



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

Business Management

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 are now familiar with SQA awards, and have a good appreciation of the requirements of the Units in the verification group. As a result there has been a good rate of success at external verification visits, where centres have in the vast majority of cases been identified as having a good understanding of the national standards. It is however important that centres and their staff continue to maintain their focus on the required standards and do not start to err towards leniency.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The success at external verification events indicates that assessors are in the main familiar with the Unit specifications and the assessment exemplars. Most centres use the assessment exemplars, or an adapted version of them. Some centres adapt exemplars to give a more appropriate context for the candidates, which is a positive indication that there is a growing confidence in the delivery and assessment of SQA Units. When making adaptations or revisions, it is important that centres continue to submit revised assessments to SQA for prior verification.

It is vital that centres study the Unit specifications to guide them on what must be evidenced, to identify the appropriate standards, and to see what possibilities there are in terms of the assessment format and integration. In a small number of instances, assessors and internal verifiers find it difficult to understand what is expected and what the appropriate standards are. Centres will have to continue to ensure that all staff, and in particular those new to SQA qualifications, are given suitable information and guidance.

Evidence Requirements

The external verification visits were, in the main, very positive and supportive and indicate that centres have a clear understanding of the Evidence Requirements in each of the Units. It is essential that assessors resist the temptation to start to drift towards lowering standards, which can result from a creeping complacency associated with successful external verification.

It is important that those involved in internal verification, delivery and assessment continue to refresh themselves of the content of the Unit specifications and the standards and evidence required. Centres and staff also need to ensure that there is a transparent and appropriate distinction between candidates who are required to rework some of their responses and candidates whose work merits a re-do/re-assessment.

Administration of assessments

The centres are generally becoming well practised at administering assessments, but this will require continuing attention in the future, particularly with the introduction of the new frameworks and Units. Centres should also continue to take care in the area of plagiarism, which need more vigilance and resourcing as there will be a greater danger of plagiarism in some of the new Units. The continuing security of assessments and control over the conditions of assessment is an area that is essential to safeguard the integrity of the awards in the future.

It is very important that centres employ a rigorous approach towards internal verification to ensure quality. There are indications that some centres need to place more emphasis on internal verification, and use it not only as a quality assurance process but also as a mechanism to stimulate discussion, ideas, consistency and confidence.

General feedback

Feedback to candidates from assessors is crucial in helping candidates identify and understand their strengths and weaknesses. This is particularly the case with Units in the Business Management verification group. Some centres seem to be very good at providing feedback to candidates, but it was identifiable that this is an area that needs to be adopted more widely. Feedback can be time consuming, but good feedback is very valuable and centres are encouraged to work towards greater emphasis on this important means of communication in future academic sessions.

Areas of good practice

Centres and staff are, in the main, familiar with the requirements and standards of the Units. The majority of feedback regarding good practice was to confirm this understanding, and it is appropriate at this stage that the centres build on the good work that has been established.

Areas on which centres may wish to focus in future include greater feedback to candidates, more discussion and debate in internal verification, improved distinction between re-working an assessment and a re-do, providing enhanced guidance on subjects to candidates, and adding more learning resources to help candidates. All of these areas are challenges and require resourcing, but they are a natural extension of the good work that has been established thus far.

Specific areas for improvement

A number of areas require either improvement or continued effort. An area for general concern relevant to all SQA centres, regardless of location, is the security of assessments. It is critical that efforts are maintained to ensure that assessments are safeguarded and secured; otherwise the integrity of the award is endangered.

Continuing checks on plagiarism need to be made. This is particularly important as there is much greater scope for out-of-class assessment in the new Units and the new frameworks.

Centres should start to utilise the internal verification process — beyond being a simple quality check — to help foster debate among staff about standards, delivery and assessment issues. Adding this dimension to internal verification helps build a greater understanding of the awards, builds staff confidence and helps establish a more consistent approach in the delivery and assessment of the Units.