SQA

National Progression Awards

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2022

Computer Science

Information Technology

Verification group numbers: 357 and 288

Introduction

This report is compiled from verification visits for several National Progression Awards. The delivering centres were either schools offering an NPA as part of subject choices in the senior phase at levels 4–6 or colleges offering as part of a Foundation Apprenticeship at level 6. Almost all Foundation Apprenticeships were in Software Development with a small number in Hardware and System support.

The report has grouped the NPAs in two verification groups as there is some overlap within awards. Only the NPA in Software Development completely sits within verification group 288.

All verification was carried out virtually with access being given to evidence in advance of the visit.

The NPAs and units reviewed were as follows:

Code	Group award	Units
GL4W 46	NPA in Software Development	F3T2 12 Computing: Authoring a Website H6S9 46 Computing: Applications Development
GN57 45	Web Design	H614 45 Computing: Website Graphics HW52 45 Computing: Website Design and Development HW51 45 Computing: Interactive Multimedia
GP02 44	Computer Games Development	HX9V 44 Computer Games: Design HX9W 44 Computer Games: Media Assets HX9X 44 Computer Games: Development
GP8N 44	Data Science	J2HN 44 Data Citizenship J2G2 44 Data Science
GP8P 45	Data Science	J2HN 45 Data Citizenship J2G2 45 Data Science H9E2 45 Data Security
GP8R 46	Data Science	J2HN 46 Data Citizenship J2G2 46 Data Science H9E2 46 Data Security
GR54 46 (FA)	Software Development	H6S9 46 Computing: Applications Development F3T2 12 Computing: Authoring a Website J27C 76 Software Design and Development
GG0F 46(FA)	Professional Computer Fundamentals	H2N5 12 Security Fundamentals H2N6 12 Network Fundamentals H2N7 12 Server Administration Fundamentals

Category 2: Resources

Criterion 2.1: Assessors and internal verifiers must be competent to assess and internally verify, in line with the requirements of the qualification.

Almost all staff involved with delivery are qualified in an appropriate vocational area and hold a postgraduate teaching qualification such as PGDE or TQFE.

Where CPD was available it was found to be relevant within the changing nature of a dynamic subject area.

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

All centres participate in a formal annual review of courses. In addition to the formal review there was, in most visits, evidence to support the fact that this is supplemented by regular reviews by delivery teams.

Minutes of meetings were presented as evidence to verifiers and were found to be effective in providing a review of assessment, learning resources and equipment. All review was found to be effective in providing an overview of success and actions for improvement.

Almost all delivery was conducted in a face-to-face environment but some centres adopted a blended model.

All centres make use of electronic platforms for delivery of course materials and in some cases for assessment. These can range from virtual learning environments such as Moodle, Blackboard or Canvas to MS Teams, Google Classroom or in a few cases a centre-devised platform.

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 carry out some form of process to ensure that the right candidates are on the right course. This can take the form of an interview process or mapping to an academic profile.

These was evidence in some centres to review prior learning and this formed part of the selection process. In many schools, and where available, NPAs are offered at multiple levels. Learners have the option to undertake the level most suited to the individual and therefore to ensure success.

In many of the verification visits relating to GR54 46 this NPA forms part of the Foundation Apprenticeship course. Learners are in 5th and 6th year and are matched to the award by their school.

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

All candidates have regular contact with assessors. In all instances this is several times per week. This allows a clear view of progress and action can be taken to revise assessment plans. Most cohorts adhere to a schedule of planned lessons and assessment but there was evidence in most centres of candidates undertaking assessment or re-assessment at times agreed to meet individual needs.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

All centres had effective three-stage verification processes in place. In almost all instances assessment and verification are well understood and well documented. There was evidence seen of both sampling of candidate assessment materials or double marking taking place. This was mostly clear-to-follow assessment decisions and internal verifier confirmation.

Standardisation activity varied depending on centre and number of cohorts. In many instances this formed part of the ongoing review meetings that were held regularly. Minutes were effective in providing a clear record of activity.

In a small number of instances verifiers identified areas where internal verification had not been effective in identifying assessment issues.

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

In almost all instances assessment was based on the SQA assessment support pack (ASP). For knowledge assessments this was used directly with little or no modification. Some centres hosted this electronically and use of SOLAR was also noted. Practical elements were also based on the ASP but in many cases not used directly.

There was evidence to suggest that there is a system in place to undertake pre-delivery checks to ensure that the assessment is fit for purpose.

In a few cases centre-derived assessment had been used and these had also been checked for pre-delivery. In a few instances the marking guidelines had not been sufficiently detailed to provide consistent marking decisions. All instruments of assessment are required to be supported by marking schemes to provide consistent and fair making decisions particularly. This should form part of a pre-delivery check.

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

All centres have malpractice and plagiarism policies in place which have been developed in line with SQA requirements.

All centres have processes in place to authenticate candidate work. This can range from own work declaration with submissions to the use of electronic plagiarism checking software such as Turnitin. All assessors authentic work in marking by awareness of candidate style and ability and would take action where there is any unexpected work submitted.

Assessment conditions are adhered to, and candidates are aware of assessment conditions in advance such as closed-book, timed assessment or open-book conditions.

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

In almost all centres assessor judgement is found to be accurate and consistent with SQA requirements. Almost all assessment was supported by clear marking guidelines and judgements made in line with this. In many cases marking commentary was provided that clearly showed marking decisions. This provided good feedback for candidates and provided information for verifiers.

In a very few instances marking schemes had not been adhered to and verifiers identified some issues with marking that were unacceptable.

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

All evidence had been retained for all visits in line with SQA requirements. Verifiers discussed the retention of evidence and in some instances the archiving or data cleansing process.

In all cases this was found to be effective in retaining evidence for verification and compliance with retention policies.

A considerable amount of evidence is generated electronically, and this is accessed through secure usernames and passwords.

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

All centres confirm that external verification reports are disseminated to staff on receipt. In some centres visited there was evidence of previous reports being discussed at meetings. However, in most centres it had been some time since they had a visit and, in a few instances, this was their first visit and they had nothing to discuss.

Verifiers discussed the usefulness of reports in informing assessment and verification practice.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

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

♦ Use of centre-devised, web-based, assessment platform
♦ Quality and availability of centre-devised learning materials online
♦ High level of candidate support
♦ Extensive and constructive feedback of assessment

Specific areas for development

The following area for development was reported during session 2021–22:

♦ Internal verification process to ensure marking schemes/guidelines are available for all assessment