



National Qualifications 2018
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.

National Courses

Seven external verification visits were carried out by the team this session. Despite most centres' lack of preparation for these visits, all centres were found to be satisfactory.

The following qualifications were externally verified:

Skills for Work: Engineering Skills (National 4; National 5)

General comments

Eight centres were selected for external verification this session. External verifiers visited seven centres: two further education colleges who were delivering the National 4 qualification, and one college and four schools who were delivering the National 5 qualification.

The eighth centre had registered candidates for both National 4 and National 5, but withdrew the National 4 candidates before the date of the scheduled visit.

One of the schools visited was offering the National 5 award for the first time. It had submitted a very late request for approval from SQA, as it was unsure that this process was required. It required support and development from the external verifier during their visit.

All the other centres demonstrated 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.

We would emphasise the importance of the Visit Plan, which is sent to centres before the visit date. This document explains that the external verifier will wish to meet with a centre representative before the visit commences, and that they will need to access evidence relating to:

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

Unfortunately, this pre-visit information is still largely ignored by centres.

Only one centre started the visit with a member of its quality assurance team introducing the centre's procedures. In all the other centres, this important stage of the visit was left to departmental staff assessing or verifying the award, with various degrees of clarity. It should be emphasised that the external verifier bases their report on centre staff's adherence to centre procedures in their standardisation and recording of assessments, sampling, and internal verification decisions. It is disappointing that centres are not using the report guidance to

make arrangements for external verifier visits. Such a lack of preparation often leads to external verifiers spending far longer trying to understand the centre procedures, before continuing with the rest of their visit.

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

As the centres visited have all been offering these awards for a number of years, they are demonstrably familiar with the course arrangements, and record the requirements from the unit specifications in their internal verification procedures. The one exception to this was the recently approved school. It did not base its scheduling of units in line with course arrangements guidance, and this had resulted in candidates attempting the National Design and Manufacture unit before two skill acquisition units. They had decided to use a kit format for the control of the unit, with the support structure being undertaken at a later date.

All centres visited, with the exception of one, were using the SQA-produced National Assessment Bank (NABs) materials for candidate assessment. The centre not using NABs had taken the initiative to develop full assessments and marking schemes for all units based on the NABs. The centre had approved these internally, and recorded them in procedures.

Two of the other centres using the National 5 NABs had altered some of the practical tasks. One had not recorded this in its internal verification minutes.

Evidence requirements

Most centres demonstrated a clear understanding of the evidence requirements for the course. Only one centre did not fully understand the importance of the employability skills integrated into each individual unit, while a few centres were inconsistent in their approach to this. It would be beneficial for all centres to develop meaningful partnerships with local engineering employers at the outset of the course, to encourage candidates' understanding of good working practice.

Administration of assessments

As most centres use the SQA-produced NABs, which are subject to strict scrutiny, all assessments are at the appropriate level.

During this session's visits, external verifiers found that two school centres were carrying out internal verification at the conclusion of the course rather than at the conclusion of individual units. This may result in inconsistent candidate assessment results, something that candidates would have to address towards the end of the session.

External verifiers noted that one of the main centres had a rather lax approach to internal verification procedures, with most other centres relying on their procedures for National Courses. We would suggest that these centres base their

procedures on the SQA-produced Verification Toolkit, thereby allowing external verifiers to see where and why decisions have been agreed and recorded.

The most recently approved school centre had no formal internal verification procedures. The visiting verifier was told that each department decided how they would carry out this function. As a result, there were no recorded internal verification decisions, and centre-wide standardisation was poor. The centre was, in this instance, referred to the SQA quality enhancement manager for advice and support.

Areas of good practice

Several examples of good practice were reported during session 2017–18.

We would make special mention of the enthusiasm of centre staff in the delivery of these awards, which is notably appreciated by candidates.

Some centres are investing heavily in modern technology resources and encouraging candidates to make use of this in their completion of practical tasks.

One centre had arranged for a few candidates to be registered on the local college's Foundation Apprenticeship scheme. The external verifier advised the centre that candidates who successfully completed this scheme would receive their National 5 maintenance unit practical tasks by accreditation of prior learning, but that they would still need to fulfil the employability skills aspect for the complete unit award.

Specific areas for improvement

Visiting verifiers noted the following areas for improvement during session 2017–18.

Centres should fulfil the Visit Plan requests, and ensure that their internal verification procedures are presented and explained to the external verifier at the start of their visit.

Most centres have a rather indifferent approach to candidate feedback, especially with regard to employability skills. This is evident from the lack of comment on many candidate assessments throughout the course encouraging candidates to improve on weak skills.

All alterations to NABs must be recorded with justification and internally verified before a unit is delivered, to enable external verifiers to understand why a change has been made. Centres can also apply to SQA for prior verification 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 adhere to unit specifications and evidence requirements.