SQA Advanced Qualification (China)

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2024

English and Communication

Verification group number: 1

Introduction

During the academic year 2023 to 2024, there were 24 English and Communication qualification verification events at 22 SQA centres across China. All meetings were carried out virtually using MS Teams. The following units were selected for verification:

HR1C 46   Workplace Communication in English (12 events)
HP75 47   Communication: Business Communication (6 events)
J1NB 47   Research Skills (8 events)

Generally, the standard of work across centres in China continues to improve. Administratively, centres had robust internal verification policies which were well documented. Assessors worked hard to support learner achievement and progression.

It is important that centres who are performing well keep a focus on the cycle of quality improvement and continue to take actions to enhance assessment and verification processes. In the small number of cases where there were recurring issues, course teams should work together to eliminate weaknesses and develop good practices that will be beneficial to both staff and learners.

This QVSR report presents the main findings from 2023–24 external verification activity. Observations of good practice are highlighted and areas for improvement are noted for the consideration of all centres.

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.

In all centres verified, staff had appropriate qualifications and occupational experience to deliver these verification group 1 units. Almost all assessors and internal verifiers had records of meaningful and relevant in-house CPD. Some included evidence of relevant subject related reading and reviewing new resources.

However, in a small number of centres, there was an absence of subject-specific CPD being recorded. It is important that both the assessor and internal verifier include some CPD activities specific to their subject (business communication or research skills) to maintain currency and further enhance their academic knowledge.

Some assessors and internal verifiers are reflecting on their CPD and considering how they will make use of their new learning. The number of staff doing this is improving.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

In all centres there was clear evidence that assessors and internal verifiers were following their centres' assessment and verification procedures in line with SQA requirements. Almost all centres recorded this with detailed documentation such as minutes of course team meetings, pre-verification, during verification and post verification forms. Although this is improving year after year, a few centres still just provided minimal documentation making it difficult to see how staff had communicated and how standardisation was being achieved.

Many centres are now taking the time to complete end of unit reporting (Assessment Summary Reports, Course Review Reports or similarly titled documents) looking back on the academic year and commenting on key achievements and difficult issues such as the high number of learners needing a second or even third attempt at assessments. The number of centres carrying out this exercise is increasing. Some of these centres took the report to the next level and created detailed SMART actions for the year ahead. Most assessors and internal verifiers could be more evaluative and action focused when writing these reports. Close analysis of specific issues can lead to focused actions which could improve results in future. All centres are encouraged to carry out evaluative end of unit reporting if they are not already doing so.

Some centres continued to ignore external verifier report recommendations from the previous year, leading to the same issues being highlighted in external verification reports, year after year. In one centre, recommendations from Workplace Communication in English were viewed in isolation and not shared with assessors and internal verifiers of Business Communication. Sharing information, helps to ensure high levels of standardisation are assured for the forthcoming academic session. It also fosters a collegiate approach to the learning, teaching and assessment strategy moving forward in a supportive way.

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

All centres selected appropriate instruments of assessments for all units. Most centres continued to rely on SQA ASPs and used them well. The revised ASPs for Workplace Communication in English and Business Communication, introduced in 2022, are now being used by many for assessment and/or re-assessment. Some centres are using

their own assessments which have been submitted for prior verification and are specifically tailored to the needs of their learners.

Some centres did not include SQA word counts on assessment task instructions, perhaps contributing to reports and research investigations which were much longer than the required number of words. This creates extra work for learners and in turn, additional marking for assessors.

The following unit specific issues were noted.

Workplace Communication in English and Business Communication
One centre referred to pass mark percentages within assessment instructions. This is not valid assessment practice for Communication and Research Skills units.

Some centres alternated Outcome 1 assessments from year to year to ensure there would be no collusion between learners from one year to the next.

Research skills
Of the centres verified this year, most delivered and assessed Research Skills as a stand-alone unit. Very few chose to integrate it with the Graded Unit.

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

Almost all assessment decisions were accurate and there was ample evidence of consistent judgements by assessors and internal verifiers, which were well documented on assessment checklists and in detailed internal verification records. This has improved since the previous QVSR.

In some centres, assessors provided minimal feedback to candidates on assessment checklists. Candidates must be given detailed guidance on what is required for redo or re-work to improve their assessments to achieve a pass.

The following unit specific issues were noted.

Workplace Communication in English and Business Communication
Outcome 1
Assessment judgements for Outcome 1 were accurate and consistent in all centres. This is a considerable improvement. Though one centre used an assessment checklist which did not accurately match SQA evidence requirements.

Outcome 2

In some centres, candidates had not been asked to write their word counts on written assessment submissions, which made it difficult to judge whether candidates had met the minimum word counts.

Outcome 3

Almost all centres provided sample video evidence for Outcome 3. The quality of the recordings of the oral presentations is improving year on year. A small number of centres used video recording apps which provided a visual transcript which viewers can follow as learners delivers their presentations.

In one centre, candidates dressed and acted formally for their Business Communication Outcome 3 business meetings. This was seen as good practice, as the learning developed within the unit is intended to mirror skills necessary for success within a business environment.

In some centres, large numbers of candidates in the Outcome 3 meetings, meant that the meetings were very long and learners sometimes lost concentration during the event. Meetings should be in smaller groups which will make them more manageable for recording and video file handling. It also helps learners to be able to focus their attention for a shorter period.

In one centre, video footage showed candidates delivering solo presentations which were much longer than the required minimum.

On some occasions, external verifiers found it difficult to match assessment checklists to the evidence in video recordings.

In some centres, there were concerns over learners using scripts and reading their presentations. Candidates' note cards should be submitted as assessment evidence to ensure that they are notes and not scripts.

In one centre, the seating arrangement for group discussions was unhelpful with learners sitting in rows. They should sit around a table to discuss their findings as this would better demonstrate interaction between learners and provide a more relaxed and realistic experience of a meeting.

Research skills

In most centres, EVs noted that learners demonstrated a high level of engagement in the research process.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

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

♦ Reflection on CPD and staff, considering how they will make use of their new learning.
♦ The creation of detailed SMART actions as part of end of unit reporting.
♦ Sharing information from one EV report with other staff in the same verification group to ensure high levels of standardisation.
♦ Submitting centre-devised assessments for prior verification, specifically tailored to learners' needs.
♦ Alternating Outcome 1 reading assessments from year to year for Workplace Communication in English and Business Communication.
♦ Video recording apps which provided a visual transcript.
♦ Learners dressing formally for their Business Communication Outcome 3 meetings.

Specific areas for development

The following areas for development were reported during session 2023–24:

♦ Some subject specific CPD to be recorded each year to maintain currency and enhancement of academic knowledge.
♦ Provision of detailed internal verification documentation to demonstrate how standardisation is achieved.
♦ Evaluative end of unit reporting to create action plans for improvement.
♦ IV records should show where external verifier report recommendations have been considered.
♦ SQA word counts and speaking times should be included on assessment task instructions.
♦ Feedback to learners on assessment checklists should be meaningful.
♦ Learners should write their word counts on written assessment submissions.
♦ Learners delivering solo presentations should not over-exceed the given times.
♦ Sample video recordings of learner meetings and presentations are necessary to ensure assessment decisions can be independently verified.
♦ Assessors should deter learners from reading scripted presentations.