



**Higher National Qualifications (China)
Internal Assessment Report 2014
Mathematics and Statistics**

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in Higher National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications in this subject.

Higher National Units

General comments

External verification for HN Mathematics and Statistics took place at a total of eight centres. The only Unit reviewed was F84K 35, Statistics for Business. All verification this year was conducted postally.

Many centres reviewed were found have a clear and accurate understanding of the national standards for assessment. Many centres did not, however, provide full information on their first submission to SQA, which resulted in a delay in verification as additional material had to be requested.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The assessors were generally conversant with the Unit specifications and exemplification material. Centres should be aware that a revised version of the assessment support pack (ASP) for F84K 35 is now available and they should use this version (version 3) when assessing candidates from now on.

Evidence Requirements

In general, the centres and assessors were meeting all Evidence Requirements for Units, although attention should be paid to comments under 'Areas for Improvement' below.

Administration of assessments

The centres sampled appeared to be gathering evidence in accordance with the specification requirements (that is, closed-book assessments were being conducted as closed book, etc). There were instances, highlighted below under 'Areas for Improvement', where consistency and accuracy of approach to marking could have been improved.

Internal verification appeared to be generally sound across the centres visited, although some centres did not write on internally verified papers, making it hard to confirm that verification had taken place.

General feedback

In general, centres were providing good feedback to candidates. Access to assessments appeared to be fair.

Areas of good practice

The following areas of good practice were identified:

- ◆ Unit specifications and exemplars were being used correctly.
- ◆ In general, internal verification appeared to be robust.

- ◆ Marking seemed to be of a generally high standard and consistent.
- ◆ Records of work appeared to be well maintained and highly organised, making the verification process run smoothly.
- ◆ Verifiers noted the high quality and comprehensive nature of candidate feedback found at some centres.

Specific areas for improvement

Several areas for improvement were identified. Most of these do not apply to all centres but are included here to show common problems and to act as guidance for all centres:

Submission of material for verification

The most significant issue encountered during postal verification was the lack of material submitted. All assessment instruments and marking schemes must be submitted, along with all student assessment material (both successful and unsuccessful attempts). Centres should also submit evidence of staff competence to deliver this Unit, as well as evidence of standardisation meetings, equipment, learning support and other procedures.

Having enough subject specialists

In one centre, the verifier noted that too few staff were able to act as internal verifiers because of the limited number of subject specialists. Staffing should be adequate for the delivery and verification of all subjects.

Assessment instruments

Centres can adapt assessment support packs for their own centre. Marking schemes should indicate the answers and where marks are allocated. Re-sit attempts should use an alternative instrument of assessment. Alternative instruments of assessment should be sufficiently different from each other to ensure that students cannot predict the content of assessment. If in doubt, a centre can submit a proposed assessment to the SQA for prior verification.

Re-sit attempts

An e-mail sent to centres on 13 September 2013 indicated that it is possible to change responses after the end of an assessment. The term used was 'redo' or 'repair'. Although this practice is approved for some verification group areas, it is not appropriate for Mathematics and Statistics Units and should not be used. Candidates who do not achieve an assessment on a first attempt should be re-assessed using an alternative instrument of assessment.

Use of English language in assessments

Assessment responses should be made in English. For marks to be awarded in comment questions, the responses must be meaningful and unambiguous. Some candidates may need to improve their language skills to achieve this.

Use of Excel

Excel should be installed using the English language version. Assessment material can be stored and submitted for verification in digital rather than printed form.

Accuracy of marking

In a few cases, marking was found to be inaccurate or unclear. Great care should be taken to ensure that marking is accurate and consistent with the national standard. Care should be taken to ensure that marking is fair — neither too lenient, nor too severe.

SQA recommends the use of standard symbols when marking. These can be found in published marking instructions on SQA's website.

Consistency of terminology in feedback

It would appear that feedback comments were not always correctly used or consistently communicated. Feedback can be an important part of the learning process. Consistency should be encouraged for clarity.

Internal verification

Where internal verification has taken place, the assessment should show re-marking in an alternative ink colour (for example, green), so that this can be checked by an external verifier.

Higher National Graded Units

No Graded Units were verified in the HN Mathematics and Statistics (142) area.