



**National Qualifications 2019
Qualification Verification Summary Report
Skills for Work: Engineering Skills**

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

Skills for Work Courses

Skills for Work: Engineering Skills (National 4)

Skills for Work: Engineering Skills (National 5)

General comments

Eleven centres were selected for external verification this session with all receiving visits. One further education college was delivering the National 4 qualification, one college was delivering both the National 4 and National 5 qualifications, and seven schools and two colleges were delivering the National 5 qualification. Geographically, the centres were spread from an island in the Irish Sea to the north of Scotland, including the outer isles.

Three schools were registering candidates for the first time following award approval early in the session. One school had accessed the SQA offer of a post-approval visit before their external verification visit in late May.

The other centres have a comprehensive understanding of national standards as they have been offering the awards for a few years.

The vast majority of candidates this session were male and from S4–S6.

Unfortunately, this report is in the same vein of the past few sessions in respect of many issues arising — centres should refer to past reports to improve centre performance. Only one centre from outside Scotland had made use of the information in past reports provided to design their delivery and ensure it meets the standards.

A visit plan was sent to centres before the visit date. The plan stipulated that the external verifier wished to meet with a centre representative before the visit in order to access evidence relating to:

- ◆ equal/fair access to assessment
- ◆ assessor standardisation arrangements
- ◆ internal verification strategy/procedures and sampling

Unfortunately, this request was not taken on board by many centres.

Two college centres initiated the visit by introducing the procedures from a member of their quality team — in all other cases, this important stage of the visit was left to departmental staff assessing or verifying the award, with various degrees of clarity. As in past years, it should be emphasised that the external verifier should base their report on whether centre staff adhered to the centre procedures in their standardisation and assessments recording, sampling and internal verification decisions. It is disappointing that centres are not taking heed of this report to make arrangements for external verifier visits. This often leads to

visits taking longer in order for the external verifier to understand the centre procedures before beginning their process.

Skills for Work: Engineering Skills awards require industrial partnerships to encourage candidates to develop an understanding of the workplace. Centres in the islands often find difficulty in this important aspect of candidate development of employability skills — this can be successfully overcome by centres simply inviting company individuals to visit the centre and offer a question and answer session to candidates.

This session, many centres were not aware that SQA had issued revised unit codes to the award units with the result that they were using assessment materials and records which were out of date. This should have been attended to at relevant meetings and included in relevant minutes.

The initiative taken by Highland Council to develop a common internal verification policy for use in all centres must be highlighted as this results in these centres sharing best practice with templates based on the SQA Internal Verification Toolkit available to all staff. It may be beneficial to other groups of centres to allow staff to share such a development that will lead to a standard approach.

The majority of centres are making use of the Colleges Scotland support material for the awards to prepare candidates for assessments — the external verifier can help with access and use of this material.

All centres subsequently received satisfactory visits from verifiers this session.

Course arrangements, unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

As these awards have been offered for a number of years, centres are now familiar with the information included in course arrangements and record the requirements from the unit specifications in their internal verification procedures.

The recently approved centres were made aware of the existence of this information at approval stage.

All centres (except one college) attempting the awards were making use of the SQA-produced National Assessment Bank (NAB) material for candidate assessment. The centre that didn't make use of the SQA NABs had taken the initiative to develop an integrated assessment and marking scheme for three of the National 5 course units based on the NABs which had been subject to internal approval and recorded in procedures. The centre had submitted this material for prior approval by SQA before use.

Two of the other centres using the National 5 NABs had altered some practical tasks with one not recording this in their internal verification minutes. The other centre had submitted and received permission for the alteration through the prior approval process.

Evidence requirements

Most centres have a clear understanding of the evidence requirements for the course units.

The interpretation of the assessment for employability skills in the National 5 Design and Manufacture unit (where candidates should prepare a short written report on their activities followed by a presentation to their peer group) was problematic in some centres with candidates struggling to comply with the evidence requirements but still being marked as successful. As engineering is a communication process, centre staff should explain that if candidates decide to follow this route, they will be asked constantly to justify choices of processes, etc. Centres may use staff as a peer group if this would help, but the requirements must be completed to be successful.

There is still an inconsistent approach to employability skills in general. It would be beneficial for all centres to develop meaningful partnerships with local engineering employers at the outset of the course to encourage candidate understanding of this in relation to good working practice. Good completion of the skill sections of the units should enable candidates to monitor their progress and allow them to record development. Assessor written feedback on employability skills to candidates should always form part of an individual unit feedback session with targets mutually set.

Administration of assessments

All centres except one made use of the SQA-produced NABs that have been subject to strict scrutiny, so all assessments were at the appropriate level.

The remaining centre used the SQA prior approval service to ensure compliance with the unit evidence requirements before use.

During visits, it was found that some school centres were carrying out internal verification at the conclusion of the course rather than at the conclusion of individual units. One centre only carried out internal verification on the course units using a small total sample in their interpretation of the centre procedures. The verifier requested that the issue with sampling should be reviewed for future sessions. This may result in the internal verifier discovering an inconsistency in the results of candidate assessments, with candidates having to address this towards the end of the session.

Centres are reminded that the sample should follow the centre policy where the procedure should be stated.

Verifiers are suggesting that all centres should study the SQA-produced Internal Verification Toolkit which will allow external verifiers to see where and why decisions have been agreed and recorded.

Areas of good practice

The following areas of good practice were reported:

More centres are continuing to invest in modern technology resources and encouraging candidates to make use of this in their completion of practical tasks.

A highland centre had developed a partnership with the University of the Highlands and Islands whereby the centre delivered, assessed and verified two course units and the partner organisation delivered, assessed and verified the other two for which they offered resources of benefit to candidates.

An island centre was making use of a local tradesman to deliver and assess the National 5 Maintenance unit using the SQA Level 2 Award in Cycle Maintenance which they had agreed cross-matched the evidence requirements of both. The centre had full control of the verification process to satisfy their policies.

Special mention must again be made of the enthusiasm of centre staff in the delivery of these awards.

Specific areas for improvement

The following areas for development were reported:

Centres should understand that the visit plan requests that internal verification procedures be presented and explained to the external verifier at the start of the external verification visit, and centres must make arrangements for this to take place.

Most centres have a rather indifferent approach to candidate feedback, particularly with regards to employability skills — this is seen on many candidate assessments where no comment is made to encourage them to advance weaker skills throughout the course.

All alterations to NABs must be recorded with justification and internally verified before unit delivery to enable external verifiers to understand why the decision to alter is made. Centres could also apply for prior moderation to SQA to recognise this change officially.

Internal verification of individual units should be undertaken at the completion of the units rather than at the completion of the course in order to make the necessary moves to adhere to unit specifications and evidence requirements.