



**Higher National Qualifications (China)
Internal Assessment Report 2012
Management Skills**

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

External verification visits for this verification group during 2011–12 indicated that centres appear to have a good understanding of the requirements of the standards set in the Units verified. There are very few relevant Units in this verification group with the result that verification activity covered only two Units. In fact, almost all the external verification visits involved only one Unit, DE3L 35 *Behavioural Skills for Business*. Most of the comments in this report, therefore, relate to this Unit.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

EV comments showed Unit specifications and assessment materials were available at most visits. This is what should be the case at EV visits and confirms that centres appear to be familiar with the Unit specifications. Most centres also made use of the exemplar instruments of assessment. This is sensible and helps to ensure that assessors can make suitable judgements on candidates' work.

Evidence requirements

In general, centres also seem to understand the evidence requirements of Units. The use of exemplar instruments of assessment helps to make sure that the evidence requirements are fully covered by instruments of assessment. In most cases, centres followed the marking requirements set out in the exemplars. Occasionally there was a need to remind centres that, to be successful, candidates must provide evidence which meets all aspects of the evidence requirements.

Administration of assessments

Overall, the process of assessment seems to have been carried out in a suitable manner, eg recording of candidates' results was clear and re-assessment could be easily tracked. Some centres, however, do this better than others. As already noted, most centres use the SQA exemplar assessment packs which helps to ensure that assessment instruments are pitched at a level appropriate to that of the Unit.

Some centres try to develop their own marking guidance. In principle, this is good practice as marking guidelines in any exemplar assessment cannot cover all possibilities. Developing the marking guidelines can therefore help to improve the accuracy of assessors' judgements. When doing this, however, centres must strictly follow the evidence requirements in the Unit specification and ensure that all aspects of the marking guidance are fully consistent with them.

In some cases, candidates would benefit from clearer instructions about the format of answers, eg the use of a report format.

There was some considerable variation in internal verification between centres. Some centres carried this out very effectively, eg using suitable forms and providing a full internal verification report. In other centres, however, internal verification was limited and, in at least one case, time constraints had prevented any internal verification being done.

Centres should ensure that internal verification procedures are followed and that internal verification is carried out prior to an external verification visit. This enables the external verifier to review all aspects of the assessment process. In some cases, comments from internal verifiers were vague. Comments from internal verifiers to assessors should, if at all possible, be detailed and specific. This helps to determine a clear and transparent standard which can be applied to candidates' work.

General feedback

In most cases, centres had prepared well for the external verification visit.

The extent of feedback from assessors to candidates varied between centres. In some cases, it amounted to little more than a statement of the result of the assessment. In others, though, assessors had made detailed comments on candidates' work.

Assessors focused on the strengths and weaknesses of candidates' work but also included comments intended to help candidates with their use of English and suggestions on how to use a report format. These types of comment can be very helpful to candidates, particularly those who have to undertake remediation and re-assessment. When making such comments, however, it is important to ensure that they are as objective as possible. Subjective statements such as 'the report she submitted is beyond her communication skills' should be avoided.

A key issue arising from external verification was the low success rate of candidates at the first attempt. One reason for this seemed to be that inadequate time had been allocated to delivery and assessment, so that candidates were not adequately prepared for assessment. This situation caused particular problems for candidates who have difficulty with English.

This emphasises the importance of careful, detailed feedback by assessors to candidates but also highlights the importance of the learning and teaching process. Satisfactory success rates tended to arise where external verifiers commented favourably on the effort the centre had made in delivering the Unit.

DE3L 35, *Behavioural Skills for Business*, is a challenging Unit. To achieve the Unit, candidates should make a clear link between the material in the case study and relevant theory. Candidates can be helped to do this during the delivery of the Unit. Where candidates do not do this in the assessment, careful comments by the assessor can help them to improve in a subsequent assessment.

Areas of good practice

Most aspects of good practice noted during external verification have already been referred to. It is worth repeating the main ones as centres that exhibited the following tended to achieve a higher success rate. The main areas of good practice were:

- ◆ detailed and specific feedback to candidates by assessors on all aspects of assessment
- ◆ consistent application of the marking guidelines by assessors
- ◆ careful recording of all aspects of an assessment decision through the use of an assessment checklist
- ◆ use of exemplar assessment materials
- ◆ ensuring that all aspects of the internal verification process were followed and that internal verifiers made specific comments to assessors
- ◆ preparing an internal verification report summarising internal verification activity

Specific areas for improvement

The main conclusion from external verification in this verification group is that centres are making suitable assessment decisions and that candidates who achieve the Unit have reached an appropriate standard.

The comments above indicate that there are some areas where centres could make improvements. These do not all apply to all centres as, to an extent, they consist of extending the good practice outlined above across all centres delivering Units in this verification group.

The following gives some areas where centres could consider making improvements:

- ◆ ensure that sufficient time is allocated for the delivery of the Unit — this should be enough to enable candidates to be properly prepared for assessment so that the success rate rises
- ◆ make use of learning and teaching methods that enable candidates to learn how to apply theoretical ideas to explain, analyse and evaluate case study material
- ◆ ensure that suitable support is available to candidates who are encountering difficulties with English
- ◆ encourage assessors to make specific and detailed comments to candidates — this should help those who do not succeed at the first attempt to be successful at a subsequent assessment
- ◆ make sure that the internal verification process is carried out and that internal verifiers make detailed comments to assessors — in this way the consistency of assessment judgements can be improved

Higher National Graded Units

There was no external verification of Graded Units in this verification group.