



SQA Advanced Qualifications (China)

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2024

Economics

Verification Group: 258

Introduction

All external qualification verification for the 2023–24 session for Economics was conducted through virtual events. As in the past few years, centres submitted evidence for the generic criteria and for the selected units separately. A report was created for each centre covering the criteria identified as generic for each award, with separate reports for units by verification group based on the criteria that are relevant to delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance.

The generic reports were completed first and submitted to the centres. On completion of the unit reports, the primary verifier led a meeting with each centre where the subject/unit verifiers could seek information and provide feedback. The unit reports were submitted along with outcome forms after the meetings had taken place.

The following Economics units were selected for verification:

J461 47	Economic Issues: An Introduction
J5AX 48	Economics: Micro and Macro Theory and Application
HP72 48	Economics 2: The World Economy
HP0R 47	International Trade Institutions

The following SQA awards were selected for verification:

GT32 48	AD Business
GT35 48	AD Business with Accounting
GM57 48	AD Global Trade and Business
GT37 48	AD Global Trade and Business
GP0N 48	AD Financial Services
GT36 48	AD Business with Marketing
GT33 48	AD Business with Human Resources Management
GT34 48	AD Business with Information Technology

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.

Subject report criterion

Evidence included: CVs/resumes, CPD records, copies of certificates, research interests and articles published, past employment history, SQA/CSCSE and other training events attended.

All assessors and internal verifiers were very well qualified, holding an undergraduate and one or more postgraduate degrees. Most staff held qualifications with economics as a specialism or as a subsidiary subject, and all staff held qualifications relevant to the delivery and assessment of the units assigned to them. Some staff also held professional body and teaching qualifications.

Many had considerable experience of delivering, assessing and internally verifying SQA awards, with some working at more than one centre over a number of years.

The records showed that the assessors and internal verifiers were active in updating and refreshing their knowledge by participating in internal training events relevant to the delivery and assessment of SQA awards and also being involved in maintaining up-to-date knowledge of their subjects. Participation in events sponsored by SQA and CSCSE were commonly identified in CPD records and there were examples of staff holding 'Best Teacher/Elite Teacher awards' as well as some having attended teacher training courses offered by UK universities.

The movement of staff between centres and attendance at SQA events has led to a good degree of cooperation and networking, which is very positive.

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

Generic report criterion

Evidence included: Review policies, minutes of meetings, learning materials, resource checklists, teaching resources, IV and standardisation records, safety checks, ASP and US update records, equipment lists.

Most centres provided a policy explaining the review process and then provided a series of documents as evidence of implementation of the policy. Where a specific policy document explaining the review processes and opportunities for reviews was provided, understanding the other evidence submitted was relatively simple.

Where a review policy was not submitted it was generally more difficult to interpret the evidence provided. Even so, centres were still successful but the evidence sometimes appeared disjointed. It was simply easier to interpret the evidence and arrive at a valid verification decision when centres also provided an overall explanation of their process for reviewing resources.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

Generic report criterion

Evidence included: Centre entrance requirements, handbooks, induction details, guidance systems, PDP/Individual Learning Plans, support services, language support and certificates, staff availability and contact details, workshops, study groups.

Criterion 3.2 is easier to successfully evidence through a range of documents covering candidates' prior achievements and matching those achievements to the requirements of the award. It is unlikely that a single piece of evidence could adequately demonstrate that the centre meets all of the aspects of criterion 3.2.

Centres were successful in evidencing 3.2, with some submitting a greater range of documents than others. Details of the admissions process and entry requirements that some centres provided were a good starting point. All centres must offer an appropriate language training year, and details of that year and candidates' results again provided a useful insight. Centres must demonstrate that candidates who meet the language requirements are then prepared for the further two years of study.

Details of the induction candidates experience are important and some centres invest heavily in this, whilst for other centres the details provided were limited. It is important that details of student support services, responsibilities and candidates' entitlements are provided to candidates. This was often provided in a candidate handbook in addition to induction details.

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

Generic report criterion

Evidence included: Timetables, tutorial times, delivery and assessment schedules, tutorial records, individual/personal development planning, communication records, staff availability details, student appraisal records, mentoring systems, support services, minutes of meetings.

Criterion 3.2 and criterion 3.3 are strongly connected, with 3.3 focusing on ongoing monitoring of progress and continuous support throughout the running of the course.

Centres provided timetables showing details of scheduled classes and tutorials. Many centres provided detailed teaching schedules for each unit and assessment schedules. Most classes were face-to-face but a small number were held online.

Almost all centres provided records of tutorials with examples of questions asked by candidates and tutor responses. Examples of online contact were often provided along with details of how candidates can contact tutors outside class times.

Some centres provided details of progress reviews and examples of individual learning plans with targets for self-improvement.

Written feedback to candidates on their performance is an area that could be improved at some centres. Some feedback was minimal beyond detailing where redo work was required, and it is useful to provide some detail of strengths and weaknesses, even when a candidate has successfully completed an assessment.

Some centres provided details of ongoing English language support throughout the course, which is important as most centres identified language ability as an important factor in determining success.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

Generic report criterion and subject report criterion

Evidence included: Assessments, unit specifications, marking schemes, quality/IV manual, staff manuals, verification/standardisation records, minutes of meetings, assessor summary IV reports.

All centres provided details of their internal quality assurance policy and provided completed verification records. The records contained varying levels of detail but the majority were very thorough, and many contained excellent observation, reflection and analysis. This resulted in many centres being identified as having good practice in the area of internal quality assurance.

Centres showed a good understanding of SQA requirements and demonstrated an appreciation of the need for the assessor and the internal verifier to work closely together to ensure that standardisation was achieved. The records showed that checks were made identifying the unit requirements and standards, and that discussions took place to best ensure that assessment decisions were appropriate and consistent.

Two of the units verified were new to some centres and the early focus on understanding them was a contributing factor in the successful verification outcomes.

Some centres provided excellent narrative accounts of assessment decisions in their records, but often the sampling records lacked detail on how marginal assessment decisions were decided.

Most centres created an excellent assessor summary report for each unit, containing observations and reflection along with recommendations and analysis of performance. It was a positive strength when centres demonstrated that the reflection and lessons learned were taken forward and acted upon. This has been strongly encouraged through the SQA 'Circle of Success' model promoted at the 2019 SQA Professional Development Conference and again in Shanghai in 2024.

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

Subject report criterion

Evidence included: Assessments, solution guidance, unit specifications, pre-delivery IV checks, IV/standardisation records and minutes of meetings, invigilation records, assessor/IV reports, quality manual, details of staff duties and responsibilities, teaching and assessment schedules.

All centres provided SQA-devised and/or centre-devised prior-verified assessments. It was quite common that prior-verified assessments were created by another centre. This sharing of resources is a positive development.

Some centres submitted invigilation records and attendance sign-in sheets for examinations such as that used in Economic Issues J461 47. All centres provided examples of originality/authenticity declarations to demonstrate that assessments were undertaken under the appropriate conditions and that each candidate understood their responsibilities. All centres had a policy relating to authenticity and malpractice.

Centre staff studied the unit specifications, and discussed the standards and identified the requirements. Initial mandatory checks were recorded in the pre-delivery IV records. Typically, further IV records, standardisation and unit meeting minutes provided evidence of discussions relating to the selection and use of the assessments. Assessor summary reports would commonly analyse performance and make recommendations regarding future delivery and assessment practice.

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

Generic report criterion

Evidence included: Quality/IV manuals, plagiarism and malpractice policies, authenticity checks and declarations, internal verification records, invigilation records, assessment attendance records/sheets, details of electronic authenticity checks.

All centres provided examples of originality/authenticity declarations, and all had plagiarism and malpractice policies and procedures as required by SQA.

Assessors and IVs undertake checks as an integral part of the assessment and quality assurance processes. All centres have staff and centre manuals that detail staff responsibilities. Candidates are provided with handbooks that contain details of their responsibilities and information on the course and assessment.

Some centres submitted details of referencing guidance provided to candidates, often as part of induction, and some provided paper or electronic guides.

Verification records include checks to ensure that the tutor and internal verifier have identified unit and assessment requirements. Some verification records included situations where plagiarism was identified and then dealt with in line with the centre policy. Some centres also provide examples of invigilation reports and other documents as further evidence that assessment conditions have been identified and applied.

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

Subject report criterion

Evidence included: Candidate work, IV records/minutes, assessor/IV reports, class results, assessor annotations and feedback.

All centres provided samples of candidate evidence as required by SQA for virtual verification events. The candidate responses included a range from excellent achievement to marginal work, and also included work judged to be insufficient in meeting the required standards. Redo and re-assessment work was submitted when appropriate.

Result lists provided details of candidates achieving or not achieving outcomes, the overall unit achievement and, in most cases indicated where redo and re-assessment had taken place. Most result records also identified the candidates whose work was submitted as evidence sent for verification.

The majority of the verification activity for VG 258 covered Economic Issues: An Introduction J461 47, a unit with a single ungraded examination assessment requiring a 50% cut off pass mark. Centres understood the unit requirements, but feedback indicated that the 90 minute time allowance to complete the examination was difficult for candidates in the first year of a course. This was passed back to SQA. Only a small number of events covered other VG258 units.

All units require an element of assessor judgement when making assessment decisions, and it is a strength where centres maintain a clear and comprehensive set of internal verification records that show a rationale for the decisions made. This is particularly important in the sampling record, where marginal work should contain a brief rationale explaining how the final assessment decisions were determined.

There were instances where such details were recorded, but most centres tended to record that assessment decisions were agreed by the IV without the detail explaining the basis on which marginal cases were decided.

Feedback to candidates about performance was mixed, with some really excellent examples, but it is an area where more centres could focus on providing a brief summary of the strengths and weaknesses exhibited in the candidate's work. Such feedback tended to be less common for candidates whose work was accepted as meeting the unit requirements, but was more commonly provided in guidance to candidates whose work required either redo or reassessment.

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

Generic report criterion

Evidence included: Retention and disposal policy, data handling and management policy, details of storage facilities, storage records and access records.

All centres provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that they have a policy for evidence retention that meets SQA's requirements. The range of evidence submitted varied with some centres providing more evidence and detail than others. The basic details tended to be the retention policy and a record of materials retained. Some centres went further and provided photographs of secure storage facilities, and some provided details of the responsibilities of staff, security/access measures and document disposal arrangements.

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

Generic report criterion

Evidence included: Course meeting minutes, communication flow charts, IV records and distribution records, records of staff discussing and acting upon QV feedback.

All centres managed to evidence the dissemination of qualification verification feedback. Some centres provided stronger evidence than others through the provision of a clear communication policy then followed up with supporting documents showing that the policy was being implemented.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

The following good practice was reported during session 2023–24:

- ◆ Criterion 2.1
 - Explanations of the benefits and implementation of learning gained from CPD events.
 - Excellent updating of subject knowledge.
- ◆ Criterion 2.4
 - A range of coherent evidence covering each element of the criterion.
- ◆ Criterion 3.2
 - Quality of induction and support services.
 - Quality study skills and mentoring support from peers.
 - Opportunity for candidate feedback and ideas for improvements.
- ◆ Criterion 3.3
 - Mentoring systems.
 - Individual/personal learning planning that encourages reflection, goal setting and engagement.
 - Support meetings with staff with tailored candidate support.
- ◆ Criterion 4.2
 - Assessor and IV summary reports containing analysis, evaluation and recommendations.
 - Standardisation and IV records and reports that evaluated and reflected upon delivery and assessment followed by actions to make improvements.
- ◆ Criterion 4.3
 - IV records containing excellent discussion relating to the assessments and their use.
 - Assessor/IV summary reports containing evaluative accounts of delivery and assessment of individual units that can inform future practice.

- ◆ Criterion 4.4
 - Use of a variety of checks including electronic plagiarism checks and questioning.
 - Maintaining sign in sheets and creating invigilator reports for the examination for Economic Issues J461 47.
 - Development of policies relating to Artificial Intelligence.
- ◆ Criterion 4.6
 - Concise relevant accounts within IV records explaining assessment decisions.
 - Excellent feedback to candidates to enable future improvement.
 - Cross marking/assessing to aid consistency in assessment.
- ◆ Criterion 4.9
 - Clear evidence in course records showing that QV feedback is received, disseminated and acted upon to help improve future practice.

Specific areas for development

The following area for development was reported during session 2023–24:

- ◆ Criterion 2.1
 - Participate in more external events.
 - Evidence submitted needs to support all criterion elements.
- ◆ Criterion 2.4
 - Evidence appeared disconnected and disjointed where centres did not provide details of their review policies.
 - Evidence submitted needs to support all criterion elements.
- ◆ Criterion 3.2
 - Better/explicit details of candidate induction.
 - A range of evidence to show how candidates are selected and supported throughout their studies.
- ◆ Criterion 3.3
 - Introducing personal tutor systems and mentoring schemes.
 - Better feedback on performance for all candidates including those achieving assessments.

- Language support throughout all years of the awards.
- ◆ Criterion 4.2
 - Explanations of judgements on marginal candidate performance to be recorded in the sampling record.
 - Greater reflection and suggestions for improvements.
 - Better use of external and internal feedback to action improvements in future delivery and assessment.
- ◆ Criterion 4.3
 - Better recording of discussions in meetings and records.
 - Assessor/IV summary reports.
 - Better use of external and internal feedback to action improvements in future delivery and assessment.
- ◆ Criterion 4.6
 - Better recording in IV records how marginal assessment decisions are determined.
 - Better/greater feedback to candidates including those achieving assessments to enable them to improve future performance.
- ◆ Criterion 4.7
 - Providing a detailed retention policy along with supporting evidence that shows clearly that the policy is being implemented.
- ◆ Criterion 4.9
 - Clear evidence that external and internal feedback is used to adjust and improve future delivery and assessment.