



**Higher National Qualifications (China)
Internal Assessment Report 2015
Information Technology**

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

The Information Technology group Units cover a range of areas such as applications, computer hardware, operating system software and networking.

In all centres visited, following scrutiny of the evidence presented and discussions between External Verifiers and centre assessors, internal verifiers and staff, we found that:

- ◆ The evidence seen against the quality assurance criteria was considered to be sufficient.
- ◆ Within the IT Technical area, staff have made good progress in their first delivery of the new Units within the HND qualification and have understood and produced good work on interpretation of Outcomes.
- ◆ Within the IT Applications Units, there was a major improvement in adapting to the Unit requirements, within differing contexts.
- ◆ Internal assessment activities were consistent with documented centre procedures and in line with SQA requirements.
- ◆ Assessors were marking and making judgements to appropriate and acceptable standards for the Units sampled.
- ◆ Effective assessment systems were in place and were being implemented.
- ◆ Overall, the standards checked were compliant with SQA requirements.

The EV team is pleased to report a high level of confidence in centres, as they have been able to demonstrate clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Through visits to centres and prior verification activity during the session, the EV team found that centres have a good general understanding of Unit specifications.

Assessors are, in general, aware of the detail of Unit specifications and are familiar with SQA exemplar and assessment support pack materials.

The instruments of assessment seen were valid and reliable — assessments were mainly exemplars/ASPs and some centre-devised assessments. Centres were using latest version of SQA exemplars/ASPs across all candidates.

Pre-delivery checks were made and recorded for current Unit specifications and assessment exemplar/ASPs. The exemplars and other instruments of assessment are subject to internal verification.

Some alternative assessments had been prepared by centres and prior verified.

Evidence Requirements

Evidence Requirements for the HN Information Technology Units are generally well understood. In particular, for the IT Applications Units, assessors showed a clear understanding of the standards required. Unit Evidence Requirements had been correctly interpreted and applied.

As this was the first time that centres had delivered the new technical IT Units, there had been discussions within centres regarding requirements. Overall, these had been interpreted appropriately. Following discussions with the visiting EV, staff quickly grasped the meaning and were reassured that they are well set up for future deliveries.

In all cases, the supporting documentation seen indicated that there would be sufficient coverage and checking of all Evidence Requirements.

Administration of assessments

The quality assurance criteria approach is now adopted by centres. This requires checks that centre assessment and internal verification procedures are being implemented effectively

Most centres had robust and well documented assessment and internal verification procedures, which provided a clear and accessible audit trail through the assessment and internal verification processes.

Materials presented for external verification were well organised, well presented and accessible for scrutiny.

From the EV reports, it appears that the internal verification systems within the centres visited are well constructed, with appropriate strategies and well documented. The procedures and processes were being implemented appropriately.

Authentication is an issue which is being very well addressed in centres. The use of plagiarism-checking software, use of candidate disclaimers to give a sense of ownership, and scrutiny by assessors which is backed up by question and answer sessions on the topic, are all being employed effectively.

General feedback

Overall, there was good evidence that candidates are being well prepared and supported for assessment across all Units.

Documents were provided containing a wide range of activities to assist in candidate development needs. There were discussions with teachers over the candidates' development needs and processes undertaken to address these. Such processes included:

- ◆ ongoing support and feedback following formative assessments

- ◆ candidates being able to e-mail teachers/assessors directly with exercises or general subject area questions and receive responses within suitable timescales
- ◆ induction covering a wide range of information as to how candidates were introduced to the requirements of the award and processes of remediation and appeal
- ◆ discussions at staff–student meetings that were minuted

Assessment arrangements for candidates with learning difficulties are in place. There were clear statements and examples given of where the centres had dealt with students who had additional support needs and the accessibility measures implemented to address these.

SQA remediation and re-assessment criteria and processes were clearly stated and in order.

Areas of good practice

Previous reports have commented on the good practice shown by centres. It is encouraging that external verification during 2014–15 confirmed that these continue. Good practice noted in EV reports during this session included:

- ◆ Remediation is carried out as quickly as possible after a first unsuccessful attempt.
- ◆ Original unsatisfactory attempts were retained along with successful re-do/re-assessments. This is a most useful practice when checking on standards. It provides a clear guide and evidence when judging standards applied.
- ◆ Original attempts and remediation/re-assessments were clearly identified and tracked with dates and assessor signatures.
- ◆ The standard of presentation of all materials was very good. In particular, the indexing of evidence against each QA criterion was most impressive and greatly facilitated the external verification process.
- ◆ Additional marking schemes had been prepared to help with the consistency and reliability of assessments.
- ◆ It was good to see positive comments to encourage students' progress.

Specific areas for improvement

- ◆ It is suggested that centres may devise their own assessment instruments, based on the AE/ASP. For example, for H17D 34 Introduction to Project Management, Outcome 1, the centre could write different questions or reword those in the exemplar to match their own students' learning experiences. Any such changes should be sent for prior verification.
- ◆ The assessment materials for D75X 34 ITAS 1 were discussed with many centres and as a reminder it is advised that they could be contextualised for the locality (China) and for different master subject areas used.

Any major changes to exemplars should be prior verified by SQA.

Higher National Graded Units

Titles/levels of HN Graded Units verified:

H40F34 Computing: Graded Unit 1

H40G 35 Computing: Networking Graded Unit 2

General comments

For H40F 34 (Examination), centre materials were reviewed by remote verification.

In all cases, the materials that were submitted were in order and sufficient. The master file accompanying the candidate materials had been mapped to the relevant SQA quality assurance criteria. This was most useful when conducting the external verification process.

Sufficient evidence was presented, which indicated that there was an accurate understanding of the national standards.

For the project-based Graded Unit H40G 35 — overall, everything was in order. It was considered that the candidates had been awarded appropriate grades and that the centre procedures were suitably supporting the assessment process. Centres were complying with SQA requirements.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

For H40F 34 (Examination), the SQA Unit specification was used in conjunction with a valid assessment exemplar.

Clear assessment policy was being applied with regard to re-assessments.

Graded Unit assessors showed a high familiarity with the Graded Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials.

This was the first delivery of the new project-based Graded Unit H40G 35.

Following various interactions, assessors now appear to be familiar with the Graded Unit 2 Project.

Centres were assessing the Units using the correct method — project scenario.

Assessment instruments were in line with the stated Grade Related Criteria. The AE/ASP exemplars were used to provide a basis for their marking scheme.

Evidence Requirements

For H40F 34 (Examination):

- ◆ All evidence seen was marked appropriately and consistently across the Graded Unit and to SQA required standards.
- ◆ The marks awarded all reflected the standard of work produced and judgement of candidate performance was appropriate.
- ◆ Assessor comments had been written on the candidate scripts to explain why marks were deducted.
- ◆ Assessment checklists provided a detailed breakdown of where marks were awarded.
- ◆ Assessors demonstrated a good understanding of the Evidence Requirements.

For the project-based Graded Unit H40G 35:

- ◆ Checks were made on the application of marking system/schemes and to establish the method of grading.
- ◆ There was some initial lack of understanding of Minimum Evidence Requirements.
- ◆ Overall, on inspection of candidates' final submitted folio work, the candidates demonstrated a good grasp of requirements and demonstrated knowledge and skills at an appropriate level to the grades awarded.
- ◆ Marking schemes had been applied consistently.
- ◆ The judgement of candidate performance by assessors was mostly in line with the standard required. Any marking disagreements were judged to be within acceptable boundaries and all grades presented were accepted without change.
- ◆ These all indicated that assessors had a reasonable understanding of the Minimum Evidence Requirements.

Administration of assessments

All information and documents requested were provided to enable the external verification process.

These included:

- ◆ evidence of assessment procedures
- ◆ details of staff qualifications and CPD
- ◆ teacher handbook and internal verification handbook
- ◆ prior checking of assessment exemplar
- ◆ a pre-delivery checklist which included checks for currency of the Unit specification and that candidates would have sufficient information and learning resources for tackling the Graded Unit
- ◆ internal verifier sampling forms
- ◆ the marking scheme

Generally a good standard of supporting materials were submitted for central verification.

General feedback

The individual candidate marking schemes, which were a breakdown of individual marks allocations, contained well written, constructive feedback to candidates.

The feedback was felt to be to be consistent with their performance.

Areas of good practice

Good practice noted in EV reports during this session included:

- ◆ There was evidence of double-marking and of subsequent internal verification taking place on all candidate scripts. The decisions identified in the standardisation meeting had been applied by the IV and clearly shown on the scripts.

Specific areas for improvement

- ◆ Centres should take full notice of the Minimum Evidence Requirements from the Unit specification. Then when devising the assessment instrument/assessment task instructions, ensure there is clear mapping between them and the Minimum Evidence Requirements. Following this, ensure appropriate sub-marking schemes are developed and applied consistently across the candidates sampled.
- ◆ Centres may devise their own assessment Instruments, based on the AE/ASP. The centre could write different scenarios or rework those in the exemplars to match with their own students' learning experiences. Any such changes should be sent for prior verification.