



**Higher National Qualifications (China)
Internal Assessment Report 2016
Business Management and
Business Graded Units**

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

HN units and graded units

This internal assessment report covers units contained within the Business Management verification group (254), and the following Business Graded Units:

H0J1 34 Business with Accounting: Graded Unit 1 (SCQF level 7)
H0J5 34 Business with Information Technology: Graded Unit 1 (SCQF level 7)
H0J7 34 Business with Human Resource Management: Graded Unit 1 (SCQF level 7)
H3P4 34 Global Trade and Business: Graded Unit 1 (SCQF level 7)
H0HY 34 Business: Graded Unit 1 (SCQF level 7)

H3P5 35 Global Trade and Business; Graded Unit 2 (SCQF level 8)
H0J2 35 Business with Accounting: Graded Unit 2 (SCQF level 8)
H0J0 35 Business: Graded Unit 2 (SCQF level 8)
H0J8 35 Business with Human Resource Management: Graded Unit 2 (SCQF level 8)

General comments

The units within this verification group continue to be challenging for candidates and the staff delivering and assessing them. Established centres are, in general terms, familiar with SQA awards with many having offered SQA qualifications for several years. Centres in the main appreciated the requirements and standards associated with the units, but there were a number of weaknesses identified during qualification verification events.

The Business Management units are common to a number of group awards and have been in existence for a long time. A number of project graded units from different awards were selected for central qualification verification with examinations being verified at a later central verification event.

There were instances where centres were not successful at qualification verification for a variety of reasons which resulted in actions being put in place. It is therefore essential that centres and staff maintain their focus on the requirements that qualification verification demands, and also continue to work in ensuring that the correct standards associated with each unit are being met.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Qualification verification events indicated that assessors are in the main familiar with the unit specifications and the assessment support packs (ASPs) for the units within the Business Management group. Most centres use the SQA ASPs and new versions were provided this academic session. For graded unit examinations, centres all used the appropriate SQA China ASP (CASP). Some centres have contextualised assessments for use with the general Business Management units and used these after prior verification. When making

adaptations it is important that centres continue to submit the revised assessments to SQA for prior verification.

Judging the correct standard remains a problem in a small number of centres and continued effort in the area of standardisation is essential. It is vital that centres study the unit specifications to guide them on what must be evidenced and to identify the appropriate standards.

Records of internal verification and standardisation meetings should be maintained as should discussion between assessors and other staff as this plays a crucial role in correctly applying the standard. This can be very difficult when staff are on part-time contracts and centres need to ensure that there are opportunities for all staff to meet, regardless of whether they are full-time or part-time. Some centres maintained good records of the meetings showing discussion and standardisation between the different staff involved in delivery, assessment and internal verification. Centres have to invest resources to ensure that all staff, in particular those new to SQA and those who are part-time, are given suitable information and guidance.

Over this year the China ASPs have been introduced and it has been a positive result that the centres have ensured that the up-to-date assessments are being used and the latest version of the unit specification also utilised.

Evidence requirements

Qualification verification visits and the central verification events were, in the main, positive and supportive and indicate that centres generally have a clear understanding of the evidence requirements defined in each of the units.

In the examinations, marks should be awarded for genuine points that are explained/analysed/discussed etc. This was an area of weakness in some centres as marks were being awarded for basic single-word or two-word responses without the required expanded explanation. This resulted in some centres having to review their marks and alter grades. Centres are advised not to base practice questions on the actual case study that will be used for the examination. Care needs to be taken not to lead candidates to the questions that will appear in the assessment.

Some centres had a higher than anticipated failure rate in the examination and indicated that further development work would be undertaken prior to the re-sit, and this is highly recommended. In a few cases centres had candidates in the high 40s% that were very close to the 50% pass mark. Centres were recommended to review these marginal fails, although a review would not always guarantee that the mark could be increased, but there are occasions where additional marks can be justifiably awarded.

It is important that all those involved in internal verification, delivery and assessment continue to remind themselves of the content of the unit specifications and the standards and evidence required. When interpreting the standards and the evidence requirements there has to be a degree of

professional judgement used. A centre that has a high proportion of A and B grades should review these to examine whether they are truly justified.

For non-examined units it is important that centres start to move away from the rigid quantification models being applied to units when deciding which candidates are required to 're-do' rather than undertake a full re-assessment. Not all questions are equal in terms of complexity and candidate responses can vary in quality, therefore there needs to be a more flexible approach to making 're-do' versus re-assessment decisions.

In projects there has to be a careful and justifiable approach to the awarding of additional marks. In a small number of cases poor judgements were made and too many A grades awarded, leading to re-marking as an action.

In the examinations, marks should be awarded for relevant points made that are explained/analysed/discussed etc. As highlighted in previous years, it is not sufficient to just identify points and gain marks without relevant explanations in support of the points identified. It is strongly advised that prior to marking that a markers' meeting takes place so that those involved can standardise their approaches to marking and enhance consistency. This is an essential component in arriving at sound and consistent assessment decisions, and greatly enhances the chances of a success at an external qualification verification event. Meetings should be recorded to show how decisions are arrived at and also how differences between markers are resolved. Standardisation meetings should take place before and after assessment before deciding on final grades.

Administration of assessments

Centres are generally familiar with the requirements associated with the assessments in the units in the Business Management verification group. One area where a simple improvement can be made is in ensuring that authenticity declarations are made by all candidates. This is an easy matter to arrange, but perhaps more difficult and very important, is ensuring that the candidates adhere to the rules regarding authenticity and plagiarism. Assessors and internal verifiers must be vigilant in detecting plagiarism in all forms and should act in accordance with their own policy when it is detected. The use of electronic authenticity checks is becoming more widespread and can prove a valuable tool in both detecting and deterring instances.

The continuing security of assessments and control over the conditions of assessment continue to be of essential importance. There can be significant consequences for both candidates and their centre when a security breach is traced back to the centre.

It is important that all those involved in the delivery and assessment of the units understand the assessments and the conditions that apply. This should be discussed in meetings prior to delivery. Verification and standardisation meetings provide the perfect forum for staff to discuss assessment and delivery issues, and to ensure that standards are applied appropriately and correctly. Having a

good system in place costs money, but it greatly enhances the chances of a successful outcome at external quality events.

Guidance on marking given in the past still stands, such as not using half marks. There was evidence in the graded units that double marking was being used. There were also cases where marks were being altered, and records kept of how the final decisions were arrived at. It is important that assessors ensure that it is clear why marks are awarded, and in exams it should be identified which are basic content marks and which have been awarded for development.

For projects, the reasons for awarding additional marks should be clear and based on the criteria for which they have been awarded. Some centres have been too lenient in awarding the extra marks resulting in re-marking after a sanction has been placed.

General feedback

Feedback to candidates from assessors is of great benefit to candidates, helping them understand why they have the grade/result they have and how they might improve. Some centres seem to be very good at providing feedback to candidates and it is appreciated that this is time-consuming and requires effort and investment.

Detailed feedback for examinations is less important except where a candidate has to undergo a second paper in which case constructive but critical feedback is essential. Many centres do not provide successful candidates with their marks, but just the grade they have achieved.

In the graded unit projects, candidates require confirmation that they are achieving at each stage or not. An indication of how well they are doing is important but again precise marks are not necessary provided the candidates know that they are achieving, with an indication of how well. Projects should be evaluated stage by stage but also as a whole at the end to ensure that the grade award is merited. Guidance and feedback will not only take place at the end of each stage but reasonable assistance should be ongoing as the assessor acts as the project supervisor. Assessors must take care in judging the appropriate level of assistance that should be provided.

Areas of good practice

To help provide a clearer picture of good practice the examples cited in the qualification verification reports are bulleted below:

- ◆ Excellent records on CPD and staff qualifications
- ◆ Use of personal development plans
- ◆ Additional time scheduled to support candidates
- ◆ Ongoing support with English language training
- ◆ Records of who receive ASPs and other documents

- ◆ Good records of communication between staff and candidates
- ◆ One-to-one support
- ◆ The use of WeChat and other means of communication
- ◆ Releasing staff for training
- ◆ Clear actions resulting from verification activity and their recording
- ◆ Detailed student handbooks
- ◆ Detection of plagiarism and appropriate use of the disciplinary procedures
- ◆ Careful monitoring of attendance
- ◆ The allocation of mentors for each candidate
- ◆ Sharing information from training events and conferences with other staff
- ◆ Mentoring new and/or part-time staff
- ◆ Providing constructive and useful feedback to candidates
- ◆ Using formative assessment to prepare candidates for summative assessments
- ◆ Detailed activity logs for the project
- ◆ Organising evidence for qualification verification by cross-referencing it to each of the criteria
- ◆ The use of Harvard referencing and citations
- ◆ Clear double marking and cross-checking work and recording how decisions were arrived at

Specific areas for improvement

Whilst many centres were successful at qualification verification, across the verification group a number of recommendations and actions were recorded. These following areas were identified during verification events as requiring either improvement or continued effort by some centres:

- ◆ A lack of any detail in verification and standardisation records
- ◆ Not providing evidence for qualification verification criteria at central events
- ◆ A lack of reviews of candidate progress
- ◆ Not providing the opportunity for staff to meet and undertake standardisation activities
- ◆ Providing poor or no feedback
- ◆ Misunderstanding the standards expected
- ◆ Overly generous marking in the examination and the need to ensure that marks awarded can be justified on the basis of the answers and the quality of the responses actually provided
- ◆ Awarding an excessive number of high grades that cannot be justified
- ◆ Overstepping the boundary with regard to leading candidates too much towards the questions in the examination
- ◆ Insufficient checks for plagiarism
- ◆ Allowing candidates to rely on rote learned responses which failed to demonstrate understanding

- ◆ Not explaining how differences in marks were resolved
- ◆ Not supporting candidates whose English was poor
- ◆ Poor referencing
- ◆ Rigid approaches to 're-do' versus re-assessment using strict quantification of correct responses rather than applying a common sense professional judgement approach
- ◆ Not providing evidence for each of the qualification verification criteria
- ◆ Not identifying how additional marks had been gained in the project
- ◆ Providing more feedback on how to improve performance
- ◆ Ensuring that marks awarded can be justified on the basis of the answers and the quality of the responses

All centres need to regularly remind themselves of potential areas of weakness to help maintain the progress that has been made and to make improvements in the future.