



**Higher National Qualifications  
Internal Assessment Report 2012  
English and Communication**

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in Higher National Qualifications in this subject.

# Higher National Units

## General comments

The majority of centres visited this year have been commended by External Verifiers for their clear, accurate understanding of national standards and the well presented, efficiently organised paperwork prepared for external verification events.

## Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Assessors are — in general — familiar with Unit specifications, SQA exemplar packs and support materials. In many centres, SQA materials are used as models to design assessment packs, contextualised to the HN awards being undertaken. Validation is assured through prior verification and/or internal verification.

## Evidence Requirements

Evidence Requirements for the HN Communication Units are clearly understood. Assessment tasks are contextualised and, where practical, linked to relevant work across course programmes or integrated across Outcomes. In a minority of centres, some recently appointed staff are not always as aware as they could be of recommended approaches to generating evidence. This includes the need to ensure that evidence submitted is original and the work of one individual.

## Administration of assessments

In many of the centres visited, verifiers commended the integrated and/or contextualised approaches to assessment and praised team working on varied approaches to common standards. Most centres offer a range of assessments that are current, relevant and well designed to challenge candidates at an appropriate level. There were, however, still instances of limited assessment approaches using a single Reading text and generic tasks for a range of awards. Although technically valid, this is not the most useful or relevant way to develop Communication skills.

Some cross-college variation in assessment instructions and checklists has also been observed. In most cases this has been linked to restructuring of sections and changes of responsibility and personnel. Advice on the need for standardisation has been given by EVs and the potential for inconsistencies of judgement discussed with Quality Managers.

Centres are commended generally for their attention to detail in internal verification procedures and documentation.

## **General feedback**

Formal feedback to candidates continues to be supportive, with clear indications and instructions on any work that needs further development.

Candidates interviewed are enthusiastic about how their skills have improved and confirm the value of the Units in developing the confidence needed to manage business communication.

Increasing use of web-based materials, social media and online support encourages wider access, keeps the subject area up to date and is in line with business practice.

## **Areas of good practice**

A secure electronic version (staff VLE) of a master folder for each Unit/vocational area is used increasingly. This includes assessments that are nationally available as well as assessments that have been validated by internal verification or submitted to SQA for prior verification with detailed marking guides. This efficient practice is particularly helpful for new staff or where assessors work on different sites. Providing samples of 'borderline' evidence, with commentary, can be a helpful aid to assessor judgement.

Including copies of relevant centre policies and examples of induction/guidance materials in master folders assures standardisation and supports internal/external quality procedures.

Plagiarism and the problems associated with copying and downloading materials directly can be explained to candidates in induction materials and wall posters; tracking software, used in several centres to good effect, emphasises the importance of originality and authenticity.

Mandatory language classes for international students have been introduced in some centres. These provide valuable support as well as records of attendance that meet the needs of outside agencies. The ESOL Unit DE1K 33 Workplace Communication in English is included in HN award frameworks and provides useful access (at SCQF level 6) to Communication servicing Units.

## **Specific areas for improvement**

Assessing Reading skills: Assessors are reminded that where Reading skills are being tested, writing skills are not. It may be helpful to draw attention to weaknesses but not to penalise them. Oral responses are acceptable.

Assessing Writing skills: There is no one format for writing a report. If business writing is integrated with other course work, a range of styles will be appropriate.

Assessing Oral Communication skills: Ideally, some examples will be recorded for feedback to candidates and internal/external verification purposes. An observation checklist should be used to record achievement, with detailed comments based on Evidence Requirements.

# Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

F6V7 34 Creative Industries: Media and Communication GU1

F6V8 35 Creative Industries: Media and Communication GU2

## General comments

All centres have benefited from extensive experience with delivery of HN Communication with Media awards. Assessors and internal verifiers demonstrate sound understanding of national standards. The aims of both awards are being fully met; centres visited are developing in their students critical and analytical approaches to media work with a realistic awareness of industry issues and ethical responsibilities.

## Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Assessors are fully familiar with the revised Unit specifications and instruments of assessment. Exemplification materials for the new awards are not fully developed but centres have designed their own and meetings are planned to share experiences and materials.

## Evidence Requirements

Assessors have a clear and accurate understanding of the Evidence Requirements for the Units.

## Administration of assessments

Development of the information in Unit specifications into clear assessment information for candidates and supporting staff is routine practice. Centres are working to the national standards.

All information — Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials — is generally accessible in e-master files.

Centres are commended for the team working across these awards and the attention to detail in internal verification procedures and reporting. Judgements made are sound and well considered. Systems and procedures are efficient, and record keeping is meticulous.

## General feedback

Feedback to learners reflects industry practice and combines checking progress with promoting independent working. Documented feedback provided by assessors at all stages of the projects is clear, specific and precise.

The effort and time that has been put into projects by all involved is commendable.

Evaluations in the final stage are, without exception, thoughtful, mature and reflective. Candidates interviewed were clear about how developing a portfolio had developed important skills and increased their confidence and employability.

### **Areas of good practice**

Each centre delivering the new award has demonstrated excellent practice and dedication to providing a valuable learning experience for candidates.

Increasing use of e-folders and paperless assessment is efficient, effective and in line with current working in the creative industries.

Pre-course agreements negotiated and clearly documented as part of the brief, are in line with professional practice.

Particularly good practice is seen in the numerous additional extra-curricular events and co-operative working with the creative industries undertaken in all centres. This has included charity fundraising, work experience — for example, training work with Strathclyde Fire Brigade, some very professionally arranged film and music events, and prize-giving and award ceremonies.

Close links and co-operative working with universities ensures relevance and articulation.

The provision of a support services study base for additional on-course guidance is commendable.

The development of a detailed observation checklist for pitches, and the making and retention of recordings for review/peer review is a practical aid to progress.

### **Specific areas for improvement**

There are no areas identified for improvement. It is to be hoped that centres can further share their experiences and benefit from the work completed so successfully this year.