NQ verification 2022–23 round 2

Qualification verification summary report

Section 1: verification group information

Verification group name:	Photography
Verification activity:	Visit
Date published:	June 2023

National Units verified

Unit code	Unit level	Unit title
H4KT 76	SCQF level 6	Photography: Image Making (Higher)
H4KV 76	SCQF level 6	Photography: Contextual Imagery (Higher)

Section 2: comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

The team of visiting verifiers observed a range of good practice across most centres that participated in the external verification process. Observations and good practice are outlined in the comments below.

Both Image Making and Contextual Imagery units were presented for external verification.

Centres used the following unit assessment support packs:

♦ Package 1: Unit by Unit approach
♦ Package 2: Combined approach
♦ Package 3: Portfolio approach

Most centres used 'Package 2: Combined approach' to assess the work of their candidates.

Most centres used the unit assessment support packs effectively to deliver the units. Most centres used the SQA-generated assessment tasks 'Light & Time', 'My World' and 'Masters of Photography' to assess the work of their candidates.

Centres are reminded that SQA offers a [prior verification](#) service for centres that wish to adapt these assessment tasks or generate their own.

Candidate assessment evidence was generally very well-structured, demonstrating that centres have made appropriate use of Understanding Standards materials and exemplar unit assessments that SQA published.

Image Making — outcome 1
Candidate evidence for assessment standards 1.1 and 1.2 was generally very good. This is a marked improvement on previous years, possibly due to the inclusion of this aspect within the externally assessed project.

In some instances, the candidate evidence for assessment standard 1.2 did not meet the national standard. This assessment standard requires candidates to discuss the specific impact of the influences identified for assessment standard 1.1 on two pieces of work by two photographers. While candidates had attempted to do this in most cases, their comments were often unable to address this appropriately.

The general standard of evidence produced for assessment standard 1.3 was strong. Candidate responses included justified personal opinions on the work of their chosen photographers. In some instances, however, candidates did not use appropriate language to convey their opinions. Centres are reminded that candidates must be able to use appropriate photographic language and vocabulary to describe their own work and that of other image makers.

Image Making — outcome 2
Candidate evidence for this outcome was mostly of a very high standard and reflects the high quality of learning and teaching that has taken place before the unit assessment.

Most centres presented evidence digitally for the purposes of external verification; however, some chose to present candidate work in a printed format. A digital approach helps to minimise consumable costs for the units and encourages candidates to make better use of their time. Most centres effectively presented evidence in Word documents and PowerPoint presentations.

Most centres presented work that demonstrated a very strong technical understanding of digital photography. Final image selections were appropriate and offered a range of different styles and genres. The standard of technical skill, however, continues to be inconsistent, with many candidates producing images that were under or over-exposed, out of focus, or with inappropriate use of flash.

The majority of candidate evidence for assessment standard 2.2 was very strong. However, some candidates presented work for external verification that did not demonstrate good compositional techniques.

Contextual Imagery — outcome 1
Evidence presented for the Contextual Imagery unit was of a good standard. The quality of photographic work was strong and demonstrated candidates' ability to use appropriate photographic processes for creative effect.

In centres that adopted the combined approach, candidates produced evidence that strongly linked to the work of their influential photographers in the Image Making unit.

Most candidates selected styles and genres that were appropriate for their choice of equipment and level of technical skill. Some candidates had chosen styles and genres for assessment standard 1.2 which were too challenging for their current level of skill. Centres should always encourage candidates to pursue projects which are achievable and suitable for their level of skill.

Centres should be reminded that candidates' own photographic work must link visually to the work of their influential photographers in terms of style and genre.

Contextual Imagery — outcome 2

Evidence produced for outcome 2 was thorough, with most centres adopting a standardised approach by using both SQA and centre-devised pro formas. This approach to assessment ensures that all candidates have an understanding of the requirements of the outcome.

Some candidates did not meet the requirements of assessment standard 2.3, as they were unable to evaluate the success of their work in relation to their original intentions. Centres are reminded that candidates must identify one valid strength and one area for improvement in their photographic work and practice.

Assessment judgements

Most centres' assessment judgements were accurate, consistent and reliable, in line with the national standard.

Most centres recorded their assessment judgements clearly using either SQA-devised Candidate Assessment Records or an appropriately adapted version to suit an individual centre's approach. In some instances, however, no assessment judgements were given or no comments were available to justify decisions. This is an important part of the assessment and verification process, and centres should always record this in a suitable format.

The majority of centres demonstrated clear evidence of effective internal verification procedures. In some cases, the centre's internal verification process did not identify inconsistencies in the assessor's judgements.

Some centres continue to make use of colleagues from other centres to assist in the internal verification process and assist them with their own assessment judgements.

Some centres did not evidence any form of internal verification. All centres offering SQA qualifications should have an effective internal quality assurance procedure in place. More information on internal verification can be found on SQA's website.

In some instances, centres submitted evidence for external verification that was marked as 'complete' when the candidate had not successfully met or produced evidence for all assessment standards. Centres are reminded that 'interim' evidence is perfectly acceptable for the purposes of external verification; however, internal assessment must accurately reflect this.

Centres are advised to revisit candidate evidence periodically to ensure their judgements reflect the most up-to-date work for each candidate.

Section 3: general comments

Centre staff engaged well with external verification and found the process to be supportive and transparent.

Generally, candidate evidence and details of departmental learning and teaching were presented coherently, allowing the verification process to run smoothly.

There was strong evidence of candidate engagement and a high level of skill present in both units.

Centre staff should be commended for developing effective resources to support learning and teaching. The following ideas, techniques, strategies, policies and processes are examples of good practice which were observed in centres' delivery of both units:

♦ Overall quality of candidate responses indicates the effectiveness of the learning and teaching that has taken place before the unit assessments.
♦ Candidates are provided with excellent resources in the form of centre-devised course handbooks, tutorials and workshops that support their understanding of the subject both creatively and technically.
♦ Some centres provide candidates with a list of photographers to investigate for outcome 1 of Image Making. This approach supports candidates in meeting this outcome successfully by vetting the photographers that they choose.
♦ Centres have made use of a variety of digital formats to present candidate unit work. This effective approach to assessment can reduce course costs without compromising the candidates' experience.

In the lead up to external verification this session, there was still some confusion regarding what evidence is required for unit verification. Some centres provided project work and others, just a range of photographic work.

Centres are reminded that unit assessments are no longer mandatory and do not form part of the Higher Photography course assessment. The Image Making and Contextual Imagery units are standalone SCQF level 6 units. Project work must not be presented for external verification as the NQ Verification Team do not verify evidence for the course assessment (project or question paper) or National Progression Award (NPA).

Centres can continue to use units as a method of structuring their course. Centres that continue to offer these units will still be subject to external verification.

A course report will be published after the assessment diet, which will highlight more detail on the course assessment (project and question paper) for this session. This will be published in the course reports section of the Higher Photography page.