.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

There was evidence across all centres that institutional policies and procedures in relation to assessment were robust and adhered to. Standard assessment checklists were often used to record candidate progress. Some candidates included a cover sheet with a plagiarism disclaimer.

Internal verification policies were working well and were well documented. In one centre, where assessment was carried out by relatively new members of staff, internal verification was carried out on a 100% internal verification sample to best support the new assessors.

There was evidence that when issues were identified through the internal verification process, these were referred to and addressed effectively through the discussion log. Internal verification procedures were documented in Form IV005.

From candidate assessment logs and assessor feedback, it was evident that internal verification procedures were being implemented to support standardisation of assessment decisions.

Centres were generally using comprehensive pre-delivery review checklists to analyse and record performance indicators (PIs), candidate evaluation, feedback, and proposed action points to enhance an already excellent programme delivery.

In one centre, summary minutes of meetings between assessors and internal verifiers were included in the paper and electronic format of the master folders retained in the centre. It was clear from the centre's records that their assessment and internal verification procedures had been implemented in a way that ensures standardisation of assessment.

There was evidence that where issues were raised across the multiple campuses, these were generally referred to standardisation meetings for resolution. In one centre, there was evidence that cross-campus differences in assessment practice were identified during the internal verification process and addressed through standardisation.

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

All the centres visited were using the current, standard, SQA assessment support pack materials. Some centres enhanced the materials or developed their own, for example by adding local checklists for observations to allow more specific and comprehensive feedback for candidates.

In a number of centres, a pre-course delivery checklist was used to review and confirm the validity, currency and reliability of the instruments of assessment. This review was recorded in the appropriate centre documentation. Centres appeared to be making effective use of the instruments of assessment and the marking guidelines from the assessment support pack.

A few centres provided evidence that their assessment instruments had been prior verified as being valid, reliable and fit for purpose.

In addition to using the SQA assessment support pack, one centre enhanced the lesson plan template to encourage candidates to explore and develop their knowledge and understanding of current legislative requirements, such as equality and diversity, accessibility and sustainability. To ensure inclusiveness, the centre accepts audio commentary as an alternative assessment method. Audio commentaries are recorded for standardisation and verification purposes. There was some evidence of cross-referencing of assessments to unit H417 36.

A few centres allowed candidates to use professional discussion instead of reflective commentaries, but none of the candidates at these centres used this approach.

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

Every centre had appropriate policies and methods in place to ensure that assessment evidence was the candidate's own work. In some cases, candidates were asked to sign a disclaimer about the authenticity of their work. Some centres routinely use Turnitin or a similar authenticity checking software package within the VLE online course area. All assessments were submitted with a signed cover sheet, declaring that the work being submitted was the original work of the candidate.

In one centre, the policy was to accept work submitted by candidates from their own email address as evidence that the candidates were submitting their own work. However, all candidates also signed and uploaded a scanned cover sheet for their folios, which included a plagiarism disclaimer.

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

Across all centres, there was evidence that extensive feedback was provided to candidates from all assessors in a consistent manner. Strong positive feedback was being provided. In many cases, feedback was provided to enhance re-submissions. Assessment decisions were consistent across all assessors in all centres.

In a centre with two campuses, there was evidence that assessors were using a discussion log to ensure consistency across campuses and assessors.

Assessment checklists were regularly used to record decisions, ensuring standards were followed. However, in many cases, the focus was on negative aspects, such as grammar and punctuation, rather than positive comments about what candidates are doing well to meet assessment evidence requirements.

External verifiers found evidence of accurate and consistent assessment decisions, feedback on written work, remediation and resubmission, where required. In some centres, candidates were

told to leave feedback comments visible on their resubmitted work to ensure a record of feedback was maintained.

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

On every occasion, the evidence that was requested to support the visit was available for the external verifier. Centres followed the SQA guidelines on the retention of evidence.

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

There was evidence in all centres of a policy and procedure to follow to ensure the outcome of verification visits was communicated to the course team. Where applicable, evidence that recommendations from previous verification activity had been acted on was also available. There was evidence in course team meeting minutes that reports received were discussed before the start of the next session.

In one centre, the outcome of external verification visits was disseminated as a summary to the course team to inform assessment practice and recommendations. In this case, the centre was advised to circulate the full report to the team. However, it was also recognised that for other monitoring purposes by the centre, the summary reports could be a useful tool.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

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

There was a range of examples of good practice highlighted in the reports. These included activities that would be deemed normal practice in the context of other qualifications, for example using Turnitin and other IT resources to detect plagiarism in student assessments.

- ◆ Evidence of a new online/blended learning format, which enabled candidates to work at their own pace and more easily integrate the PDA with their own teaching timetables.
- ◆ One centre disseminated a 'Quality Newsletter' four times a year to share all the EV reports across the centre to allow everyone to view and learn from the good practice being implemented across different subject areas.
- ◆ In one centre, online trackers were created to record the progress of each candidate. Access to the VLE was also monitored to ensure no candidate slipped off the radar.
- ◆ Using an online system for candidates to book their classroom observations into diary slots with assessors.
- ◆ Using integrated assessment across the two PDA units using resources developed or presented by candidates in H416 36 as part of H417 36.
- ◆ The learning and teaching plan in one centre included micro teaching sessions as a form of peer assessment. These sessions provided a safe and supportive development environment for candidates. Candidates found them to be very valuable, stating that they were immediately able to put what they had been learning into practice in their own roles.
- ◆ Routine access to a foundation award before starting PDA level 9.
- ◆ Candidates had access to an introductory video on the VLE, highlighting steps within the course and where and how to receive support.
- ◆ The course handbook for candidates included evidence of college assessment policy and procedures. Candidates used this as a single place to record their achievements and progress.

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

- ◆ Centres must ensure they regularly check for updates to the unit specifications and assessment support packs (ASPs) at initial standardisation or moderation meetings before delivery to ensure they are using the most current versions.
- ◆ Detail should be added to the minutes of each standardisation meeting to maintain strong, robust evidence of the centre's internal verification process throughout the delivery.
- ◆ The use of templates, particularly for lesson plans, would help standardise candidate submissions and ensure that required assessment criteria were fully met.
- ◆ A blended learning approach with regular scheduled group meetings reduces the one-to-one sessions for assessors.
- ◆ Asking candidates to submit a personal statement as part of their application process allows the course team to observe and identify any specific individual learner needs with regard to academic writing skills.