NQ verification 2022–23 round 2

Qualification verification summary report

Section 1: verification group information

Verification group name:	Psychology
Verification activity:	Event
Date published:	June 2023

National Units verified

Unit code	Unit level	Unit title
J2D1 75	SCQF level 5	Psychology: Individual Behaviour
J2CY 75	SCQF level 5	Psychology: Research
J2D3 75	SCQF level 5	Psychology: Social Behaviour
J2D2 76	SCQF level 6	Psychology: Individual Behaviour
J2D0 76	SCQF level 6	Psychology: Research
J2D4 76	SCQF level 6	Psychology: Social Behaviour

Section 2: comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

Overall, centres had made effective use of the SQA-provided unit assessment support packs. Centres can be reassured that the unit assessment support packs have been through a rigorous quality assurance process and as such are deemed valid approaches to assessment.

A small number of centres used approaches to assessment that had been prior verified. The prior verification process ensures any centre-devised approaches to assessment meet assessment standards and outcomes. Using this service is considered good practice.

The majority of centres used package 1: unit-by-unit approach. When centre-devised assessment approaches were used these also tended to be on a unit-by-unit basis. There was evidence of a centre-devised assessment, which combined different unit assessment standards in a skilful and creative way. This reduced assessment for candidates and is considered good practice.

Some centres applied and implemented Curriculum for Excellence principles in their approach to assessment by using adapted and centre-devised approaches to assessment that took account of the assessment standards and guidelines in the unit assessment support packs.

Some centres used naturally occurring evidence and candidates were given a range of opportunities to achieve assessment standards.

Where centres devise their own assessment approaches or adapt the SQA-provided unit assessment support packs, they are reminded to use the outcomes and assessment standards in the unit specification. Additionally it is advised to use the judging evidence table in the unit assessment support packs (particularly the third column). This would support the use of appropriate command words to enable candidates to generate sufficient evidence to meet the requirements of the unit.

For centre-produced assessments or adapted unit assessment support packs that are significantly different, using the free prior verification service provided by SQA is strongly recommended to ensure validity.

Centres are advised to ensure they are using the most current version of SQA-provided unit assessment support packs, available from SQA's secure site. Centres are also advised to check SQA's secure site to ensure that any prior verified assessment is still valid before use.

Assessment judgements

The assessment judgements were in line with national standards, reliable and accepted for some centres.

Where unit assessment support packs had been used, some centres had made effective use of the information on judging evidence to support assessment judgements for each candidate. In these instances, assessment judgements were clearly based on the assessment standards and candidates had been appropriately identified as pass or fail against these. From the evidence submitted, it was clear that some assessors accurately and consistently applied the assessment standards and had a clear understanding of the standards.

Some assessors provided useful notes on the candidate assessment record to explain how assessment judgements were reached.

Centres are advised to adhere to the assessment standards while judging candidate evidence and to pay particular attention to the level of demand generated by different command words. This applies particularly in relation to the difference between 'describe' and 'explain' and especially for SCQF level 5.

There were some instances of inaccuracies in assessment judgements and centres are reminded to use the judging evidence table when making assessment judgements if using an SQA-provided unit assessment support pack.

In some instances, centres were lenient in judging application of knowledge. This occurred predominantly for unit J2D4 76: Psychology: Social Behaviour, assessment standard 1.3:

'Applying understanding of social psychology to everyday behaviour' where candidates had explained an everyday behaviour using concepts but not research. Centres should be aware that to achieve this assessment standard candidates are required to both 'explain everyday social behaviour with reference to concepts and/or theories' and 'explain everyday social behaviour with reference to research evidence'. This information can be found in the third column of the judging evidence table for the unit assessment support pack for the unit J2D4 76: Psychology: Social Behaviour.

Centres should note that the unit J2D3 75: Psychology: Social Behaviour also requires candidates to use both research evidence and concepts to explain everyday social behaviour for assessment standard 1.3: 'Using psychological knowledge to explain examples of everyday behaviour'.

There was some evidence of over-assessment for candidates undertaking the units J2D1 75: Psychology: Individual Behaviour and J2D3 75: Psychology: Social Behaviour. It is important that centres are aware of minimum standards for achievement and assessment standard thresholds, which can be found in the unit specifications.

Where verbal remediation and/or clarification is undertaken with candidates, it is advised this is recorded by the centre in some way. This would facilitate effective internal and external verification. In addition, where alternative assessment approaches are undertaken, centres are advised to ensure that all assessment evidence provided can be accessed, particularly in relation to digital uploads, and an appropriate assessment strategy is provided.

Section 3: general comments

Internal verification

Many centres engaged in thorough internal verification processes, with evidence of robust systems. There was evidence of cross-marking, detailed notes by internal verifiers and developmental support for assessors in relation to their assessment judgements. It was encouraging to see such professional and collaborative processes and these practices supported external verification.

As well as ensuring national standards are maintained, internal verification should ensure that assessors are fully supported through the process of unit assessment. Internal verifiers and assessors may find the suggested approach in SQA's NQ internal verification toolkit useful to ensure national standards are maintained, assessors are supported, and valid assessment approaches are used.

Prior verification

Centres are strongly advised to submit centre-devised assessments for prior verification if these differ significantly from the unit assessment support packs. This is a free service provided by SQA and should be requested before assessments are used with candidates. Further information on the prior verification service is available on the delivery processes section of SQA's website.

If a centre has used a prior verified assessment, the verification certificate should be included with material submitted for external verification.

Good practice

Centres are to be commended on candidate feedback. A range of feedback mechanisms were identified at the verification event. Some assessors provided detailed and specific feedback in relation to achievement and some assessors provided supportive and developmental feedback, enabling an understanding of both current achievement and where skills could be developed, particularly when candidates were progressing to a higher SCQF level.

Identifying where assessment standards were met on candidate's scripts was noted as good practice as it provided very clear, supportive feedback for candidates to measure their own progress.

Many centres provided clear checklists or grids indicating where assessment standards had been achieved which was helpful during the verification event. In addition, annotations on candidate scripts gave clear indications of final assessment judgements.

Many centres provided candidates with a choice of assessment approaches, clearly adopting Curriculum for Excellence principles, enabling candidates to have some autonomy and ownership over the way evidence is presented. Some centres provided worksheets for candidates to complete, which clearly signposted candidates to the requirements of each assessment standard, while retaining personalisation. Where integrated assessments were used, it was noted that these encouraged deep thinking and analytical skills.