



**Higher National Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2016
Sports Therapy**

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in Higher National qualifications in this subject.

Higher National units

HNC Soft Tissue Therapy GH18 15

HND Sports Therapy GJ58 16

General comments

The HND Sports Therapy award was revalidated in April 2014 and, for the first time in the history of the award, included a year one exit point in the HNC Soft Tissue Therapy award, which was validated in August 2013. Currently, only two centres deliver the award, one centre introduced the award immediately following HNC validation, the other centre introduced the award in the current academic session (2015–16). A further centre will be delivering the award from academic session 2016 and two further centres are seeking approval to deliver the award.

The revised award incorporated relevant National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Sports Therapy, which themselves had been reviewed and revised by Skills Active in 2010. This, coupled with the need to have a vocationally relevant end point at year 1 (requirement outlined by centres for all awards), increased the year 1 demands on staff and learners in terms of assessment and marking. This point was made by both delivering centres, despite the fact that learners have progressed well and without detriment (the overall SCQF level of the award remains at 7, commensurate with an HNC award). SQA support for centres was to provide a large number of ASPs for units across both the HNC and HND awards.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The award is still 'bedding-in' and the holistic approach required for delivery and assessment, particularly for the HNC, means that centres have not been able to merely replace a previous unit with a revised one. This has added some challenges to centres on top of those already being experienced as a result of mergers.

The significant changes in the award were mainly within the practical units, where the requirement is for learners to evidence their competency through logged hours. Although centres have commented on the difficulties this presents, related Sport and Fitness awards also require learners to evidence their practical experience at this level. Guidance is given in the Content and Context section of the units, and closer reading of this may help centres to incorporate this new requirement into the time management of the award.

There was some updating to the Anatomy & Physiology units to incorporate the NOS. However, many evidence requirements remain the same as units in the previous award, merely re-distributed among the new units. Suggestions to amend the Anatomy & Physiology have been received from centres. However, to adopt the suggestions would negatively affect the underpinning knowledge

required by learners entering this professional field or moving on to higher education. Additionally, adopting the suggestions would mean that learners would not achieve NOS & governing body requirements and would then not allow graduates of the HNC/D to become members of the main professional association.

SQA added five additional ASPs at the start of this academic session, which should have proved helpful for delivery staff.

Evidence requirements

For the units externally verified, the evidence requirements were interpreted correctly.

Administration of assessments

For the units externally verified, the assessments were valid and reliable and administered without undue prejudice to any learner. However, it was not clear from the reports as to whether the ASPs had been used, and prior verification of any centre-devised assessments is strongly recommended. Centres showed effective use of internal verification processes through the use of pre-delivery checks, in-year verification and standardisation meetings.

This academic session, centres have sought much clarification on the marking of assessments and the sample of information required to achieve the minimum evidence requirements. This highlighted a discrepancy between assessors' perceptions and achievement at the required SCQF level. SQA responded with appropriate advice. Using the ASPs would be helpful — alternatively, seeking prior verification as outlined above, would ensure appropriate assessment decisions.

General feedback

Qualification verifiers' reports indicate that feedback to learners varied, but there were some instances of positive, constructive feedback that would benefit learners' development. Centres are advised to look at standardisation of feedback to reflect good practice. Feedback from the learners indicated that all were enjoying the award and despite finding the assessment load challenging, were progressing effectively.

As this award is still 'bedding-in' centres would benefit from regular reflection by course teams in terms of delivery and assessment and keeping open the flow of communication on these points with SQA.

Areas of good practice

Learners indicated effective support from assessors/tutors.

Specific areas for improvement

Course teams and assessors should give due cognisance to the Sports Therapy NOS, the requirements of the governing body for Soft Tissue Therapy (GCMT) and the appropriate SCQF level criteria, in order that the awards are delivered and assessed to ensure parity with other awards in this professional field and/or enable graduates to progress to higher education.

Higher National graded units

Titles/levels of HN graded units verified:

Sports Therapy: Graded Unit 1 H4XP 34

General comments

Only one visit qualification verifier visit was carried out for this graded unit. Assessors and verifiers had a clear understanding of the requirements. Learners had chosen a range of investigation topics and these had been appropriately assessed. Assessors gave positive, constructive feedback to learners.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

An ASP for this graded unit was introduced at the beginning of the academic session which may have helped in the assessment of the unit. It was not clear from the qualification verifier's report whether the ASP was being used, however, all instruments were valid and reliable.

Evidence requirements

Evidence requirements were clearly understood.

Administration of assessments

Assessments were administered appropriately. Two stages had been delivered and marked at the time of the qualification verifier's visit and internal verification had been effectively carried out, with positive and constructive feedback given to assessors.

General feedback

There was evidence of standardisation meetings across assessors/learners. Learners received detailed and constructive feedback from assessors and commented on the positive support given by assessors.

Areas of good practice

Given the introduction of the HNC, graded unit 1 has taken on a broader focus from the previous award. Soft Tissue Therapy is new, dynamic and innovative, it requires time to develop specific good practice in such an area, especially with the current political/financial constraints on merged colleges.

Specific areas for improvement

It is important for course teams to be aware of the developments within this profession. Centres should be actively supporting subject-specific continuing

professional development to ensure that all assessors/internal verifiers are current in this very dynamic profession and are able to support and advise learners appropriately.