



**Higher National Qualifications (China)
Internal Assessment Report 2014
Business Management**

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

There was a reasonable amount of qualification verification in relation to the Units contained in verification group 254. Most activity was successful but some results were less successful. In many cases, it was because evidence required for one or more criteria was not provided. Existing centres have become increasingly familiar with the Units and SQA's approach to quality assurance. However, those that did not receive the 'High confidence' rating will have to ensure that the areas requiring improvement are acted upon and the actions taken are carried forward into the next academic session.

There was a reasonable rate of success at qualification verification events and it was apparent that some excellent work is being accomplished. Centres generally have a good understanding of the national standards and adapted well to evidencing the criteria in the SQA's approach to quality assurance.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Many staff have attained a degree of confidence regarding the delivery and assessment of the Units that comes with experience. It is very important that centres maintain checks regarding the use of up-to-date Unit specifications and assessment exemplars (AEs) / assessment support packs (ASPs). SQA regularly updates these on an ongoing basis and on occasion withdraws an AE/ASP. Centres must check prior to delivery that the most up-to-date version is being used, and must avoid just handing out a paper copy or saving an electronic version from one academic session to the next. The correct operation of the internal verification system at the pre-delivery stage should pick this up. The consequences of not using the correct specification and AE/ASP can have a significant impact on the certification of the students.

As in previous years, the majority of centres have used the SQA AEs/ASPs which have been created for the new Units. Some centres have continued to create their own versions and these have been submitted for prior verification, which is strongly recommended. In most instances, the assessments created provide the learner with a more recognisable context against which the questions are set. Centres will have to continue to ensure that all staff and in particular those new to SQA qualifications are given suitable information, guidance and support.

Evidence Requirements

The majority of centres and staff have a good understanding of the Evidence Requirements in each of the Units. There were a small number of instances where staff had misinterpreted the standard or were inconsistent in applying the standard. Again, care needs to be taken regarding use of the correct AE/ASP and making sure that they are passed through internal verification.

Administration of assessments

In the majority of qualification verification visits the centres are reported as organising and assessing candidates in accordance with the requirements set out in the Unit specifications. Many assessments can now be undertaken under open-book out of class conditions; and this brings added risks of plagiarism. Centres need to be alert to this danger and some were noted as making good efforts in checking to ensure authenticity with one centre undertaking oral checks to help ensure authenticity. The continuing security of assessments and control over the conditions of assessment is an area that is essential to safeguard the integrity of the awards in the future. In one visit it was identified that some elements of an AE/ASP solution had been identified and this underlines the need for vigilance and security.

General feedback

Feedback to learners remains crucial to their learning and provides a real help in allowing them to understand their strengths and weaknesses. As with last year, some centres were commended for the level of feedback that they provided learners but this was not evident in all centres. The use of 'tutorial sheets' to record meetings and discussions with individual learners was highlighted as good practice on a number of occasions. Feedback can be very time consuming to create and in the main was paper based or electronic. Some innovative centres make audio recordings of the feedback that can be electronically transmitted to each learner. Centres are encouraged to continue their good work in this area.

Areas of good practice

The SQA awards are now at a stage where centres and staff are, in the main, familiar with their requirements and standards. The areas of good practice cited tended to relate to the amount and quality of feedback as highlighted in the section above. In addition, there was evidence that some centres extend the feedback through the use of 'tutorial sheets' and encourage learners to create personal development plans.

There is an increased use of authenticity sheets where learners sign to state that they are the originator of the work and further checks are carried out by some centres. Plagiarism is an ongoing issue and any means that can help tackle it is to be encouraged.

It was noted in some reports that a centres held CPD events to pass on information from external events such as the SQA training event in Shanghai, April 2014. The dissemination of information from those attending such events is very important for the many who cannot attend.

The best of the internal verification records evidenced discussion where matters were recorded, decisions made and actions noted. Internal verification is an excellent developmental tool which when used properly will result in fewer problems manifesting themselves and will result in more areas of good practice being developed and shared.

Specific areas for improvement

The qualification verification of Business Management Units identified some areas that require either improvement or continued effort. An area of continuing concern relevant to all SQA centres is the security of assessments. This session one AE/ASP had to be withdrawn due to its appearance on the internet. The cost of creating a replacement is significant and takes time to draft and publish. The leaking of exemplar questions undermines the hard work of staff and conscientious learners. The security of assessments is therefore of prime importance where the continued vigilance and effort of all centres and staff is essential.

Some centres need to update learning materials and currently place too great an emphasis on the use of the existing SQA materials. It is important that staff are continually seeking to refresh materials on an ongoing basis.

Continuing checks on plagiarism need to be made and this will be an ongoing area where centres need to remain vigilant. The reports indicated that some centres have moved forward in this area but more work needs to be done by some centres.

The use of formative assessment to allow candidates to consolidate their learning prior to the summative assessment has to be encouraged. The use of practice exercises, revision tests and mock assessments allows candidates to make errors at a stage before the real assessment event. It can be time consuming to produce materials that are appropriate but the benefits far outweigh the cost and work in this area is to be encouraged.