



**Higher National Qualifications (China)
Internal Assessment Report 2016
Mathematics and Statistics**

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 for HN Mathematics and Statistics took place at a total of six centres. The units F84K 35, D76E 34, H7K0 33, and H7K1 34 were reviewed.

The centres reviewed were found to have a clear and accurate understanding of the national standards for assessment, supported their students well, and kept detailed and accurate records. Some general areas of improvement are detailed below.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The assessors were generally conversant with the unit specifications and exemplification material.

The assessment support pack for F84K 35 available to centres for session 2016–17 (CASP001 published Aug 2015) indicated outcomes 2 and 3 should be assessed together in an assessment of 5 hours. Some centres had difficulty accommodating this length of assessment in one session. The marking scheme for the assessment support pack also contained some ambiguities. The assessment support pack for F84K 35 has been updated for the academic session 2016–17 to address these issues (CASP001 published Jan 2016).

Centres should prepare an alternative instrument of assessment for re-sit opportunities. New instruments of assessments and associated marking schemes may be submitted to SQA for prior verification. This will give centres confidence that their assessment is valid.

A new student support pack for F84K 35 should be published soon.

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 be 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. It is recommended that internal verifiers re-mark the sampled assessment papers. This will show areas where

discrepancies occur. When a discrepancy is found, the assessor and verifier can agree which approach is most appropriate, and the decision minuted (or marking scheme clarified) so that this approach can be taken in the future.

General feedback

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

Areas of good practice

Many 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 consistency.
- ◆ Records of work appeared to be well maintained and highly organised, allowing the verification process to run smoothly.
- ◆ High quality and comprehensive candidate feedback was provided at most centres.
- ◆ Records of assessor/verifier qualifications and continuing professional development (CPD) were detailed and comprehensive. Note that reading, study and personal research can be added to CPD records as well as formal courses, etc.
- ◆ At least one centre used, for F84K 35, slightly different assessments for each candidate in a class to reduce the risk of plagiarism.
- ◆ Centres took action to address the development needs of candidates.
- ◆ The materials used by centres were of a high quality.

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:

Assessment instruments

Centres should modify assessment support pack papers for their own centre. If several centres use identical papers then candidates from one centre could inform those at others of the content, thus compromising the assessment process.

Marking schemes should indicate the answers, and where marks are allocated in detail (showing where each mark is 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 alternative methods can be used to solve a problem, the marking scheme should contain these alternatives, including the

detailed disposition of marks. If in doubt, a centre can submit a proposed assessment to SQA for prior verification.

Re-sit attempts

An e-mail dated 13 September 2013 was disseminated to centres indicating 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 cognate 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, unless alternative guidance is given in the unit specification or assessment support pack, re-sit an alternative instrument of assessment. The assessment support pack for F84K 35, session 2016–17, has detailed guidance for assessment marking and re-sits.

Accuracy of marking schemes

In a few cases, marking schemes were inaccurate or unclear. Great care should be taken to ensure that marking is accurate and consistent. 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 are available from the website.

Internal verification

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

Identification of collusion

Several cases of collusion between candidates were identified by the external verification team. Care should be taken by assessors and internal verifiers to identify cases of collusion or plagiarism when it occurs. It is not always easy to identify but the integrity of the assessment process depends upon it.

Storage of assessment material

For unit F84K 35, material may be retained in electronic form as an alternative to, or in addition to, printed form.

Higher National graded units

There were no graded units verified in the HN Mathematics and Statistics (142) area.