



**GNVQ Support
Programme**



The revised GNVQ

Assessing

Nigel Purcell

Published by FEDA

Feedback should be sent to
FEDA publications, Citadel Place,
Tinworth Street, London SE11 5EH
Tel: 0207 840 5302/4 Fax: 0207 840 5401
e-mail: publications@feda.ac.uk

Registered with the Charity Commissioners

Editor: Jenny Rhys
Proofreader: Jeremy Pinel
Designer: Kevin Ashill

ISBN 1 85338 525 5

© 2000 FEDA

You are welcome to copy this document for internal use within your organisation. Otherwise, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means; electronic, electrical, chemical, optical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Foreword | 1 |
| Introduction | 2 |
| Step 1: Develop assignment(s) | 4 |
| Step 2: Provide a teaching/learning programme | 5 |
| Step 3: Issue assignment(s) and brief students | 6 |
| Step 4: Provide continuing guidance and support | 7 |
| Step 5: Collect completed assignment work | 7 |
| Step 6: Assess the work against the criteria | 8 |
| Step 7: Take part in internal verification | 9 |
| Step 8: Return work and provide feedback | 10 |
| Step 9: Record the grading decision | 10 |
| Step 10: Decide the overall grade | 11 |
| Conclusion | 13 |



Foreword

The revised GNVQ is being introduced into schools and colleges from September 2000. It will introduce changes that were recommended by the Capey review of GNVQ assessment and also by Sir Ron Dearing's review of qualifications for all 16–19-year-olds. The changes are designed to achieve two major objectives. First, to ensure that all GNVQs are easier to implement in schools and colleges. Second, to ensure that the assessment of GNVQs is rigorous and consistent.

This pack is part of the support provided through FEDA's GNVQ Support Programme. It is one of five packs designed to help tutors and managers implement revised GNVQ courses:

- Managing the revised GNVQ
- Recruitment, induction and progression
- Teaching, learning and assignment writing
- Assessing the revised GNVQ
- Key skills within the revised GNVQ.



Introduction

Assessing the revised GNVQ is the same in principle as any other form of assessment so you can draw on your existing experience of other awards. However, there are important distinctive characteristics of the GNVQ that you need to take into account, which this pack is designed to address.

There are two basic types of vocational unit in the revised GNVQ. The first is the portfolio (internally) assessed unit, which is usually assessed by the tutor for that unit. Assessment is of a range of evidence for each unit, provided by the candidate and based on the requirements laid down in the specifications. Two-thirds of the units in a typical GNVQ are this type, e.g. four units of a six-unit Foundation or Intermediate GNVQ, or eight units of a 12-unit Advanced GNVQ.

The second type of unit is independently assessed by examiners appointed from outside the centre by the awarding body. Candidates complete preset assignments or other activities, which are then sent to external examiners for assessment.

This pack only deals with the portfolio assessed units.

○ **Also see – Teaching, learning and assignment writing**

Aims and objectives

The two main aims of this pack are to help you to:

- assess portfolio assessed GNVQ units to the national standards defined in the unit specifications
- maximise the achievement of your students.

The objectives of the pack are to enable you to:

- outline the key steps to assess a GNVQ portfolio assessed unit
- recognise the distinctive characteristics and requirements of GNVQ assessment at each stage
- identify good practice principles for each stage
- apply these principles to your own assessment practices.

Structure

The pack is based on a flow chart (Table 1) of the assessment process, which identifies 10 key steps to assessing a GNVQ portfolio unit. Each step is discussed in more detail in the main body of the pack. These assessment stages are not fundamentally different from other forms of continuous assessment, so you can use any experience you may already have. For example, you can draw on experience gained through current-model GNVQs, GCSEs, modular A-levels etc.

One of the reasons for revising GNVQs was to make the assessment process more straightforward and this has largely been achieved. All assessment is a skilled, professional process requiring skills and practice, but the revised GNVQ provides substantial guidance and clear criteria to help you make your decisions.

Table 1 – Ten steps to assessing revised GNVQs

Step 1

Develop assignment(s)

Step 2

Provide a teaching/learning programme

Step 3

Issue assignment(s) and brief students

Step 4

Provide continuing guidance and support

Step 5

Collect completed assignment work

Step 6

Assess the work against the criteria

Step 7

Take part in internal verification

Step 8

Return work and provide feedback

Step 9

Record the grading decision

Step 10

Decide the overall grade for each student

Ten steps to assessing revised GNVQs

Step 1 – Develop assignment(s)

Your assignments should facilitate the process of gathering evidence and ensure that the quality of evidence supplied by the student is good. In principle the students only have to fulfil the ‘assessment evidence’ requirements, so they can, if they choose, simply work directly from those requirements. However, you will need to prepare assignments and tasks which cover the assessment requirements in order to motivate students and help them to produce the necessary evidence.

Assignments need to be carefully planned in order to ensure that the tasks cover the assignment requirements and allow the more able students to achieve higher grades (see Teaching, learning and assignment writing). The fundamental principles of assessment on which GNVQs are based are essentially the same as those for other forms of assessment, so the evidence submitted should be authentic, sufficient and valid.

The key sections in the unit specifications that define the evidence required are:

- ‘assessment evidence’, which sets out the work that has to be submitted to fulfil the requirements for a pass, merit or distinction
- ‘assessment strategies’ – the section of ‘Teacher guidance’ that offers advice on how the evidence can be gathered and what form it should take.

You need to be familiar with these sections to support and assess your students effectively. The content and layout of the unit specifications are explained in detail in Section 1 of Teaching, learning and assignment writing, so you should read that first.

Ensure that the assignment will result in sufficient evidence

Making sure that students produce sufficient evidence is a key aspect of any assessment process. You do not want to burden your students with unnecessary work but you need enough evidence to be sure that they have reached the required standard. The revised specifications give detailed guidance as to exactly what evidence the students must submit, so this should substantially reduce any uncertainty in this area. However, there are certain principles you need to be aware of.

- To achieve a pass (grade E at Advanced level) for a unit a student’s work must cover all the requirements specified in the banner at the top of the assessment and grading grid of each unit. To achieve a higher grade the student must still fulfil the criteria for the lower grades as well as the additional criteria.
- A range of points is available within each grade, in order to allow for differentiation and to reward students for work at the higher end of each grade.
- The only evidence that the student has to supply is that defined in the ‘assessment evidence’ section. The student does not have to provide evidence for everything described in the ‘What you need to learn’ section. This must be covered in the teaching programme. The assessment evidence requirement will allow the student to show that she/he has grasped and can apply the requisite knowledge, skill and understanding.

Ensure that the assignment will result in valid evidence

The central characteristic of GNVQs is that they require the acquisition and application of knowledge, skills and understanding in and to a broad vocational context. However, remember that GNVQs are not designed to develop and assess occupational competence. The assessment grid in the specifications defines the evidence requirements and is presented in a way which gives you the opportunity to design assignments which take account of local organisations and a wide range of types of evidence.

Ensure that the assignment provides equal opportunities and open access

GNVQs lay stress on equal opportunities and open access, and you should carefully consider any special needs your students may have. If necessary, you should customise assignments for particular students.

More than one assignment may be developed to cover the evidence requirements and grading criterion. In particular, foundation and intermediate students may find a large assignment over-challenging. For them a series of tasks may be more appropriate.

○ **Also see – Teaching, learning and assignment writing**

Step 2: Provide a teaching/learning programme

You should prepare and deliver a teaching and learning programme to enable the students to achieve the requirements of the 'What you need to learn' section in the unit specifications.

You help your students to fulfil the assessment requirements by providing teaching and learning opportunities that will prepare them for the tasks in the assignment(s), and by developing their independent learning skills.

○ **Also see – Teaching, learning and assignment writing**

Step 3: Issue assignment(s) and brief students

When issuing assignments you should:

- explain the need to meet the evidence requirements in full
 - make sure that the students know the meaning of all technical terms used in the assignment and the 'assessment evidence' grid
 - outline each task and discuss how to approach it, possible sources of information etc. However, the work must be the students' own, so you need to think carefully about what you can tell the students about the evidence required and what support can be given.
 - outline and discuss the timing and nature of any preplanned activities specifically designed to gather information for tasks
 - describe any resources you are providing to help them with the assignment – videos, CD-ROMs, hand-outs, textbook references etc.
 - explain the kind of evidence you expect from each task and how you intend to assess it – what form it should take, whether it needs to be wordprocessed etc.
- advise the students how to present the assignment to you in an accessible form
 - set a target date for completion of the assignment and interim dates for review
 - give an opportunity for questions from the group as a whole and from individual students.

These procedures will help the students to produce evidence in a satisfactory form and minimise the need to resubmit work. The key principle is that the assessment process should be transparent and the students should be clear about what is expected of them.

Step 4: Provide continuing guidance and support

Providing continuing guidance and support to the students enables them to complete the assessment requirement.

This can be done through regular meetings with them to discuss their plans and progress. You can formalise this procedure by developing and reviewing a personal learning plan with them, which can significantly reduce the assessment workload by reducing the need for referrals. However, remember that students often need to show independence for higher grades.

Some information is very difficult to obtain from public sources and you may want to help your students by organising group activities to access it.

GNVQ units require the students to find out much information for themselves. You can help them by developing their research skills, through providing help with library, Internet and resource centre access, etc.

Step 5: Collect completed assignment work

You should collect completed assignment work from students on the set target date.

It makes sense to develop and apply common policies on referral, resubmission and late submission of work. In theory there is no time or number limit on resubmissions but in practice you may have to set targets and limits to ensure that progress is made at a reasonable rate. Also, students who do submit work on time may complain if late submission is not penalised. The students should be clear about exactly what the policies are.

Step 6: Assess the work against the criteria

The work should be assessed against the criteria listed in the 'assessment evidence' grid. At Foundation or Intermediate level you are deciding whether to refer the work or to award a Pass, Merit or Distinction. At Advanced level you are deciding whether to refer or to award an A, B, C, D or E grade. In addition, a range of points are available for each grade and guidance will be provided on how these can be allocated.

As for any other award, your decisions should be impartial, accurate and reliable and you need to be sure that the work is authentic, sufficient and valid. Key questions to ask when assessing an assignment are:

Is this the student's own work?

The unit specifications for the internally assessed units do not require the evidence to be generated under the supervision of the assessor. Therefore, you usually have to rely on evidence collected over a long time and from a variety of locations and sources. Furthermore, some units specify that part of the evidence is generated through team activities, but each separate student must still satisfy the evidence requirements.

Does this work meet the criteria in the 'assessment evidence' grid?

Work which does not meet the specified evidence requirements should be referred.

Review the assessment strategies section from 'Essential information for teachers' for the unit. This gives additional guidance on the general qualities that distinguish between grades, and on the interpretation of the criteria for each grade. These enable you to make a holistic professional judgement of the quality of the student's work.

○ [Also see – Key skills](#)

Step 7: Take part in internal verification

Taking part in the internal verification procedures is a crucial part of your role as an assessor. Internal verification helps to establish common assessment standards within your centre and also to ensure that national standards are maintained.

The two main internal verification activities carried out by all assessors are:

- supplying samples of work requested by your designated internal verifier
- participating in internal standardisation activities.

Your internal verifier will usually ask you to supply a sample of assessed work each time you collect an assignment. He or she should then check and confirm your assessment judgements for that sample. You should wait for feedback from the internal verifier before returning the work to your students.

In addition to the sampling process you will usually have to take part in standardisation exercises in which a group of staff will individually assess samples of students' work and compare their judgements. Comparing and discussing the differences is an invaluable means of achieving a common understanding and standard of assessment. This process is further helped where standardised materials are available, and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) is currently developing such materials for each vocational area for use in centres.

External 'standards moderation' procedures are the responsibility of the awarding bodies in conjunction with QCA and you will have to comply with these. The procedures will ensure that assessments across centres are consistent.

○ **Also see – Managing**

Step 8: Return work and provide feedback

Assessed work should be returned as soon as possible together with feedback to the student about performance. It is good practice to set target dates for returning work to students.

Feedback should:

- be directly related to the assessment criteria
- be given in written and, where appropriate or asked for, oral form
- outline the basis for the assessment decision
- include comments on strengths as well as weaknesses
- suggest how the student could improve his/her performance
- (for referrals) state clearly what needs to be done to complete the assignment and indicate the target resubmission date.

It is good practice to record when oral feedback is given and to annotate student work to indicate that it has been assessed and where the criteria for grading have been met.

○ **Also see – Key skills**

Step 9: Record the grading decision

Recording the grading decision is a very simple process in the new GNVQ because all you have to do is to record the final grade for each unit. Records showing achievement of individual criteria are not needed.

Step 10: Decide the overall grade

The grade for the qualifications is determined by the cumulative points for each portfolio and externally assessed unit.

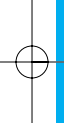
Responsibility for the final decision on the grade for the qualification rests with the awarding body.

Table 3 – Key questions flow chart

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Step 1 | Develop assignments (page 4) |
| | Are the assignment(s) satisfactory? |
| | Yes ▼ |
| | No ► Review assignment(s) and modify appropriately |
| Step 2 | Provide a teaching/learning programme (page 5) |
| | Are the students ready to undertake the assignment? |
| | Yes ▼ |
| | No ► Continue the teaching and learning programme |
| Step 3 | Issue assignment(s) and brief students (page 6) |
| | Are all students clear about the assignment requirements? |
| | Yes ▼ |
| | No ► Arrange a session with relevant students to review the requirements |
| Step 4 | Provide continuing guidance and support the students to enable them to complete the assessment requirement by the target dates (page 7) |
| Step 5 | Collect completed assignment work (page 7) |
| | Have the students handed the work in on time? |
| | Yes ▼ |
| | No ► Apply policies for submission dates and late submissions |
| Step 6 | Assess the work against the criteria – decide what grade to award (page 8) |
| Step 7 | Take part in internal verification (IV) – if requested, pass samples of work to IV (page 9) |
| | Is the IV satisfied with your assessment decisions? |
| | Yes ▼ |
| | No ► Reassess work in the light of feedback from IV |
| Step 8 | Return work and provide feedback (page 10) |
| | Is the work at pass grade or above? |
| | Yes ▼ |
| | No ► Refer work for resubmission |
| Step 9 | Record the grading decision (page 10) |
| Step 10 | Decide the overall grade for the student at the end of the programme (page 11) |

Conclusion

The flow chart in Table 3 repeats the 10 steps that have been discussed in the pack, but also indicates questions you need to ask at each step in order to ensure that your assessment practice is in accordance with the requirements of the GNVQ system. It also gives you the page references in the pack where that step is discussed.



ISBN 1 85338 525 5

