

4.6 Feedback to learners

Feedback to learners will be part of the on-going monitoring process to ensure learners have passed the stages necessary for progression.

After the final stage of the project has been assessed and learners' work has been graded, centres should ensure that internal verification has taken place before learners are informed of their final grades. Learners should also be made aware that these grades may be subject to external verification and that there is a possibility that they may be re-graded.

It is good practice to discuss each grade with each learner, explaining the reasoning behind his/her grading. This will help learners to identify areas for further development, whether this is in further study or employment.

When giving feedback to learners, it is highly recommended that it is grading that is discussed and not individual marks.

4.7 Remediation and re-assessment

Remediation allows an assessor to clarify the learner's responses, either by requiring a written amendment or by oral questioning, where there is a minor shortfall or omission in evidence requirements. In either case, such instances must be formally noted by the assessor, either in writing or recording, and be made available to the internal and external verifier. In relation to graded units, learners must be given the opportunity for remediation at each stage of the project.

The evidence for a project-based graded unit is generated over time and involves three distinct stages, each of which has to be achieved before the next is undertaken. This means that reassessment of stages must be undertaken before proceeding to the next stage. The overall grade is derived from the total number of marks *across all* sections and should reflect the ability of the learner to work autonomously and the amount of support required. Learners who have failed any stage of the project and have been unable to provide the necessary evidence through remediation must be given the opportunity for reassessment of that stage.

Any learner who has failed their graded unit or wishes to upgrade their award must be given a reassessment opportunity, or in exceptional circumstances, two reassessment opportunities. This must be done using a substantially different project.

This means learners would have to start from scratch using a:

- ◆ different case study
- or

- ◆ different product
or
- ◆ different investigation

In these circumstances, a centre's policy should be followed to determine:

- ◆ when re-assessment will be offered, for example, in the same academic year or in a new academic year
- ◆ the processes for registering learners, for example, they could be withdrawn from a current entry and then re-entered
- ◆ whether learners will be charged for re-assessment

In light of this, centres should consider arrangements for re-assessment as early as possible, and learners should be made aware of these arrangements, as necessary.

5 Examination-based graded units

Examination-based graded units will be closed-book or open-book. Details of the examination should be brought to the attention of learners as early as possible. This will raise their awareness of the examination and encourage them to think about the importance of revision and preparation for the examination. Also, it cannot be assumed that learners will be familiar with examination technique, and support will be required to help learners with this, as well as the integration and application of knowledge and skills. An early introduction to the graded unit will ensure that they retain all necessary notes and materials required for revision purposes.

5.1 Introduction for learners

Graded unit specifications include a section with information for learners. This information can be used as it is or supplemented with other details. The type of information that could be given to learners includes:

- ◆ an introduction to the purpose or aims of the graded unit
- ◆ a list of the key units which learners should have achieved, or be in the process of achieving, before sitting the examination
- ◆ an outline of a course plan containing topics to be covered (see Appendix 2 for a sample plan)
- ◆ an explanation of how learners will be assessed including details of venue, date, start time, length and format of examination (see Appendix 3 for an example of a formal communication)
- ◆ a clear explanation of the conditions under which the examination will take place along with any arrangements specific to the graded unit, eg closed-book, or closed-book with seen case study
- ◆ an explanation of the grading process and main factors that will influence grade, eg degree of integration, drawing strong conclusions, etc
- ◆ arrangements for re-assessment

It would be useful to give this information to learners as an oral presentation and in document form, and to build in time for a thorough discussion of the points so that learners can ask questions and seek clarification on any point. As recommended above, the introduction could be given to learners at the start of the programme of study and then returned to as the programme progresses. In this way, it can provide a trigger for learners to seek clarification on relevant areas of study as they progress through their key units.

5.2 Timetabling and resources

Examinations normally last three hours, but a notional 40 hours of structured learning has been allocated to a single-credit graded unit. This should be used:

- ◆ to ensure learners are prepared for the actual examination
- ◆ for revision of topics
- ◆ to learn exam techniques
- ◆ to undertake a mock examination
- ◆ for re-assessment

Appendix 2 gives an example of how these activities might be implemented.

Below are two possible models that can be considered in terms of timetabling. Both models have their merits and demerits, therefore each centre should choose a model that best suits their local situation and the resources available to them.

Model A

Model A follows the normal blocks/semesters and timetable for other units, for example 12 weeks at 3 hours per week, or 18 weeks at 2 hours per week. This model is a traditional approach, which may be easier to timetable, and results in a concentrated timeframe once learners have achieved, or nearly completed, the key units that underpin the graded unit. This model has some drawbacks in that time will be very tight, bearing in mind that revision along with examination technique has to be built into the programme. (Appendix 2 gives an example of a plan using this model.)

Model B

Model B spreads the delivery over a longer period of time with a smaller number of hours each week, for example 36 weeks at 1 hour per week. This model may be more difficult to timetable compared to Model A, but may offer greater opportunity for a more integrated approach as learners progress through the key units that underpin the graded unit. Using this model, the early part of the graded unit delivery could focus on examination and revision techniques and the latter part could be set aside for revision and integration of topics. If this model is used, it is important that the momentum of the class is maintained from the start of the graded unit through to the examination.

It may be useful to try different models in alternative years and compare the benefits.

Centres should note that timetabling and resources need to cover assessment/ marking of examinations, internal verification, and perhaps external verification. Centres need to plan for these activities to optimise the successful assessment and grading of learners within allocated timeframes.

5.3 Managing the graded unit examination event

Effective management of the examination event is vital. As with all assessments, the examination event has to be conducted fairly and in accordance with a centre's internal procedures and SQA requirements.

Course teams must ensure that all conditions of assessment are met, as per the graded unit specification. All examinations will be supervised and unseen, and will normally last three hours. Failure to meet the conditions of assessment will invalidate the assessment process.

Supervision may be carried out by a member of the course team or by external individuals contracted by the centre. The management of the examination is the responsibility of the centre and it is recommended that all aspects should be carried out by a clearly identified person from each centre, eg the examination co-ordinator or SQA co-ordinator. The roles and responsibilities of supervisors will include:

- ◆ receipt and security of examination papers at the examination event
- ◆ distribution of examination papers to learners
- ◆ overseeing examinations to ensure that examination regulations and conditions are complied with
- ◆ reporting back, especially where incidents of malpractice occur
- ◆ collecting learners' papers and returning them to the examination co-ordinator/SQA co-ordinator or other named person

When making arrangements for examination-based graded units, centres should consider the following points:

- ◆ the number of learners
- ◆ accessibility issues
- ◆ the size of room required to allow the examination to be carried out and the conditions of assessment to be met
- ◆ appropriate room selection, ie taking account of external factors such as noise and interruption
- ◆ the number of desks required
- ◆ any conditions of assessment, eg closed-book, open-book, restricted open-book, consideration of case studies prior to exam and/or during examination, formulae sheets, statistical tables
- ◆ answer books/paper — if using answer books, make sure that there are enough of them and that they contain sufficient pages for learners to answer at length, if they wish.
- ◆ checking the number of examination papers and answer books/paper required
- ◆ agreeing a process for copying the examination paper and ensuring security of examination papers
- ◆ the number of supervisors required

- ◆ training of supervisors in their responsibilities, eg issuing papers, supervising the examination, collecting papers and delivering to the examination co-ordinator
- ◆ early communication to learners of date, time and venue for examination (see Appendix 3 for an example of a suggested form of communication)
- ◆ identification of marker or markers
- ◆ identification of internal verifiers

5.4 Assessing, marking and grading examination-based graded units

The course team should agree an approach to assessing and marking the examination-based graded unit and grading learners' work. The examination-based graded unit may be done by:

- ◆ a sole assessor assessing all questions
- ◆ more than one assessor assessing all questions, ie double-marking
- ◆ more than one assessor assessing different questions, ie double-marking different questions
- ◆ different assessors assessing different questions
- ◆ some other approach not covered here

The approach taken will be influenced by the size of course teams. For example, if resources allow, a centre could have at least two members of staff for each key topic. A system can then be devised and managed where staff double-mark the questions that relate to their key topic. It should be noted that the use of double-marking does not take the place of internal verification. If a number of staff have expertise in key topics, this also helps with internal verification as there will be ample qualified and experienced staff available to discuss and agree standards, and ensure that all papers are marked consistently and reliably.

However, many centres will not be in this position and as a result will have to think about the best and most effective approaches to marking.

If centres do adopt a system of double-marking, the following approach could be used:

- ◆ each assessor independently judges learners' evidence and assigns marks
- ◆ assessors meet to compare marks and discuss any discrepancies
- ◆ after discussion, assessors agree on final marks
- ◆ a record should be made of these discussions and the rationale for the decision arrived at

Double-marking may also offer a useful opportunity for staff development for new or less experienced members of staff/assessors, and it is a useful means of including course team members in the whole process of assessing graded units.

Assessors should work to a marking scheme, which:

- ◆ has been internally verified
- ◆ has been agreed by all those involved in the assessment
- ◆ must be based on the level of demand and grading criteria laid out in the graded unit specification

If an assessment exemplar is available, this will also provide guidance on marking the examination and should be used by centres when preparing their own marking scheme or guidelines. This scheme should make clear where marks will be assigned. However, note that learners may introduce information that is not contained within this scheme and, providing it is appropriate, learners should not be penalised for this and the marking scheme should allow for credit to be given for appropriate content.

Remember also that if changes are made to an assessment exemplar, including changing the Marking Guidelines, it is strongly recommended that the changes are submitted to SQA for prior verification, once it has been through the centre's own internal verification systems.

When devising marking schemes for examination-based graded units, whole marks rather than half marks must be used. Marks must be allocated on the basis of achievement rather than omission. If content or format (eg syntax, spelling, etc) is essential to meeting the standard, this should be clearly stated in the Evidence Requirements and grading criteria, and learners should be awarded marks for what they have achieved.

Also, there may be a temptation to assign individual marks to specific points, eg one mark for making a point, one mark for giving one strength, one mark for giving one weakness. However, if marks are divided too finely, this can constrain assessors if they are trying to take a more holistic view of a learner's work. It may be preferable, therefore, to allocate a greater number of marks to a wider category, which leaves more scope to take account of the quality of an assessment rather than quantity of information. The point here is that the level of demand should be the driver rather than just a simple allocation of marks, which can lead to mechanistic assessment.

To achieve a graded unit, learners must meet all the minimum Evidence Requirements and achieve at least 50% of the available marks. Examinations will be marked out of 100. Markers will aggregate the marks achieved by the learner to arrive at an overall mark for the examination. Markers will then assign a grade to the learner for this graded unit based on the following grade boundaries:

A = 70% – 100%

B = 60% – 69%

C = 50% – 59%

For any marking system to operate effectively it is essential that assessors use clear, agreed notation and comments to mark scripts. In particular, it has to be clear why and where particular marks have been awarded. This is important, as reasons for allocating particular marks must be clear to other assessors, internal

verifiers and External Verifiers — the internal verifier and External Verifier should not have to re-mark a script or guess the reasons for an assessor allocating particular marks. It will also allow assessors to summarise points when giving feedback to learners. For example, where a number of marks are allocated to part of a question, then the assessor might want to indicate the number of marks allocated to explaining a concept, developing the concept, and giving an example.

Marks and comments can be made on the examination book/answer paper and for this reason it is worthwhile ensuring that book/paper contains a margin to allow comments to be made clearly. A front sheet that allows scoring for individual questions and totals to be displayed is also useful. Another method is to have a marking sheet for each answer book/paper or a marking sheet for each question. This approach may give more room to expand comments although it does mean switching between the exam script and the comments sheet.

Here are some other useful points to consider:

- ◆ Some markers prefer to complete batches of answers at a time, ie they mark all answers for question one, then question two, and so on. This has the advantage of producing consistency in marking answers to the same question for different learners.
- ◆ It is good practice to read through an answer once before marking it, then read it again and start to actually 'mark'.
- ◆ Assessors should check marks for each answer or parts of questions and the total for all questions. Totals need to be distinguished from contributing marks and be clearly displayed.

Once all answers are marked, the learner's marks for the full paper should be totalled. This mark should be reviewed and compared with the guidance in the graded unit specification on grading. At this stage, consider whether there is agreement with the grade reached through marking.

If using a double-marking system, marks should be compared. Discrepancies and borderline decisions should be discussed, ie where close to one of the grade boundaries, which might affect a grade. Agreed conclusions should be reached and the rationale behind decisions should be noted.

5.5 Feedback to learners

Once examination scripts have been assessed, graded and internally verified, learners should be informed of their performance and grades. However, learners should also be made aware that these grades may be subject to external verification and that there is a possibility that they may be re-graded.

It is good practice to discuss each grade with each learner, explaining the reasoning behind his/her grading. This will help learners to identify areas for further development, whether this be in further study or employment. With

examination-based graded units, this may involve highlighting particular questions that they answered well or poorly. In any feedback to learners, it is highly recommended that it is grading that is discussed and not individual marks.

The decision to give learners access to their marked scripts is a matter for individual centre policy.

5.6 Re-assessment

SQA's policy is that learners should be offered the opportunity for one reassessment and in exceptional circumstances two reassessment opportunities.

All re-assessments must comply with each centre's policy on re-assessment. Therefore, it is up to centres:

- ◆ when re-assessment will be offered, for example, in the same academic year or in a new academic year
- ◆ the processes for registering learners — for example, they could be withdrawn from a current entry and then re-entered
- ◆ whether learners will be charged for re-assessment

Points to note when planning re-assessment:

- ◆ Consider arrangements for re-assessment as early as possible and make learners aware of these arrangements, as necessary.
- ◆ Build in at least one re-assessment into the programme of study/assessment schedule — best practice would be to do this when planning the initial assessment date.
- ◆ Leave sufficient time between date of initial assessment and any re-assessment. Remember there needs to be enough time to mark learner scripts, provide feedback, and allow time for further revision by learners. Failure to provide enough time will put undue pressure on both staff and learners.

Also remember, if a learner does not achieve a pass or if a learner wishes to upgrade, this must be based on a substantially different examination from that given originally.

Appendix 1: Sample letter for submitting examination evidence for verification

At XYZ College, 10 learners sat graded unit 3: Planning and Design this session. The Planning and Design graded unit started this session with 11 learners and one learner withdrew from the Course. The sample submitted represents all of the learner work for graded unit 3.

The following documents are included here:

Graded unit 3: Planning and Design

1. Completed verification sample form with details of all 10 learners.
2. Learner responses for the assessment, which learners sat on 25 May 2017
3. Internal verification records
4. Instrument of assessment — pale green document.
5. Marking Guidelines — pink document.
6. Sample Marking Sheet — blue document (a marking sheet is contained within each learner response).
7. Assessment Checklist containing all learner marks per question and grades.

Mr John Smith

XYZ College

Note that it may be helpful to colour code documentation for submission. This may help verifiers when dealing with large amounts of documentation.

Appendix 2: Plan for graded unit examination

The following plan is based on 12 x 3-hour sessions.

Week Number	Topics to be covered
1	Introduction to graded unit and resources available
2	Introduction to examination and preparation for examination
3	Revision techniques
4	Revision of topics
5	Revision of topics
6	Examination techniques
7	Mock examination
8	Feedback on mock examination. Further input on techniques/revision
9	Revision
10	Examination
11	Revision
12	Examination re-assessment

Appendix 3: Sample letter notifying learner of examination

XYZ COLLEGE
Main Road
XYZ

Dear Ms Jones

Planning and Design — graded unit 1

This letter provides details of the examination for graded unit 1, Planning and Design.

You should note these details and keep this letter for reference purposes.

You will sit the Planning and Design graded unit 1 examination on:

Date: (insert date)

Time: (insert time, eg 9.30 – 12.30)

Location: (insert room, building, college)

The graded unit will be in the form of an examination. The questions will be unseen and will be provided on the day of the examination. You are not permitted to take any material into the exam. The examination will take place under supervised conditions.

- ◆ The examination paper will be in one section
- ◆ You will be required to attempt all questions
- ◆ The examination paper will cover aspects of all four content topics (integration) and problem solving
- ◆ Questions may be split into several parts and each part given a separate mark
- ◆ Some questions will be integrative (cover more than one of the four content topics)
- ◆ You should submit your script(s) and question paper at the end of the examination
- ◆ Start your answer to each question on a new page ensuring you clearly identify the question (and part of the question)

The questions in the exam will be based on the following four units that you have studied in terms 1 and 2:

- ◆ Insert unit title and code
- ◆ Insert unit title and code
- ◆ Insert unit title and code
- ◆ Insert unit title and code

The questions you will be given on the day of the exam are designed to allow you to demonstrate your ability to integrate and make connections between the subject content of the units listed above.

Grading

If you successfully pass the examination, you will be graded based on the marks you obtain on the day of the examination as follows:

A = 70% – 100%

B = 60% – 69%

C = 50% – 59%

Re-assessment

If your mark is below 50%, you have the opportunity for re-assessment. This will be a substantially different examination; this will take place on:

Date: (insert date)

Time: (insert time, eg 9.30 – 12.30)

Location: (insert room, building, college)

Yours sincerely

Ms J Smith

Course Co-ordinator