

Specialist Paper 8

Internal Verification: Guide for External Examiners and Centres

Purpose

This paper aims to provide general guidance on the use and importance of internal verification for Higher Nationals and NQF Level 4-7 Specialised/Short Course programmes. Table 1 indicates the scope of internal verification.

The role of internal verification in quality assurance of assessment

Internal verification is one of a range of quality assurance processes that centres will use to demonstrate high quality assessment practices. It will assist centres and programme teams to bring consistency, transparency, validity and reliability to all aspects of assessment design, grading and marking.

Internal verification in the assurance of quality assessment

Internal verification, or quality assurance of assessment, is one of the keystones of assessment quality assurance systems. It must be part of an overall quality system and should have formalised policies and procedures agreed as part of the centres quality assurance system.

Internal verification has two components. One focuses on internal verification/review of assessment design whilst the other is concerned with accuracy and consistency of the assessors' judgements on student work. Internal verification is about the centre ensuring that assignments are 'fit for purpose' and that the assessors' judgements are correct and valid.

The role of internal verification for Level 1-3 programmes has been clearly specified by Edexcel and details can be found in the *External Verification Handbook*. However, there is currently no similar document for Level 4-7 programmes. In the introduction to the NQF Higher National specifications it is stated that:

'Centres will be required to demonstrate ongoing fulfilment of approval criteria over time and across all programme areas. This will include consistent application of policies affecting learner registrations and learner appeals, and the effectiveness of internal verification or standardisation processes.'

Records of the internal verification activities for both the assignment and assessment decisions must be maintained and made available for the external examiner.

Internal verification of assignments

It is important that, before any assignment brief is released to students, it should be checked to ensure that it contains sufficient information to enable them to carry out the defined tasks and produce evidence to demonstrate mastery of the assessment criteria.

Assessment internal verification activities will cover:

ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS ON ASSIGNMENT BRIEF

- correct unit/programmes details are included
- clear deadlines including handout and submission dates, are clearly identified
- name of assessor included
- is the assignment a part or whole unit assessment activity?

THE ASSIGNMENT ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

- are clear tasks/assessment activities identified that can be understood by the students?
- are the tasks linked to the assessment criteria?
- are merit and distinction grading criteria identified and contextualised?
- is it clear what evidence the student needs to produce to meet the assessment criteria?
- is the assignment set in a scenario or vocational context?
- has appropriate language been used?

ASSIGNMENT INTERNAL VERIFICATION REPORTING

- written feedback on the outcome of the internal verification will be provided to the assessor
- identifies what changes if any of the assignment brief are required and what remedial action should be taken
- gives clear dates for completion of the remedial action
- following revision, the assignment brief will undergo further internal verification to ensure that it is fit for purpose and will be formally signed off

The internal verification of assessment decisions

Internal verification is not the same as double marking of student work. Internal verification is concerned with the accuracy and reliability of assessor judgements across the programme. Cross standardisation of assessors is a feature of good assessment practice and is between the assessors concerned and contributes to assessment quality assurance.

PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT INTERNAL VERIFICATION

- the internal verifier will check a range of assessment decisions for all assessors and units
- an internal verification sampling plan must be agreed at programme level to select which units and assessors will be subject to internal verification
- the sampling plan will consider assessors experience in selecting the size of the internal verification sample. New assessors will require more monitoring and support through the internal verification process than will experienced assessors
- in the event of unexpected assessment decisions, (eg. no students achieving pass in the assignment), additional internal verification outside of the sampling frame may be conducted on individual units/assessors

INTERNAL VERIFICATION CHECKLIST

The internal verifier will check:

- that there has been correct application of the assessment criteria awarded
- the internal verifier may comment on aspects of good assessment such as annotation on the work, indicating where individual criteria have been met
- the level and standard of feedback provided to the student
- that there is clear advice linked to the assessment criteria on what the student might have or needs to do to achieve higher outcomes
- that there are clear action points on what the student must address to meet the relevant pass criteria if these have not been achieved

ASSESSMENT DECISIONS INTERNAL VERIFICATION REPORTING

On completion of the Assessment Internal Verification activity, the IV will complete a report, signed and dated after the original assessor`s report, which will focus on:

- stating if the assessor`s assessment decision is confirmed or not
- stating what action points are required of the assessor with clear dates for completion
- confirming agreement of any required action(s)

Centre responsibilities in internal verification

The centre has responsibility for:

- designing and agreeing templates and supporting documentation, eg. assignment brief cover sheet, task layout, clearly defined outcomes, appropriate grading descriptors
- the centre will need to agree the policy on when internal verification should be undertaken, the timescale for refinement and action if required
- clarifying who is authorised to check the assignment briefs and authorise the release to students
- developing or adopting existing internal verification feedback sheet to be used by all internal verifiers
- agreeing the standardisation, double marking or checking of marked assessments between assessors
- agreeing the procedure for the resolution of any disputed internal verification decisions not agreed through this process
- agreeing the time allowance for designated internal verifiers to enable them to carryout their role and responsibilities
- ensuring a system is in place which completes the internal verification feedback/assessor action loop

KEY FEATURES OF INTERNAL VERIFICATION

WHY IV	HOW TO IV	WHAT TO IV	WHEN TO IV	WHO'S INVOLVED
Quality audit trail	Reviewing of assessment briefs	The assessment strategy	Assessment strategy during curriculum design	Locally appointed internal verifiers
Requirements of centre	Reviewing of assessment decisions	Number of assessments All assessment briefs	Assessment briefs before work is distributed to students	External Examiners
Awarding body requirements QAA QCA	Providing commentary/ feedback to assessors	Selection of assessors assessment decisions	Assessment decisions after grading and ideally before disclosure of achievement to students	