



**Higher National Qualifications (China)**

**Qualification Verification Summary Report 2017**

**Business**

## Introduction

The following units were selected for verification:

F84T 34	Managing People and Organisations SCQF level 7
F7J7 35	Business Culture and Strategy SCQF level 8
H2XK 35	Global Business Organisations SCQF level 8
H3MF 34	International Business Environment: Geographical Influences SCQF level 7
H0J1 34	Business with Accounting: Graded Unit 1 SCQF level 7
H0HY 34	Business: Graded Unit 1 SCQF level 7
H0J8 35	Business with Human Resource Management: Graded Unit 2 SCQF level 8
H0J2 35	Business with Accounting: Graded Unit 2 SCQF level 8
H3P5 35	Global Trade and Business: Graded Unit 2 SCQF level 8
H0J0 35	Business: Graded Unit 2 SCQF level 8

These units are current and were not revised in the 2016–17 session.

There has been a significant amount of verification activity during the 2016–17 session. Qualification verifiers visited centres or attended central verification events in China. A few centres were verified remotely.

## Category 2: Resources

**Criterion 2.1: Assessors and internal verifiers must be competent to assess and internally verify, in line with the requirements of the qualification.**

(This criterion is completed for regulated qualifications only.)

In general, staff are well qualified in terms of academic qualifications and many are experienced at delivering and assessing SQA qualifications. There are relatively few with formal teaching or internal verification qualifications. In some cases, continuing professional development (CPD) activity was very good with relevant training and attendance at SQA-related events. In other cases CPD was relatively limited and often referred to routine events such as attending a meeting before the start of term.

There was encouraging evidence of some staff passing information from SQA events back to their centres and to the other staff involved in SQA qualifications. This is particularly important as only a restricted number of staff can attend events such as the Professional Development Conference.

**Criterion 2.4: There must be evidence of initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials.**

This criterion is not applicable for the central verification of graded units. For the other units verified, centres usually had systems in place to ensure ongoing reviews. These systems included formal cyclical reviews where necessary changes are made to the learning environment and materials.

The internal verification process also covers the checking of assessments and learning materials. Individual staff regularly add and update learning materials, but there is still a heavy dependence on the learning guides produced for many of the units. In most cases centres used the SQA-produced assessment support pack, but some centres devised their own assessments and sent them to SQA for prior verification.

Evidence of the internal quality system in some centres was also apparent from records of meetings.

### **Category 3: Candidate support**

#### **Criterion 3.2: Candidates' development needs and prior achievements (where appropriate) must be matched against the requirements of the award.**

This criterion is not applicable for the central verification of graded units. For the other units verified, centres had their own selection processes for recruiting candidates who had applied for the HND awards. Those that were successful were provided with an induction of varying duration and intensity. They had to complete a first year studying English where they had to gain a minimum score for IELTS to proceed to the second year.

Centres often operated a system of dedicated pastoral care, usually with a student advisor/mentor. In some centres there were regular timetabled guidance slots. Centres usually provided access to specialist support services. A major demand of the course is the level of English required and some centres provided excellent ongoing tuition in English throughout the second and third years of the course.

#### **Criterion 3.3: Candidates must have scheduled contact with their assessor to review their progress and to revise their assessment plans accordingly.**

This criterion is not applicable for the central verification of graded units. For the other units verified, centres timetabled formal slots. Assessors could be contacted outside class times, often by e-mail and WeChat, but sometimes at their staff base as well. Access to staff can be difficult when they are employed on a part-time basis, and are often paid for scheduled formal contact time only. Candidates generally received verbal and written feedback that varied in length and detail. Tutorial records were maintained, showing contact between candidates and their tutors and detailing problems and areas discussed. The level of tutor support and contact is a crucial factor in determining the success of an HN award.

## **Category 4: Internal assessment and verification**

### **Criterion 4.2: Internal assessment and verification procedures must be implemented to ensure standardisation of assessment.**

All centres provided an internal verification policy and completed internal verification records. The detail contained in the records varied, with the most basic being a checklist and a recognition that assessment decisions had been accepted with a 'yes or no' result. The more useful records contained narrative, identifying points that had required some thought, or that might need explanation or changing. Some records contained explicit actions for future implementation along with timescales. These more detailed and reflective accounts provide a better foundation for standardisation and the correct judgement of the standard; the basic records add little extra value.

In the main, assessment procedures were straightforward and well understood. However, there were a significant number of Graded Unit 2 projects which were over-generously marked. This was not identified through internal verification and it is an area for concern.

### **Criterion 4.3: Assessment instruments and methods and their selection and use must be valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair.**

Centres used SQA-produced assessments or, in a number of cases, a locally devised version based on the SQA assessment support pack. A number of assessments were submitted across the year for prior verification. The assessment instruments were usually checked before they were used, and this check was recorded in an internal verification record. There were few records indicating that there were any problems with the assessments, and they were generally accepted as being valid, reliable, equitable and fair.

Centres had the up-to-date unit specification for each unit. Where candidates had justifiable cause, assessment conditions could be adapted to meet those specific needs, and candidates could usually access specialist support.

### **Criterion 4.4: Assessment evidence must be the candidate's own work, generated under SQA's required conditions.**

Centres provided a malpractice/plagiarism policy. In most cases candidates had to sign an authenticity declaration during their induction. The use of electronic checkers was rare, but is becoming more common for units such as Managing People and Organisations.

There were a number of instances where copying or poor referencing were identified and appropriate action was taken. In these cases, verifiers recommended allocating more resources to improve referencing skills using a recognised format, such as Harvard. All evidence reviewed was generated under the conditions set by SQA for these particular units.

**Criterion 4.6: Evidence of candidates' work must be accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements.**

In general, centres are familiar with the units and the assessments for the units. Where candidates' work was judged as unsatisfactory, they were re-assessed. Some centres were unsure about re-assessment for the projects, and, like other units, a second attempt is allowed. Where part of a project is deficient, the candidate should have the opportunity to correct that part of the project, and this constitutes the second attempt. For the examination, re-assessment of individual parts is not allowed. When a candidate fails, they must complete a second examination paper in its entirety. It is vital that centres adhere to this.

There was a degree of variation in the quality of the work provided for the business projects and there needs to be greater thought and effort in correctly matching candidate work against the grades. A number of centres awarded high marks, leading to grades that were not justified. This was rarely corrected through internal verification. A greater focus on standardisation and using the grading table in the assessment support pack is strongly advised.

Assessors usually provided feedback on the scripts or on checklists, but the amount and value of the feedback varied. Records of meetings suggest there is growing recognition of the importance of standardisation activity, but the correct standard needs to be identified by some centres and more work in this area is needed.

**Criterion 4.7: Candidate evidence must be retained in line with SQA requirements.**

Centres had a retention policy and retained all candidate evidence and assessment records in line with SQA's requirements. Many centres retain candidate evidence for a longer period than required by SQA. All centres recognised the need for security during storage.

**Criterion 4.9: Feedback from qualification verifiers must be disseminated to staff and used to inform assessment practice.**

This criterion is not applicable for the central verification of graded units. For the other units verified, centres in general demonstrated they have an effective process in place to ensure dissemination of feedback from external verification activity. At some centres this took place and was recorded at internal verification meetings. Qualification verification reports were generally available.

At a modest number of centres, lessons from previous external verification activity were being adopted and acted upon too slowly. Centres should be aware of the difficulties that can occur when actions and recommendations are not thoroughly implemented.

## **Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers**

The following good practice was reported during session 2016–17:

- ◆ Centres cascaded information from SQA events such as the annual Professional Development Conference to staff who had been unable to attend these events.
- ◆ Assessors provided quality and detailed feedback to candidates.
- ◆ Tutors supervised small groups of candidates for projects.
- ◆ Centres sought advice from appropriate sources such as SQA, qualification implementation managers and external verifiers.

## **Specific areas for development**

The following areas for development were reported during session 2016–17:

- ◆ There needs to be a better appraisal of the standards for the projects when awarding grades.
- ◆ The internal verification process should be used as a genuine quality check, rather than just being an administrative task that needs to be completed.
- ◆ Interim internal verification is very important and will help identify problems at an earlier stage, leaving more time to find solutions.
- ◆ There needs to be better standardisation to ensure that the standards are correctly identified and more consistently applied.
- ◆ The awarding of minimum and additional marks need to be clearer when marking the projects.
- ◆ There must be primary and secondary research conducted in the projects.
- ◆ An activity log is a personal record of the work carried out by the candidate during the first two stages of the project, and it is mandatory. Marks should be awarded depending on the level of detail and reflection.
- ◆ The activity log and the plan are not the same thing. The plan is a detailed set of activities/actions that the candidate has to complete to produce the three stages of their project. The activity log is a record of actual activity, and this should ideally be reflective and may deviate from the plan because not all activities will go to plan.
- ◆ There should be more emphasis placed on using a formally recognised referencing system. Centres should provide guidance to candidates on referencing.