Higher National Qualifications

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2022

English and Communication

Verification group number: 1

Introduction

During session 2021–22, verification group 1 qualification verification took place in 10 centres across Scotland. There were two distinct areas of activity:

Three QV events dealt with the HND Media and Communication Group Award covering the following units:

J2JR 34   Analysing and Delivering Complex Oral Presentations
J2LD 34   Introduction to Working in the Creative Economy
J2JL 35   Promoting and Pitching
J3W5 35   Communication: Social Media Advanced

Seven centre qualification verification events were for a Communication servicing unit: H7TK 34 Communication: Business Communication.

This report will be divided into two parts to allow for specific findings to be presented separately for these two distinct areas of activity:

Part 1: HND Media and Communication Group Award
Part 2: Communication servicing

Part 1: HN Media and Communication Group Award

All centres offering HND Media and Communication Group Award provided sufficient evidence to achieve 'high confidence' ratings. Appropriate documentation was provided for all criteria and was well presented.

Category 2: Resources

Criterion 2.4: There must be evidence of initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials.

All centres involved in 2021–22 verification were delivering the new group award introduced in 2020. Standardisation minutes across most centres recorded meaningful ongoing discussion between assessors and internal verifiers throughout the year. There was evidence of the review of assessments and discussion about methods of delivery and integration opportunities. Verification documents clarified assessment procedures and conditions for each unit and showed adjustments to assessment conditions during the pandemic and due to online delivery.

Category 3: Candidate support

Criterion 3.2: Candidates' development needs and prior achievements (where appropriate) must be matched against the requirements of the award.

In all centres effective guidelines were in place to ensure that learners' needs and prior achievements were taken into account at entry so they could be matched against the rigorous demands of the award. Clear recruitment requirements were in place and adhered to in all centres.

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

All centres provided a range of evidence to show that regular contact with assessors was scheduled, documented and maintained with a mix of virtual and classroom-based communication. In one centre, staff and learners coped well with the demands of blended learning where the theory units were delivered online and practical classes were on campus.

Learners were able to get support directly from lecturers, either face-to-face or through one-to-one calls. In one centre, feedback from learner interviews confirmed that a few had found it particularly difficult to complete units online. In another centre, there was evidence to show

that the use of MS Teams had opened up new lines of communication with learners who would perhaps be more reluctant to contribute in-person in class.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

All centres provided robust verification and standardisation information in a professional, timely manner. Discussions during qualification verification events were helpful and provided useful information about the delivery and assessment of the new group award. There was ample evidence that centres' quality procedures had been implemented efficiently and effectively. In one centre, encouraging and positive feedback from the internal verifier to the assessor based on the unit specification was of particular value in the exceptionally difficult circumstances of the last two years.

In one centre, standardisation minutes provided little information on issues related to delivering or assessing the new units and framework. Minutes should provide a detailed account of decisions made on the new framework and issues addressed. When delivering new units there should be some reflection on what has or has not worked in terms of delivery and assessment with actions for future delivery.

In one centre, the range of communication tools used for open dialogue and communication between assessors, verifiers, managers, the quality team and learners was well documented. Informal standardisation chats in staffrooms had moved online and provided a much more detailed written record of discussions.

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

Generally, centres were happy with the units on the new framework and the reduced volume of assessment. In all centres, assessment instruments, methodology and use were valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair. They had been developed in accordance with the principles underpinning the revision of the HNC/D awards and reflected National Occupational Standards.

J2JR 34 Analysing and Delivering Complex Oral Presentations

Using holistic approaches and minimising the assessment burden were evident throughout. Learning and assessment materials were current and reflected issues relevant to the sector. In one centre, there was evidence of effective integration of learning and assessment of this unit with significant elements of the graded unit which minimised the assessment burden and developed valuable meta-skills in self-management, social intelligence and innovation in a context relevant to the media sector.

In one centre extensive use of centre designed templates and frameworks supported learners to achieve required standards. Documented feedback was clear, informative and supportive.

In one centre, the video for analysis in Outcome 1 was appropriate though slightly longer than required. Candidates often wrote well beyond the requested 500 words, possibly due to them analysing an 18 minute presentation instead of a 10–15 minute presentation. Centres should adhere to the requirements of the unit specification and provide a 10–15 minute presentation to reduce the workload for learners.

In one centre, on-going evaluation and group feedback was particularly effective.

In one centre, a very impressive product had been delivered, using Outcome 1 Analysis to build a successful Outcome 2/3 presentation and group discussion.

J2LD 34 Introduction to Working in the Creative Economy

All assessments were valid, matched to the unit specification, and provided clear direction on what was required to achieve each outcome. In one centre, learners were provided with an option to present written or oral evidence for Outcomes 1 and 2 allowing them to choose the method which best suited their strengths. In another centre, learners worked on the unit over the year with Outcomes 1 and 2 being delivered in the first block and then Outcome 3 being integrated with Web Design later in the year when the learners had produced more work to upload to their websites.

J3W5 35 Communication: Social Media Advanced

All four assessments were valid and matched to the unit specification. They provided clear direction on what was required to achieve. One centre created an impressive portfolio of assessments for Outcome 1 which covered a range of topics and contexts matched to the evidence requirements.

J2JL 35 Promoting and Pitching

In all centres, assessments were valid and matched to the unit specification. They provided clear direction on achievement of each outcome. In one centre, learners were provided with a template for Outcome 1, matched to the evidence requirements which provided further clarification on how to achieve the requirements. Using the template to support learners with planning their promotion strategy clearly helped produce specific and detailed responses.

In another centre there was no word count indicated on the Outcome 1 and 2 assessments.

For Outcome 3, learners could choose whether to be assessed by written evaluation or short interview.

One centre limited the length of the oral presentations to ensure manageable workloads for staff and learners.

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

All centres provided a range of evidence to demonstrate that learners' assessment submissions were their own and generated under the required conditions. These included various digital checks, on-going one-to-one learner support at draft stages, and malpractice or academic honesty procedures. Some centres included an induction to the course which explained the importance of generating original work and ways to avoid plagiarism.

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

Learner evidence was provided for all outcomes of all units along with completed checklists. Confirmation and verification of assessor judgement by the internal verifier was accurate, fair and consistent in all centres. Feedback to learners was appropriate and constructive. Evidence of drafting and remediation opportunities was provided in all cases.

J2JR 34 Analysing and Delivering Complex Oral Presentations

In one centre, on-going evaluation and documented group feedback was particularly effective. Almost all learners were enthusiastic in planning, implementing and delivering high quality projects. In all centres clear feedback was given on any remediation needs identified. In one centre, all evidence had been recorded and therefore assessment practice for the unit was clear to see.

J2LD 34 Introduction to Working in the Creative Economy

In one centre, checklists were completed and provided feedback but there was no audio or video evidence provided for oral assessments for Outcome 1 and/or 2. To ensure standardisation across cohorts using different assessment methods, ie written and oral evidence, a sample should be recorded for the Outcome 1 and 2 assessments when being assessed orally.

J2JL 35 Promoting and Pitching

In one centre, for Outcome 2, video links provided evidence for oral pitches. Links on checklists provided access to websites.

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

In all centres, all materials and evidence were retained in line with requirements.

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

All centre policies clearly emphasised the requirement to share qualification verification reports and advice.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

The following good practice was reported during session 2021–22:

♦ Informal standardisation chats in staffrooms had moved online providing a more detailed written record of discussions.

♦ J2JR 34 Analysing and Delivering Complex Oral Presentations – effective integration with the graded unit to minimise the assessment burden.

♦ J2JR 34 Analysing and Delivering Complex Oral Presentations – Outcome 1 video close to the minimum of 10 minutes in length to reduce learner workload.

♦ J2LD 34 Introduction to Working in the Creative Economy – giving learners the option to present written or oral evidence for Outcomes 1 and 2.

♦ J2JL 35 Promoting and Pitching – using a template to support learners with planning their promotion strategy.

♦ J2JL 35 Promoting and Pitching – learners having the choice to be assessed for Outcome 3 by written evaluation or short interview.

Specific areas for development

The following areas for development were reported during session 2021–22:

♦ When delivering new units there should be some reflection on delivery and assessment with actions for the following year.

♦ Ask learners to include word counts on assessment submissions whenever they are stated as a requirement.

♦ J2LD 34 Introduction to Working in the Creative Economy – to ensure standardisation across cohorts, a sample should be recorded for the Outcome 1 and 2 assessments when being assessed orally.

Part 2: HN Communication Servicing

During session 2021–22 seven centres were selected for verification by group award. Verification group 1 Communication servicing external verifiers worked alongside primary verifiers to carry out verification on small samples of learners within the same group award. Almost all verified centres offering H7TK 34 Communication: Business Communication provided sufficient evidence to achieve 'high confidence' ratings. In most cases, appropriate documentation was provided for all criteria and was usually well presented.

Category 2: Resources

Criterion 2.4: There must be evidence of initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials.

All centres involved in 2021–22 verification were able to confirm that their assessment environments and learning and reference resources were updated in line with routine quality procedures. In most cases, records of meetings between assessors and internal verifiers and other verification documents clarified where assessment procedures had been adjusted during the pandemic due to online delivery.

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 centres provided sufficient evidence to show that measures were in place to ensure learners' needs and prior achievements were taken into account at entry.

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

All centres provided a range of evidence to show that regular contact with assessors was scheduled and documented. In some instances, this was a mix of virtual and classroom-based communication.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

Almost all centres provided robust verification and standardisation information. Discussions with centre staff during MS Teams qualification verification events were helpful and provided

useful information about the delivery, assessment and verification. There was ample evidence that centres' quality procedures had been implemented efficiently and effectively.

In one centre, detailed pre-delivery and post-delivery documents included a useful review of assessments and teaching material with action points for next delivery in 2022–23. In a few centres, minutes of standardisation meetings lacked useful detail. Minutes should provide a more detailed account of decisions and issues addressed with the unit.

In one centre, there was little standardisation activity between different departments assessing the same unit. Internal verification systems could be tightened by having assessors from servicing teams meet with Business Communication assessors for standardisation and exchange of good practice. Keeping verification separate is a potential weak point which could create future issues with college-wide compliance.

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

Outcome 1

One centre opted to use its own assessment from a national newspaper. Although a written transcript was provided, the hyperlink included required a subscription to view so external verifiers were unable to see whether the full article was sufficiently complex for this level.

In one centre, the text used for Outcome 1 was over 3,600 words which is overly long. It was a visually appealing text with small clear sections; however, the unit specification states a 'business related text of approximately 800–1,500 words'.

Centres are encouraged to submit assessments for prior verification if they are unsure of their suitability.

Outcome 2

In one centre, learners gave useful feedback about assessment skills integration, by suggesting that the assessors for Business Communication and the Word Processing and Presentations unit should collaborate to ensure one consistent layout and referencing style is used. This would allow candidates to see the link between the units they are studying as well as reduce the teaching element of these documents by two assessors.

At two centres there were contradictory issues around assessors trying to reduce learners' workload, while at the same time accepting Outcome 2 reports which far exceeded the advised word counts. Making learners more aware of word counts and adopting a portfolio approach to Outcome 2, so that the written evidence produced for Outcome 3 contributes to the total word count for Outcome 2, could effectively reduce workload. The report word count could be as low as 800 words and supplemented with business documents (minutes and agenda) from Outcome 3. This would ensure a more manageable volume of work and encourage more concise writing.

Outcome 3

In one centre, there had been ongoing issues with learners being absent for Outcome 3 assessments. The assessor could mitigate this in the future by planning to have more than the minimum four people in a group to allow for potential absences.

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

All centres provided a range of evidence to demonstrate that learners' assessment submissions were their own and generated under the required conditions. These included Outcome 2 written work being fully referenced using Harvard referencing, various digital checks, on-going one-to-one learner support at draft stages, and malpractice or academic honesty procedures. Some centres included a course induction which explained the importance of generating original work and ways to avoid plagiarism.

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

In almost all centres, candidate evidence was provided for all outcomes of all units along with completed checklists. A small number of centres had created their own assessment checklists which did not accurately state evidence requirements. These had to be amended.

Confirmation and verification of assessor judgement by the internal verifier was accurate, fair and consistent in all centres. Feedback to learners was in most cases, appropriate and constructive.

Outcome 1

Some centres asked learners to state the word count on the Outcome 1 evaluation question, making it easier for assessors to check that requirements had been met.

Outcome 2

In all centres, candidates' work was sufficiently complex and well produced, although in one centre the report format varied across candidates. It may be helpful to agree a set format for Outcome 2, to offer clearer guidance to learners and better meet the evidence requirement that format and layout enhance communication.
Some candidates had produced excessively long reports for Outcome 2 and overly long minutes for Outcome 3, which exceeded the portfolio of 1,500 word minimum for these outcomes. The focus on Outcome 3 should be the oral element. If a portfolio approach is used, the Outcome 3 business documents contribute to the writing element of Outcome 2. This would allow for shorter reports (800 words) for Outcome 2.

A few centres did not ask learners to include word counts on their reports, making it difficult to confirm whether minimum requirements had been met.

Outcome 3

Few centres provided video recordings to support Outcome 3 assessment, though most centres provided detailed observation checklists. In a few centres there was little or no

written commentary on assessment checklists particularly relating to evidence requirements addressing interaction with others. The unit specification and ASP recommend that a sample of meetings is recorded to provide evidence of candidates' participation and for assessors to review as part of the standardisation process. Although recordings are not mandatory, they are helpful. Without video, evidence that standards have been met must be in the form of comprehensive assessor feedback using a detailed observation checklist.

In one centre, the assessor effectively supported achievement by chairing the assessment meeting and prompting students to give their best performance and meet evidence requirements.

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

In all centres, all materials and all evidence were retained in line with requirements.

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

All centre policies clearly emphasised the requirement to share QV reports and advice.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

The following good practice was reported during session 2021–22:

♦ Detailed pre-delivery and post-delivery documents with a useful review of assessments and teaching material with action points for next delivery in 2022–23.

Specific areas for development

The following areas for development were reported during session 2021–22:

♦ Internal verification systems could be tightened by having assessors from servicing teams meet with assessors from other teams for standardisation and exchange of good practice.
♦ Centres are encouraged to submit Outcome 1 assessments for prior verification if they are unsure of their suitability.
♦ Exploring whether the report format taught to learners can be consistent with other course units requiring reports, for example the Word Processing and Presentations unit.
♦ Considering the portfolio approach for Outcomes 2 and 3 could ensure a more manageable volume of work for learners and encourage more concise writing.
♦ Ask learners to include word counts on assessment submissions whenever they are stated as a requirement.
♦ Gathering stronger evidence of Outcome 3 achievement and internal verification.