Higher National Qualifications (China)
Internal Assessment Report 2015
Economics

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

Most centres have now had a number of years to become familiar with the Economics Units within the SQA awards. Whilst many centres were successful at qualification verification some were not for a variety of reasons. A number of areas for improvement are listed at the end of this report, with the areas identified being drawn from the qualification verification reports that showed further work was required.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

In general, centres were familiar with the Unit specifications and the Assessment Support Packs (ASPs). The majority of centres have used the ASPs published by SQA but some have created their own versions, and it is strongly recommended that the centres continue to submit these for prior verification. Many of the assessments that were submitted provided new stimulus material that was contextualised and was generally of a good standard.

In a small number of cases assessors and internal verifiers found it difficult to judge the level of work expected, and in some cases applied complicated marking schemes that are best avoided. It is essential that centres ensure that all staff and in particular those new to SQA qualifications are given suitable information and guidance. It is also essential that staff participate in standardisation meetings, and for part-time staff this could involve additional cost to centres.

Evidence Requirements

In general, the centres appear to have a clear understanding of the evidence requirements in each of the Units. Staff must continue to ensure that candidates meet all of the specified evidence requirements as explained in each Unit specification in order for a candidate to be judged as achieving each Unit. Centres and staff need to ensure that there is a transparent and appropriate distinction between candidates who are required to 're-do' some of their responses, versus a situation that merits a full re-assessment. This evaluation should be based on the requirements set within the Unit specification and on professional judgement. Above all, standardisation discussions should take place and be recorded to show that a balanced and fair approach is adopted and that there is a sound basis for the decisions reached.

Administration of assessments

The experience that staff have gained has helped to provide a confidence in their understanding of the level of responses that are required from candidates. Centres in the majority of cases appropriately administer assessments, although this is an area that will continue to require focus and attention.

The continuing security of ASPs and locally devised assessments and control over the conditions of assessment are areas that are essential in the safeguarding of the integrity of the HND programme. New assessments for some Units have been commissioned and these ASPs will be available for use in the 2015–16 academic session. The creation of new ASPs is both difficult and costly and in future centres that are held as being at fault over the security lapses regarding ASPs may face repercussions as a result.

General feedback

Feedback to candidates from assessors is crucial in helping candidates identify and understand their strengths and weaknesses. There were a number of instances of centres being cited for good practice in this area, and many centres provided tutorial record sheets logging discussions and advice. In some cases, candidates were encouraged to maintain reflective logs to record what they had learned and how they might improve further.

Areas of good practice

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

- Contextualised prior verified assessment
- Use of practice exercises (formative assessments) to prepare candidates for the actual assessment (summative assessment)
- Tutorial support records to provide feedback
- Disseminating information from conferences and other educational events to staff who were not able to attend
- Recording discussion of how agreements were arrived at in standardisation meetings
- Reflective logs kept by candidates
- Providing evidence for postal qualification verification in folders that matched each of the criteria

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 areas require either improvement or continued effort by some centres and are bulleted as follows:

- Not providing the evidence required for each criteria in qualification verification
- Providing excessive amounts of information for postal qualification verification
- Using very complicated marking schemes
- Not accurately recording candidate results
- Not acknowledging sources in open-book assessments

- Identifying plagiarism
- Maintaining the security of assessments
- Recording and using student feedback
- Improving recording of discussion in IV/standardisation records
- Ensuring that the ASPs used are the correct up-to-date versions
- Identifying and using teaching materials other than the Course Tutor Guides
- Using practice exercises (formative assessment) more often to help prepare candidates
- Improving language ability
- Using professional judgement to distinguish between 're-do' and re-assessment

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.