



**National Qualifications 2019
Qualification Verification Summary Report
Skills for Work: Rural 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: Rural Skills (National 4)

General comments

Thirteen centres were selected for external verification in 2019. The team carried out 11 external verification visits. One centre was recorded as 'not running' and at a further centre the visit was cancelled.

All of the external verification visits resulted in an 'accepted' decision. There was a good awareness of national standards at all centres visited and course delivery was generally of a high, or very high, quality.

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

Assessors generally had a good understanding of standards required and were fully conversant with the course arrangements, unit specifications, instruments of assessment (NABs) and exemplification materials (SFEU support materials). At a minority of centres there was a rather poor appreciation of the requirements for internal verification. A majority of centres have developed comprehensive course master folders and some had contextualised national materials to their own institutional/candidate needs.

Evidence requirements

The National Assessment Bank materials (NABs) were universally used. The SFEU course support resources were used by a majority of centres.

Assessors were generally well acquainted with the evidence requirements for the units and the course.

Administration of assessments

Centres were fully aware of SQA policies and procedures in relation to the administration of assessments and adhered closely to these. External verifiers were provided with all of the information that was requested to complete their verification activities. Records (candidate evidence) were retained in accordance with SQA requirements.

Areas of good practice

The following areas of good practice were reported:

The centre had excellent partnerships developed with local land-based businesses and sectoral industries. This meant that candidates received a realistic and good quality learning and assessment experience.

The centre used an internal verifier from another school. This meant that there was good cross centre standardisation for delivery of assessment. The two centres shared assessments and the internal verifier reviewed paperwork.

Discussion with the assessor confirmed that of the three candidates, two were girls who had shown an interest in progressing to gamekeeping from this award, therefore challenging gender stereotypes in the industry.

The centre has taken time to involve partner providers of practical skills, in the completion of candidate employability skills reviews.

Outstanding real work environment and good relations with the workplace provider.

The school intends to extend provision/progression to the National Progression Award in Rural Skills (National 5) in collaboration with the local further education college.

Candidate selection: The centre uses an extraction method of delivery. Candidates have to submit an application and answer a series of questions on why they want to do the course. They also have to agree to make up any time missed from their normal class and parents also have to agree to their participation. This rigorous selection process is reflected in the quality of the candidates' work as it is clear they are highly motivated to do well in the course.

Work-based learning: All practical work is completed in a real work environment in partnership with local employers and individuals.

The centre has developed excellent relationships with appropriate land-based partners (deer farm and fishery) which has meant the practical delivery and assessment of the award is of a high standard.

The centre has adapted their internal verification process to ensure that live observation of assessment is included — this is very useful for standardisation and sharing practice for the practical tasks.

The centre has developed a particularly useful approach to recording each individual candidate's progress through a spreadsheet that both the candidate and the assessor can see. This means that there is less room for error and ensures that gaps in assessment evidence can be rectified quickly.

The presentation of both learning and assessment materials was very good, clear, well laid out and easy to follow. The centre uses learning packs for each unit which are based on the SFEU support materials. Each candidate also has a portfolio which contains all the knowledge questions and activities for all the units. This includes the questions for crop production, the employability reviews, risk assessments and investigation pro forma. While the assessor observation checklists (group based) and PowerPoint presentations (electronic) are held separately, the portfolio contains everything else (including details of the practical tasks that will be carried out) so the candidate is clear on what is expected.

The standard of the portfolio templates developed by the centre for each individual candidate was very high. Candidates were asked to comment on pictorial evidence of themselves undertaking the various tasks and also to research different land-based industries. Candidates confirmed that they found this particularly helpful as it brought context to the underpinning knowledge of their learning. The approach encouraged reflection on practical tasks and was therefore developing the candidates' core skills and consideration of their career options at the same time as measuring their progress on the practical skills. Candidates were clearly thoroughly engaged in the rural skills programme.

The centre was clearly very committed to developing the course further and making incremental improvements and had developed a number of strong partnerships that enhance the assessment environment for the candidates. For example, they were working with a local estate and had visited the auction market, undertaken visits to local plant nurseries and had engaged with local tree and timber businesses.

Specific areas for improvement

The following areas for development were reported:

The centre should review the current NAB for land-based industries and consider reinstating the two questions missed from the job sheets in the land-based industry units into their adapted portfolio.

The centre must undertake appropriate internal verification for the SfW Rural Skills Award in accordance with its SQA agreed internal verification policy.

The centre should involve the livestock assessor in a sample review of livestock project material produced for the Land-based Industries: An Introduction unit. This will ensure the accuracy and technical appropriateness of statements made by candidates.

The centre should provide appropriate feedback to candidates regarding completion of written assessment material to support and clarify statements or assumption made by the candidate.

The centre should consider developing a master summative spreadsheet to confirm where all candidates have completed all assessment tasks (particularly useful when there are higher number of candidates).

In the employability unit, employability reviews should be spread out across the delivery period. Although formative evidence confirmed some of this had been done, there should be reviews available from early in the delivery process. The centre may wish to consider developing individual portfolios that the candidates can keep based upon the NAB — this helps to introduce them to portfolio building (although this is not required by the qualification).

The centre should consider the use of live observation of assessment in the internal verification activity.

The centre should retain all candidate project presentations produced for the unit: J162 74 — Land-based Industries: An Introduction. This can be in electronic, video or paper format.

The centre should consider further adaptation of the NAB language to support the candidates in crop production and the land-based industry units. This could be accompanied by tailored answer sheets provided they are of a similar standard to the NAB. This would help with standardisation and delivery.

The centre should consider using actual tasks that candidates undertake to do the employability risk assessment task — this makes evidence generated more 'real' and in context to inform the task.

The centre should try to space out the employability reviews across the delivery and ensure that the review takes place close to the episode of activity it referred to. This would ensure that the review adds more value to the development of the candidate.