



Higher National Qualifications (China) Internal Assessment Report 2012

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 in the SQA awards. This has helped result in a very 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.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The success at external verification events indicates that assessors are familiar with the Unit specifications and the assessment exemplars. The majority of centres have used the SQA assessment exemplars but some have created their own versions, and it is strongly recommended that the centres continue to submit these for prior verification.

In a very small number of cases 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

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, to be judged as having achieved each Unit. Centres and staff 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 experience that staff have gained has helped to provide 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, particularly as the change to the new Units is introduced. 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.

General feedback

Feedback to candidates from assessors is crucial in helping candidates identify and understand their strengths and weaknesses. It was noted in a number of reports that this was happening at some but not all centres. 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

The SQA awards are now at a stage where centres and staff are largely familiar with their requirements and standards. The majority of feedback regarding good practice was to confirm this understanding, and it is appropriate at this stage that the centres build on this sound foundation.

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/re-assessment, 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 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 greater scope for out-of-class assessment in the new Units and the new frameworks.

Many centres are tending to be relatively mechanistic in the application of internal verification procedures. Centres should aim to utilise the internal verification process to help develop and inform staff about expected standards. This might be evidenced by the greater recording of discussions about what is expected of candidates, whether there were problems with an assessment or any difficulties encountered within a Unit, etc. This approach helps foster a greater understanding of the awards, builds staff confidence and helps establish a more consistent approach in the delivery and assessment of the Units.