NQ verification 2023–24 round 2

Qualification verification summary report

Section 1: verification group information

Verification group name:	Psychology
Verification activity:	Event
Date published:	June 2024

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 made effective use of the SQA-provided unit assessment support packs. As the unit assessment support packs have been through a rigorous quality assurance process, they are considered valid approaches to assessment.

A small number of centres used approaches to assessment which 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.

Many centres used package 1: unit-by-unit approach to assessment. When centre-devised assessment approaches were used, these also tended to be on a unit-by-unit basis. A number of centres used a prior verified combined/integrated assessment. These assess different unit outcomes in a skilful and creative way, which reduces assessment for candidates and enables them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. These are available

from SQA's secure site. Centres should provide marking guidelines or a judging evidence table for any centre-devised assessments.

When devising their own assessment approaches or adapting the SQA-provided unit assessment support packs, centres are advised to use the outcomes and assessment standards in the unit specification, as well as the third column in the judging evidence table of the unit assessment support packs. This would support the use of appropriate skill terms and command words to enable candidates to generate sufficient evidence to meet the requirements of the unit.

For centre-devised assessments or unit assessment support packs that have been adapted in significant ways, it is strongly recommended that centres use the free prior verification service provided by SQA to ensure validity.

Centres should 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 site to ensure that any prior verified assessment is still valid before use.

A few centres used closed-book, timed assessment approaches with a mark allocation. While this may be helpful in preparing candidates for external assessment, this is not helpful in assessing whether candidates have achieved the assessment standards required for unit assessment. Candidates are only required to achieve the Assessment Standards for unit assessment. Focusing on marks can often lead centres to make an incorrect assessment judgement. Unit assessments should be open-book.

Assessment judgements

Some centres made reliable assessment judgements and showed consistency of assessor judgements that was in line with national standards.

Some centres exclusively used the judging evidence table when making assessment judgements. It was observed that a few candidates could have met the requirements of the assessment standards if the unit outcomes and specification had been used in conjunction with the judging evidence table. This applied in some instances to the integrated/combined assessments, which were challenging for a few candidates. As a result, centres are advised to use the outcomes and assessment standards within the unit specification, as well as the judging evidence table, when making assessment decisions.

Where unit assessment support packs were used, some centres used the information on judging evidence effectively 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 showed a clear understanding of the standards.

Some assessors provided useful notes on the candidate assessment record to explain how they reached assessment judgements. Centres should mark on the candidate scripts where an assessment standard is achieved, as this aids both internal and external verification.

Some candidates provided evaluation points related to a study for unit J2D2 76: Psychology: Individual Behaviour, assessment standard 1.2: 'Evaluating the use of approaches and theories, to explain the behaviour'. Centres should encourage their candidates to provide evaluative points for approaches and theories to more accurately reflect the demands of the assessment standard.

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.

In some instances, centres were lenient in making their assessment judgements. This occurred for unit J2CY 76: Psychology: Research, assessment standard 1.1, 'Describing the stages of the research process'; and in unit J2D0 76: Psychology: Research, assessment standard 1.1, 'Explaining the stages of the research process'. Candidates are required to fulfil the command of 'describe' for SCQF level 5 and 'explain' for SCQF level 6 regarding the research process.

Centres should pay particular attention to J2D4 76: Social Behaviour, assessment standard 1.3, 'Applying understanding of social psychology to everyday behaviour', in which candidates had explained an everyday behaviour using concepts but not research. In order 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 unit assessment support pack for the unit J2D4 76: Psychology: Social Behaviour, in the third column of the judging evidence table.

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'.

It is important that centres are aware of minimum standards for achievement and assessment standard thresholds, which can be found in the unit specifications.

Section 3: general comments

Internal verification

Many centres engaged in thorough internal verification procedures that were supportive and developmental. It was encouraging to see professional dialogue and collaborative processes, and these practices supported the external verification process.

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. This service supports centres towards using valid assessment approaches. More information is available on [SQA's website](#).

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

Good practice

Centres are to be commended on candidate feedback. 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, enabling candidates to have some autonomy and ownership over the way evidence is presented. Centres used a range of evidence formats at the verification event, including posters, slideshows, oral presentations, worksheets and essays, as well as responses to prompts. Where integrated/combined assessments were used, it was noted that these encouraged deep thinking and analytical skills.