National Units

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2022
English and Communication

Verification group number: 1

Introduction

This report covers external verification activity during session 2021–22 for the following SCQF level 5 and level 6 National Units:

FA1W 12   Communication NC
FA58 12   Literature 1
J4G8 45   Introduction to Literature

There were eight verification events carried out by three external verifiers. Two were for colleges and six were for schools.

Delivery and assessment of the SCQF level 6 units is well established in Scotland's colleges. The Communication and Literature units are usually delivered together, often within access courses. Interest from schools has been growing steadily in recent years.

The SCQF level 6 units are usually offered in schools as a combined course to small numbers of learners. Common reasons for selecting this combination of units include:

♦   as an alternative to the study of Higher English
♦   as an alternative pathway to SCQF level 6 NQ courses
♦   provision for fifth year pupils who have achieved a C pass in National 5 English, with the aim of having those who are successful, sit Higher English in sixth year
♦   provision for a small number of students for whom Higher English is not entirely suitable

All schools verified anticipated increasing their numbers of entries in future.

The SCQF level 5 Introduction to Literature unit was updated and relaunched in 2020 and, so far, the uptake has been exclusively from schools. The unit is mainly delivered to achieve the following:

♦   as an additional qualification accompanying N5 English
♦   provision alongside N5 English for students in the senior phase who require a more individualised approach to learning and for whom N5 English may not be the most appropriate study pathway

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.

In all centres there was ample evidence of ongoing review of learning and assessment materials. This was usually documented in notes of college verification meetings, school staff meetings and/or pre-delivery checklists.

In almost all centres, review or standardisation meetings were held at various points throughout the academic session.

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 it was clear that learners' prior achievements and learning needs were carefully considered and were appropriate to the entry recommendations given in the unit specifications.

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

In all cases, scheduled contact with assessors was apparent through weekly timetables and planned review meetings. In almost all centres, targeted support sessions were in use for learners who needed them.

In college centres where the pandemic had necessitated a greater emphasis on online/remote delivery, there was evidence of effective adaptation of teaching materials and supportive engagement with learners.

♦ One centre prioritised a learner-centred approach whereby the pace of individual candidates' drafting, completion and remediation of assessments, was allowed to vary from one learner to another.
♦ One school department provided pupils with an assessment calendar mapping the route through the assessment process for FA1W 12 combined with FA58 12.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

Internal verification (IV) procedures were always clearly presented, though in some cases they were not fully implemented, by internal verifiers resulting in issues such as faulty assessment instruments.

In most centres regular IV meetings and discussion took place throughout the session. However, in one centre, internal verification took place at the end of delivery of both units resulting in some inconvenience to learners.

In all centres standardisation and IV discussions took place on both a formal and informal basis. In most cases, there was an ongoing and constructive professional dialogue between assessors and IVs.

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

In most centres, assessment instruments were valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair. A small number of assessment instruments fell short of the required standard.

SCQF level 6 units

Some centres made use of centre-devised assessment instruments which integrated naturally within the overall context of candidates' learning and dealt with vocationally relevant issues. For example, college students in the Access to Nursing cohort answered questions on an Outcome 1 text taken from the 'Nursing Times'. The high quality of candidates' responses indicated a strong level of engagement with these contextualised assessment instruments. In schools, the assessments for the reading and listening tasks were almost all very well chosen and relevant to the interests of young learners. They were challenging, interesting, meaningful and relevant.

In most centres for Literature 1 FA58 12, learners studied a wide range of texts, and their analytical skills were developed through exposure to different literary genres.

Centre-devised assessments adapted from Higher English assessment materials were in use in some centres. In most cases, there was evidence of careful and conscientious mapping of the performance criteria for Literature 1 to the Higher materials and attention was paid to the differences in terminology, resulting in valid and reliable assessment instruments.

A few of the assessments in use for Communication NC FA1W 12 could be considered as out-of-date. Centres should commit to updating their assessments on a regular basis, especially to ensure currency and to stimulate learners' interests in their vocational subject or current affairs.

When devising new assessments, centres should consult the assessment support packs (ASP) on the format of assessment questions and on the length of the texts used for Outcomes 1 and 3 of Communication NC FA1W12. In cases where centre-devised assessments are being used, it is recommended that these assessment materials are sent to SQA for prior verification.

SCQF level 5 unit

One centre delivering Introduction to Literature J4G8 45 made use of the SQA ASP. Another centre chose instead to successfully adapt National 5 Critical Essay questions for assessment of Outcome 1, carefully mapping to ensure that the assessment incorporated all performance criteria for this unit.

In one centre Outcome 2 textual analysis questions were based on a set of National 5 revision questions. However, the Outcome 2 assessment instrument contained more questions than the number recommended in the unit specification ('6–10 questions should be used for the instrument of assessment'), potentially placing an unnecessary assessment burden on candidates.

The Introduction to Literature ASP can provide a model for use when centres choose to create their own or adapt existing National 5 assessment questions. The ASP also provides a model for developing detailed marking instructions for revised questions. It is recommended that all centre-devised assessment materials be submitted to SQA for prior verification before use.

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

All centres took effective measures to ensure that candidates' work was original and generated under SQA's required conditions.

In colleges, evidence of ongoing monitoring of authenticity came from learner authenticity statements and adherence to various college policies relating to assessment protocols and induction processes.

Other effective methods seen in schools were assessed work (closed book) completed under supervision; the retention of several drafts of written work; assessors working closely with candidates as work was generated; different assessment given to learners who missed the initial assessment opportunity; and the use of anti-plagiarism software.

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

All centres effectively demonstrated a secure understanding of unit standards and evidence requirements leading to accurate and consistent assessment judgements.

In all centres, assessor feedback to candidates was appropriate, specific and encouraging.

In some centres, pertinent internal verifiers' comments on learner evidence showed careful and accurate judgement of both learners' work and the application of standards by assessors.

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

All centres had some form of policy for retention of learners' work in line with SQA requirements. Discussion during verification events showed that these policies were being effectively adhered to.

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

Colleges had clear processes for the dissemination of qualification verification reports to staff which were being carried out successfully, affirming what was being done well and highlighting areas for improvement. For most schools, this was their first external verification event for these units. Formal dissemination was carried out effectively by senior staff through department meetings.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

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

♦ Adopting a learner-centred individualised approach to the pace of drafting, completion and remediation of assessments.
♦ Providing learners with an assessment calendar mapping the route through the assessment process for FA1W 12 combined with FA58 12.

Specific areas for development

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

♦ Careful adherence to internal verification policies to allow supportive intervention and feedback at different stages throughout the academic year.
♦ Assessments for Communication NC FA1W 12 should be updated regularly to ensure currency and to stimulate learners' interests in their vocational subject or current affairs.
♦ Assessment support packs (ASPs) can provide a model for use when centres choose to create their own assessment questions and marking instructions.
♦ Centre-devised assessments should be sent to SQA for prior verification.