



Guide to Qualification Verification for Centres in China

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Part A

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance has been developed to support staff in SQA-approved centres in China through the qualification verification process.

Qualification verification is the process by which SQA ensures that centres are assessing their candidates in line with SQA qualification standards and that assessment decisions comply with SQA's Quality Assurance (QA) Criteria. Qualification verification is undertaken by Qualification Verifiers, referred to in this guidance as External Verifiers. Please see the process map (attached at Appendix 1) for a high-level look at the QA process for centres.

External Verifiers are experienced subject experts who are appointed by SQA to undertake qualification verification on SQA's behalf.

- 1.2 Systems verification is the process by which SQA ensures centres are managing their systems and resources to meet SQA's Quality Assurance Criteria. SQA's Quality Assurance Criteria cover both qualification and systems verification.

Where there are gaps in the numbering of qualifications criteria in this document, this is because systems verification criteria have been excluded. A separate guide to systems criteria is available, and you can find the full criteria in the quality assurance section of SQA's website for China: <http://cn.sqa.org.uk>

- 1.3 Part B provides specific guidance in relation to each quality assurance criterion for qualification verification, including:

- ◆ the reason the quality criterion is included in qualification verification
- ◆ specific SQA requirements for the criterion
- ◆ examples of types of evidence
- ◆ additional sources of information and guidance available from SQA

Our External Verifiers will work from exactly the same guidance.

2 SQA's values

SQA's corporate values are:

- ◆ **Trusted** — We follow agreed procedures and are open and honest in our communications
- ◆ **Progressive** — We view new and unfamiliar approaches with an open mind, whilst ensuring quality is maintained

- ◆ **Enabling** — We work in partnership with SQA centres to achieve common goals of excellence and consistency

You can expect that External Verifiers will act in accordance with these values at all times in their dealings with you.

3 Verification planning and selections: update for 2018

SQA has introduced significant changes to verification planning and selections in China for session 2018–19. This is as a result of feedback from you and our ongoing evaluation of how we deliver QA activity for our centres in China. The most important points to note are:

- ◆ A new feature of the 2018–19 verification activity is the verification of evidence by group award. This means that candidate samples will be linked to group awards.
- ◆ There is a new spreadsheet template for gathering your delivery information. You will provide information about the units you are offering within each group award, and about your evidence availability.
- ◆ Where the outcome of the unit verified is not compliant, a wider sample of candidates, across alternative group awards may be requested.
- ◆ You will receive a personalised timetable of annual verification activity giving you an overview of each planned qualification verification activity (see [Appendix 2](#)).
- ◆ We will be selecting group awards to be verified, and then selecting units for verification within these group awards.
- ◆ While the Quality Assurance Criteria are not changing, they will now be split and verified in different ways. The criteria relating to the implementation of processes across a whole group award will be considered separately – for ease of reference, the term “generic criteria” will be used to describe these criteria throughout this document (see [Appendix 3](#) for the split of the criteria).
- ◆ The documentary evidence will be asked for only once for each group award and unit selected and one external verifier will review this evidence and decide on the outcomes.
- ◆ You will have a dedicated QA Logistics Officer to assist you through the full Quality Assurance process.
- ◆ Electronic evidence, where requested, will require to be uploaded to SharePoint (which is a cloud based system) instead of the China mailbox.
- ◆ This year, we will provide some additional support during our visiting verification activity — your QA Logistics Officer will discuss this with you in greater detail when planning the visit.

New centres will have qualification verification activity within the first year after gaining approval to offer a qualification, if you have registered candidates undertaking studies. Thereafter, the visits will be scheduled according to the level of need established from previous verification activity.

Once you have returned your planning template, which provides SQA with evidence availability for each unit and the group award they relate to, SQA will determine which group awards will be selected for verification activity.

Your QA Logistics Officer will then use this information to complete the annual timetable of qualification activity for your centre. Your QA Logistics Officer will work closely with you to agree the dates detailed on the verification timetable and ensure that evidence is available. Once this is confirmed, your QA Logistics Officer will produce a final schedule of activity which you can use as a handy reference guide for all the planned verification activity.

4 Generic criteria

- 4.1 In an effort to ensure that certain criteria are standardised across each group award, verification on some criteria will be requested at the start of session. This generic criteria verification will be undertaken remotely (see next section, 5.1 '[Remote verification](#)') by an External Verifier, who will review all evidence and write a report based on their findings across the full group award. You can find the generic criteria in Appendix 3.
- 4.2 Centres must upload their documentary evidence to SharePoint by the date agreed with your QA Logistics Officer on your individual timetable (see Appendix 2).
- 4.3 Once they have reviewed your evidence against the criteria, the External Verifier will detail your outcome in your generic report (see section 13, '[The Report on the Verification Activity](#)'). This report and evidence will be retained on SharePoint. This allows the report decision and any actions to be reviewed as part of further verification activity held over the group award.

5 Modes of verification

5.1 Remote verification

General information on remote verification

Remote verification is the term given to describe any verification activity that takes place in a location other than the centre. Before remote verification activity takes place, the QA Logistics Officer will confirm with the centre's SQA Co-ordinator:

- ◆ The remote verification quality assurance criteria that are to be verified.
- ◆ The group award and the units to be verified.
- ◆ The date when evidence will be uploaded to SharePoint.

This will be shared with the centre via the Verification Timetable (see [Appendix 2](#)), which will be e-mailed to you by the QA Logistics Officer at the start of the session.

Generic criteria verification and central verification activity all come under the 'remote verification' banner.

5.2 Central verification

Central verification is currently used for verification of Graded units of Higher National Qualifications. It may also be used to verify other Higher National Units. Unlike in previous years where central verification took place in May and July, this activity will now be included in your annual timetable and will take place in line with your evidence availability.

Central verification activity is planned in the same way as remote verification activity, by your QA Logistics Officer, who will provide you with:

- ◆ The details of the evidence that must be submitted.
- ◆ Central verification quality assurance criteria (see [Appendix 3](#)).
- ◆ A blank Verification Sample Form (to be printed and completed by the centre for each unit selected for verification).

5.3 Visiting verification

SQA may determine that the appropriate mode of verification is a visit to your centre. This means that an SQA External Verifier will visit your centre to review the units in the group award that has been selected for verification. They will also provide you with tailored support.

Before the visit, your QA Logistics Officer will liaise with your SQA Co-ordinator to help you prepare for the verification visit. An element of visiting verification will focus on some additional support that you may require. Participating fully in these development sessions will be of benefit to your centre. This is your opportunity to ask questions and get guidance on anything you may be struggling with.

Areas to be discussed will be identified by the QA Logistics Officer after discussion with yourself, but could include:

- ◆ Help with a prior verification issue.
- ◆ Support with an outstanding agreed action.
- ◆ Follow up from remote verification issues.
- ◆ Delivery or assessment issues.

Once any additional support requirements are agreed, your QA Logistics Officer will confirm the following points with your SQA Coordinator;

- ◆ The assessment location to be visited.
- ◆ The planned date of the visit.
- ◆ Final group award and unit selections for verification.

- ◆ A draft agenda for the visit for your input — so you can highlight support and development areas that you would like to discuss with the External Verifier.
- ◆ Visiting verification quality assurance criteria (see [Appendix 3](#)).

Before the visit, you will receive a Qualifications Verification Visit Plan detailing the date and time of the visit, the units in the group award to be verified, and a list of the candidates selected for verification.

Two to four weeks before the visit, the QA Logistics Officer will be in touch to discuss any development needs that you would like some support with during the visit. This could be anything from issues with prior verification for awards, follow up from remote verification, issues with achieving actions, or queries about delivery or assessment.

6 Samples and evidence for verification

The general purpose of qualification verification sampling is to confirm that centres are interpreting standards correctly and that they have in place internal verification and assessment systems that allow valid, reliable and fair assessment decisions to be made. Sampling of an appropriate range of assessment and verification decisions is an important part of ensuring quality.

A new feature of the 2018–19 verification activity is the verification of evidence by group award. This means that candidate samples will be linked to group awards. Where the outcome of the unit verified is not compliant, a wider sample of candidates, across alternative frameworks may be requested.

For remote verification activity (including verification of generic criteria) and central verification we require evidence to be uploaded to your SharePoint site. This will make it easier and more efficient for the centre, the External Verifiers and QA Logistics Officers to upload and download evidence appropriately.

6.3 Sampling of incomplete unit evidence

SQA's guidance states that there should be enough evidence available to enable the External Verifier to make an informed decision and for centres to gain enough valuable feedback on the assessment of the Outcomes.

This means that your centre does not have to have completed units, although some completed units are desirable as part of the sampling mix. The unit should be a minimum of 50% complete before being verified to enable the External Verifier to make an informed judgement. In many cases, it is most appropriate to sample completed units — for example, where the assessment is an end of unit examination.

6.4 Evidence of internal verification

The External Verifier will look at evidence of internal verification activities in all of the three phases of verification described below. The types of evidence expected against the criteria relating to internal verification are detailed in [Part B](#).

6.5 Three phases of internal verification

SQA promotes a three-phase model of internal verification, which means that there are a number of opportunities to sample different aspects of the verification process on each visit. Those phases are:

- ◆ before assessment
- ◆ during assessment
- ◆ after assessment

6.5.1 **Before assessment** — this would include checking/agreeing the interpretation of assessment materials, and requirements; agreeing how assessment should proceed; and checking that resources are up to date and sufficient.

You should refer to the secure site for centres in china <http://cn.sqa.org.uk/login.html> for SQA assessment exemplars.

Even if an assessment exemplar is provided by SQA, you should check that it is still valid and that your assessors and internal verifiers agree on how to use it.

This must happen for new awards, and you should also review assessments before a new qualification block/semester runs.

6.5.2 **During assessment** — this can be further categorised into ongoing and final verification.

Ongoing verification informs the internal verifier as to the quality of assessment being carried out and helps identify where additional support for assessors may be required.

This phase is especially important where new units are being offered and/or where assessors are assessing units for the first time.

Final verification is checking the quality of final assessment decisions on completed outcomes/units.

6.5.3 **After assessment** — this covers the review and evaluation of the overall assessment process, with a view to continuous improvement in relation to qualifications and units. This will normally involve the review of previous assessment and verification decisions, processes, practices and resources. Reviews will normally take account of views from verifiers (internal and external) and candidates.

7 Retaining candidates' evidence for sampling

- 7.1 Our requirement to retain candidates' evidence provides External Verifiers with an opportunity to sample a centre's past completed assessment evidence. This helps where there is no ongoing assessment evidence (or limited availability).
- 7.2 SQA requires centres to retain all candidate evidence for the units until at least three weeks after the official completion date (the completion date provided by the centre to SQA).

All candidate evidence must be retained after verification planning begins, and until any required actions are fully completed and closed off.

8 Documentary evidence

- 8.1 The External Verifier will look at documentary evidence during the visit/remote verification. Details of the types of evidence expected for each quality assurance criterion are given in Part B of this guide.

[Appendix 3](#) provides details of the criteria which will be covered in central verification and the documentary evidence which must be sent.

- 8.2 Evidence should be uploaded to SharePoint.
- 8.3 All documents for qualification verification must be in English.

9 Carrying out visiting verification activity

- 9.1 At the beginning of a visit the External Verifier will discuss and agree with you the schedule. This also gives you an opportunity to discuss any issues you might have prior to the verification visit getting underway and to explain the arrangements you have put in place in relation to:
- ◆ Access to documents — procedures and records of implementation.
 - ◆ The sampling of assessment evidence — accessibility and location (rooms where the External Verifiers can work privately).
 - ◆ Decisions of assessors and verifiers (to be sampled alongside evidence).
 - ◆ Availability of assessors, internal verifiers and candidates for interview.
 - ◆ Domestic arrangements — location of fire exits and toilets, lunch arrangements (working lunches only), how to contact the SQA Co-ordinator.
 - ◆ Who will be available at the end of the visit for feedback.

There may be more than one External Verifier visiting on the same day, so you may need to agree several schedules and consider where there will be joint activities — for

example, you may agree a joint feedback session or make one copy of common documentary evidence available to all the External Verifiers.

10 Interviews with assessors/verifiers/candidates during External Verifier visits

10.1 Interviews with assessors and verifiers give the External Verifier a valuable insight into how assessment and verification takes place and allows them an opportunity to find out information that can't readily be found from looking at records of evidence and assessment.

It is important that you ensure that assessors and internal verifiers are available to be interviewed on the day of the External Verifier visit.

If assessor and internal verifiers cannot be available in your centre, they could be contacted by telephone or using other technology such as Skype.

10.2 Example areas for discussion with assessors and internal verifiers:

- ◆ internal verification
- ◆ how assessors are supported, eg support from internal verifiers
- ◆ how standardisation is achieved
- ◆ maintaining up-to-date subject knowledge through continuing professional development
- ◆ candidate induction
- ◆ ensuring access to assessment
- ◆ how the review process works

10.3 Interviewing candidates, individually or in groups, is valuable from the point of view of the External Verifier finding out about the support they receive and how procedures are applied from their point of view.

10.4 Example areas for discussion with candidates:

- ◆ how often they have contact with their assessor
- ◆ induction to the group award and units
- ◆ support and guidance provided to them
- ◆ communication by assessors of their progress and achievement
- ◆ feedback by assessors to candidates on their assessments (written)

11 Electronically recorded evidence

11.1 Candidate evidence that has been recorded electronically (computer files, e-mail etc) must be subject to the same levels of security and access as hard-copy evidence. This

helps ensure, but does not guarantee, that the evidence submitted remains the candidate's own work.

- 11.2 In all circumstances, where electronic evidence is being used, centres must ensure that the evidence submitted by candidates:
- ◆ is received securely by the designated centre staff
 - ◆ cannot be altered by others — candidates must be able to protect/lock their evidence before they submit it
 - ◆ is stored securely in a restricted access file throughout assessment and until the completion of the assessment and quality assurance processes
- 11.3 Assessors and verifiers must be able to record that they have confirmed assessment/verification decisions.
- 11.4 If you can demonstrate the above requirements in your electronic system, External Verifiers should not require you to print off hard copies of assessment/verification records.
- 11.5 Remote and/or central verification activity has been requested and evidence should be submitted to the China SharePoint site. It is essential that you submit the files to SharePoint in line with the guidance format to allow External Verifiers to have easy accessibility of the evidence, i.e. one candidate portfolio of evidence to one file.

12 Feedback on the verification activity

For remote/central verification

Once the External Verifier has conducted all planned verification activities they will be in a position to make a judgement against each criterion. You will receive a report from your QA Logistics Officer which details:

- ◆ the identification of good practice
- ◆ recommendations
- ◆ required action points
- ◆ the sufficiency of evidence

For visiting verification

The External Verifier will provide verbal feedback at the end of the visit to the SQA Co-ordinator and/or any other staff you choose to have present. You should ensure that this takes place in a private, quiet area. This will be followed up within one week by a written report. There should be nothing in the final written report that you were not made aware of on the day of the visit.

13 The report on the verification activity

Please see Appendix 4 for a breakdown of reporting against each group award selected.

The report will include a rating for every criterion:

Green: Sufficient evidence — this means that the centre has provided evidence that fully meets the criterion (no required action points, but there may be recommendations)

Amber: Insufficient evidence — this means the centre can provide some evidence in support of the criterion, but it is not sufficient (required action points will be set and there may also be some recommendations)

Red: Little or no evidence — this means that either no evidence has been presented or that the evidence provided by the centre falls well short of meeting the criterion (required action points will be set and there may also be some recommendations).

- 13.1 Some criteria have specific requirements which must be satisfied to fully meet the criterion. If any of these requirements are not addressed, the rating for the criterion will be amber or red, and required actions will be set. If no specific requirements are stated, the wording of the criterion provides all the necessary information.
- 13.2 The criteria have different impact levels, which are shown against every criterion in Part B.
- 13.3 Having made a decision in relation to each criterion, the External Verifier will explain their decision to you along with the rationale for making it.

They will also tell you the confidence statement for each of the three categories of qualification verification quality assurance criteria, based on the evidence available. This will be one of the following statements:

- ◆ High level of confidence
- ◆ Broad confidence
- ◆ Reasonable confidence
- ◆ Minimal confidence
- ◆ No confidence

SQA reserves the right to change the rating for a criterion if the decision of the External Verifier is overturned through the standardisation process.

- 13.4 For the purposes of qualification verification, we define good practice as effective practice within an organisation that is over and above expected practice and may demonstrate a particularly creative approach.
- 13.5 Recommendations are made so that a centre may enhance their existing provision. They are not mandatory and you do not need to act upon them. However, you are

strongly advised to discuss these with your course team and consider whether to act on them.

Required action points must be acted upon and are given when a judgement has been made that there is either insufficient evidence, little evidence or no evidence (amber or red).

- 13.6 Where the verification decisions from a visit result in your centre being given a required action for a specific criterion, the required action should be communicated to you by the External Verifier (EV) verbally and in writing. This will be done using a Summary of Agreed Actions Form for each criterion. The form should be signed by your SQA Co-ordinator or centre representative and the EV before the end of the visit. A copy of the Summary of Agreed Actions Form will be given to the SQA Co-ordinator or their representative and a copy will be held by the External Verifier.

The report should reflect the information that was communicated to you in verbal feedback.

The comments section relating to each criterion should include comments on the sources of evidence seen by EV to justify their verification decision.

The actions should also be clear and specific, with an agreed date for achievement.

- 13.7 As verification will cover units linked to group awards, candidate samples will also reflect this. Where the outcome of the unit verified is not compliant, you may be selected for a wider sample of candidates over the unit, across alternative frameworks. Notification of this will be sent to you via your QA Logistics officer and an EV will be assigned to undertake further verification.

14 Reports from remote and central verification

Where the verification decisions from remote or central verification result in your centre being given a required action in relation to a specific criterion, the required action will be communicated to you in the Qualification Verification Report.

The comments section relating to each criterion should include comments on the sources of evidence seen by the External Verifier to justify their verification decision.

The actions should also be clear and specific, with an agreed date for achievement

- 14.1 If required actions are set as a result of SQA qualification verification, an agreed timescale will be set for addressing these. Sanctions may be applied if you do not fully meet the action points within this timescale.

Where required actions have been identified, any sanctions in addition to an action plan will be discussed and standardised by QA Logistics Officers within SQA and advised to the centre in the report.

You should submit completed evidence for each required action point by the required date to SharePoint rather than to the External Verifier. This ensures that required actions can be tracked by SQA.

The evidence must be in electronic form, and should be in a format which is clear for the External Verifier to review.

Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, which should be notified to SQA as soon as they are known. Risk ratings may be increased and sanctions applied if you do not submit evidence by the agreed date.

If you submit incomplete or insufficient evidence to fully meet the required actions, you may be given another opportunity to submit. Again, risk ratings may be increased and sanctions applied if you do not submit evidence which fully addresses the required actions.

SQA will notify you of any further action required, or to confirm that the action point has been fully met by the evidence submitted and closed off.

- 14.2 You should contact your QA Logistics Officer if you want to query anything in the report.

15 Appeals

- 15.1 If you disagree with SQA's decision on the outcome of qualification verification, required actions and/or sanctions placed as a result, you can appeal.
- 15.2 Appeals may only be submitted by the head of centre, or his/her representative, who should first contact the Head of HN/Vocational Qualifications, within 10 working days of receipt of the written report to agree a time to discuss the matter. If, after this discussion, the head of centre is not satisfied, an appeal can be raised.
- 15.3 The appeal should be submitted to the Director of Operations at the Corporate Office at SQA's Glasgow office. It should be submitted in writing, clearly marked as an appeal, by the head of centre within 15 working days of the date of the discussion with the SQA manager.
- 15.4 The appeal must include a written account of why the head of centre thinks that SQA's decision is wrong, and this account must address the reasons given by SQA. The evidence which is submitted in support of the appeal must be relevant to the case being made.
- 15.5 See the SQA publication *Appeals Procedures* on the China website.

16 Sources of support

| Source of support | Nature of support |
|---|--|
| <p>China Verification E-mail: china.verification@sqa.org.uk Please include the name of your QA Logistics Officer within the subject line</p> | <p>Each centre will have a dedicated QA Logistics Officer who can provide support in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Receiving prior verification requests. ◆ Verification scheduling, timetabling and logistics. ◆ Issuing reports and receiving, logging, tracking evidence to address required action points. ◆ Dealing with quality assurance queries relating to verification activity. |
| <p>China Country Manager E-mail: Jimmy.Zhang@sqa.org.uk</p> | <p>First point of contact for specific centre queries</p> |
| <p>QA Logistics Team Manager E-mail: Juliette.McGinley@sqa.org.uk</p> | <p>Escalation of any issues or feedback on External Verifier or QA Logistics Officer.</p> |

Part B: Quality assurance criteria

| Category 2: Resource Management | |
|---|---|
| The centre procedures for managing resources must be documented, implemented and monitored to meet SQA requirements. | |
| Criterion 2.1 | Assessors and internal verifiers must be competent to assess and internally verify, in line with the requirements of the qualification. |
| Specific requirements | <p>Assessors and internal verifiers must have the required up-to-date occupational experience and/or subject understanding. In some cases, specific qualifications will be required.</p> <p>Assessors and internal verifiers must undertake relevant continuing professional development activities and keep records of this.</p> |
| Impact rating | High |
| Why is this included? | To ensure the validity and integrity of the qualifications offered by SQA, it is important that assessors/internal verifiers have the appropriate qualifications and occupational competence in relation to the qualifications they are assessing/verifying. |
| Support information | |
| Guidance on evidencing the criterion | This SQA quality assurance criterion will also be covered during systems verification, where policies and procedures will be checked. |
| Examples of evidence | <p>Where a qualification requirement, records of relevant occupational/subject experience and qualifications, which must be in English or be accompanied by an English transcript.</p> <p>Records of continuing professional development, also in English.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| Criterion 2.4 | There must be evidence of initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials. |
| Specific requirements | Initial reviews must take place before the assessment of a qualification(s) begins to ensure all of the appropriate resources are in place. Ongoing reviews of resources are required thereafter to ensure resources continue to meet qualification requirements. |
| Impact rating | High |
| Why is this included? | Reviews are firstly important in ensuring resources appropriately meet qualification requirements. On a second level, reviews can aid quality improvement. |
| Support information | |
| Guidance on evidencing the criterion | <p>The scheduling and carrying out of reviews is part of a centre's procedures, ensuring resources are checked ahead of assessment and reflected upon at appropriate points thereafter for quality improvement purposes.</p> <p>Centres will differ in terms of how and when they schedule reviews. This may happen every time a new cohort of candidates commence and/or complete a specific programme.</p> <p>Reviews of resources will also be triggered by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ changes to the qualifications being offered where resources will be required to support the introduction of new or revised units <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ feedback highlighting the need for updating resources, which may come from internal comments or reviews/IV or external quality assurance visits. <p>Systems Verifiers will look at the procedures and mechanisms for managing reviews, encompassing the type of arrangements described above. This will be checked under a separate criterion (2.3). It is the External Verifier's role to look at the evidence of systematic review taking place.</p> <p>As part of the review process, centres should ensure that all candidates undertaking an SQA qualification have equal access to available resources across all assessment sites.</p> |
| Examples of evidence | <p>Evidence of initial and ongoing reviews which could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ policy and procedures for conducting reviews |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ dates of planned and completed reviews ◆ records of reviews and their outcomes ◆ examples of quality improvements made as a result of review ◆ pre-delivery/assessment checks ◆ Course/programme reviews, action logs, minutes of meetings with review as a discussion items ◆ Site checklists, or equivalent documents, may be considered as evidence of initial and on-going reviews of other campuses |
| <p>Additional sources of information</p> | <p>Review is mentioned in the first and second phases of the ‘three phases of internal verification’ in Part A of this guidance (section 6.5).</p> <p>There is an Internal Verification Toolkit on the QA page of SQA’s website.</p> |

| Category 3: Candidate support Candidates are supported and guided through the qualifications for which they are entered. | |
|---|--|
| Criterion 3.2 | Candidates' development needs and prior achievements (where appropriate) must be matched against the requirements of the award. |
| Specific requirements | In terms of prior achievement, candidates must meet any entry requirements set by the awarding body or the approved centre and be in a position to be assessed in accordance with the relevant unit specification, course tutor handbook, group award strategy document. |
| Impact rating | Medium |
| Why is this included? | Identifying development needs and prior achievement helps ensure a more targeted approach is taken in helping candidates achieve their qualifications. |
| Support information | |
| Guidance on evidencing the criterion | <p>This criterion relates to identifying the prior achievements and development needs of candidates before or at the start of their units/qualification, and matching candidate needs against qualification requirements.</p> <p>Prior achievements may include previously gained experience, knowledge and skills or qualifications.</p> <p>Identifying prior achievement at the beginning stage helps ensure that candidates satisfy any qualification entry requirements.</p> <p>The matching of needs, based on the knowledge/skills candidates already have, allows the centre to establish whether the qualification the candidate is aiming for is at an appropriate level and likely to be achievable.</p> |
| Examples of evidence | Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plans, Individual Learning Plans, Progress Reviews. |
| Additional sources of information | The Guide to Assessment provides more information on formative assessment which is related to candidate development needs. |

| | |
|---|--|
| Criterion 3.3 | Candidates must have scheduled contact with their assessor to review their progress and to revise their assessment plans accordingly. |
| Impact rating | Medium |
| Why is this included? | It is important that assessors maintain regular contact with candidates throughout the life of their qualification so that progression can be monitored and timely information and effective support can be provided. |
| Support information | |
| Guidance on evidencing the criterion | <p>Centres may use other terms for assessment plans, such as 'assessment schedules' or 'learning, teaching and assessment plans'.</p> <p>Maintaining contact is a key assessor responsibility, the purpose being to review candidates' achievement in relation to where they are in the assessment process. This could be in relation to outcomes/units or in relation to the overall qualification.</p> <p>Contact should ensure candidates are clear in terms of their progress and where they are in the assessment process, and what will be happening next. This is a two-way process between the assessor and the candidate.</p> |
| Examples of evidence | Any relevant documentation that shows progress reviews have taken place, such as records of individual tutorial sessions, assessment plans, assessment schedules, learning, teaching and assessment plans, progress reviews. |

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

The centre's internal assessment and verification procedures must be documented, implemented and monitored to meet qualification and SQA requirements.

| | |
|---|---|
| Criterion 4.2 | Internal assessment and verification procedures must be implemented to ensure standardisation of assessment. |
| Impact rating | Medium |
| Why is this included? | This criterion is about assessors and verifiers applying their centre's assessment and verification procedures consistently, in full and effectively. |
| Support information | |
| Guidance on evidencing the criterion | <p>The External Verifier will sample a range of assessment practice in relation to documented assessment procedures to measure consistency.</p> <p>The term 'assessment procedure' covers the assessment cycle and generally includes assessment planning/scheduling, judging evidence, re-assessment, recording assessment decisions, giving feedback, review.</p> <p>The term 'verification procedure' generally includes planning, sampling, making verification decisions, review.</p> <p>Centres are required to document their assessment and verification policies and procedures. Systems verifiers will look at these written policies and procedures and whether they meet SQA requirements.</p> <p>The role of the External Verifier is to focus on the centre's implementation of these policies/procedures. However, if the External Verifier identifies any concerns about the content of a centre's assessment/ IV policies or procedures, they will flag this up in their report so that the issue can be referred to a systems verifier to follow-up.</p> <p>There are some assessment procedures that are specific to particular qualifications. They are covered under 'Conditions of assessment' under Criterion 4.4. The centre should ensure that any queries are raised with SQA and resolved.</p> |

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| Examples of evidence | Records showing assessors/verifiers consistently follow their centre's assessment/verification procedures. |
| Additional sources of information | <p>Refer to guidance in Criterion 4.6 regarding SQA's three stages of internal verification.</p> <p>The following documents are also useful reference documents:</p> <p>Guide to Assessment includes guidance on the assessment process for SQA units</p> <p>SQA's Internal Verification: A Guide for Centres offering SQA Qualifications.</p> <p>Internal Verification Toolkit on the QA page of SQA's website</p> |

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| Criterion 4.3 | Assessment instruments and methods and their selection and use must be valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair. |
| Specific requirements | <p>This criterion requires assessment instruments/methods to be appropriately selected (before assessment), and used (during assessment).</p> <p>All instruments/methods selected and used must meet the quality assurance principles of validity and reliability, etc. The abbreviated meanings of the quality assurance principles are:</p> <p>Valid — Appropriate assessment methods/ instruments have been applied.</p> <p>Reliable — Clearly-defined standards of performance were used during assessment.</p> <p>Equitable — Assessment is accessible to all candidates who have the potential to be successful in it.</p> <p>Fair — Assessments have been objectively devised/selected and are free from barriers to achievement. Assessment practice must ensure all candidates have equal opportunities to succeed.</p> <p>Practicable — Assessments have been carried out efficiently and effectively.</p> <p>The above principles are described in full in SQA's Guide to Assessment. See the link in 'Additional sources of information'.</p> <p>To support validity in assessment, centres must ensure access to the secure area of SQA's China website remains restricted to approved personnel only. SQA or centre-devised assessments must be securely stored.</p> |
| Impact rating | High |
| Why is this included? | This criterion is about how a centre demonstrates its selection and use of assessment methods/instruments to ensure validity, reliability, equitability and fairness in assessment. |
| Support information | |
| Guidance on evidencing the criterion | For HN qualifications, assessment methods are the basis on which instruments of assessment are chosen. Some HN assessments are devised by SQA — all centres have access to these on the |

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| | <p>secure section of SQA's China website under 'Assessment Exemplars/ Assessment Support Packs'.</p> <p>The centre may choose to use SQA's assessments or use their own. Where centres use their own, these should be submitted to SQA for prior verification. Refer to 'Additional sources of information'.</p> <p>Selection: regardless of whether assessments are SQA-devised or centre-devised, they should be subject to the centre's system of internal verification before qualifications are delivered.</p> <p>Assessments must be selected and used in a way that ensures they are a true measure of the candidate's skills and/or knowledge. This helps give assessment its validity and reliability. The centre's standardisation arrangements can support these assessment principles very well by ensuring at the outset, and on an ongoing basis, assessors/verifiers have a common understanding of how assessments are to be applied.</p> <p>The approaches to assessment used should not impose any unnecessary barriers to individual candidates undertaking the assessments, and appropriate adjustments should be made, where this can be done without affecting the integrity of the assessment.</p> <p>Refer to 'Assessment Arrangements' link in 'Additional sources of information'.</p> |
| Examples of evidence | Documented evidence of methods/instruments having been selected and applied. |
| Additional sources of information | <p>SQA's Guide to Assessment includes more detailed information on the principles of assessment and selecting and using suitable methods and assessments.</p> <p>For information on Prior Verification: https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/74665.6214.html</p> <p>The selection of assessment methods/instruments forms part of first phase of the 'three phases of internal verification' in Part A of this guidance (section 6.5).</p> <p>SQA Assessment Arrangements</p> |

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| Criterion 4.4 | Assessment evidence must be the candidate's own work, generated under SQA's required conditions. |
| Specific requirements | Centres must ensure that the evidence on which the assessment decision is made solely belongs to the candidate under assessment. Assessors are only able to make accurate assessment decisions, if this is the case. |
| Impact rating | High |
| Why is this included? | Determining the authenticity of each candidate's work is of prime importance in ensuring the integrity of their achievement. |
| Support information | |
| Guidance on evidencing the criterion | <p>Ensuring only the work of each submitting candidate is considered for assessment is a key centre responsibility.</p> <p>Candidates should be informed of the requirement to provide only authentic evidence. The responsibility for providing this information could involve one or more people/departments.</p> <p>Evidence generated by candidates not directly authenticated through for example direct assessor observation, should be subject to proportional authenticity checks, which may comprise comparison checks against previous submissions or questioning. Many centres use plagiarism detection software.</p> <p>Specific qualification arrangements/conditions are included in unit specifications or group award strategy documents. Course tutor guides should detail the conditions of assessment.</p> <p>For HNs they might be supervised assessment, invigilated and other examination conditions such as open-book or closed-book assessment.</p> <p>Assessors/verifiers should apply their centre's policy and procedures if they suspect or discover evidence that is not authentic. If malpractice is suspected, the centre should take the necessary steps to resolve the situation. System verifiers look at these policies/procedures when they carry out centre visits. Malpractice includes plagiarism, copying and personation.</p> |
| Examples of evidence | Evidence of assessors and/or internal verifiers confirming candidates work is authentic, induction checklists, checks on assessment conditions, use of plagiarism software' |

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| Additional sources of information | Malpractice in Internally-Assessed Qualifications |
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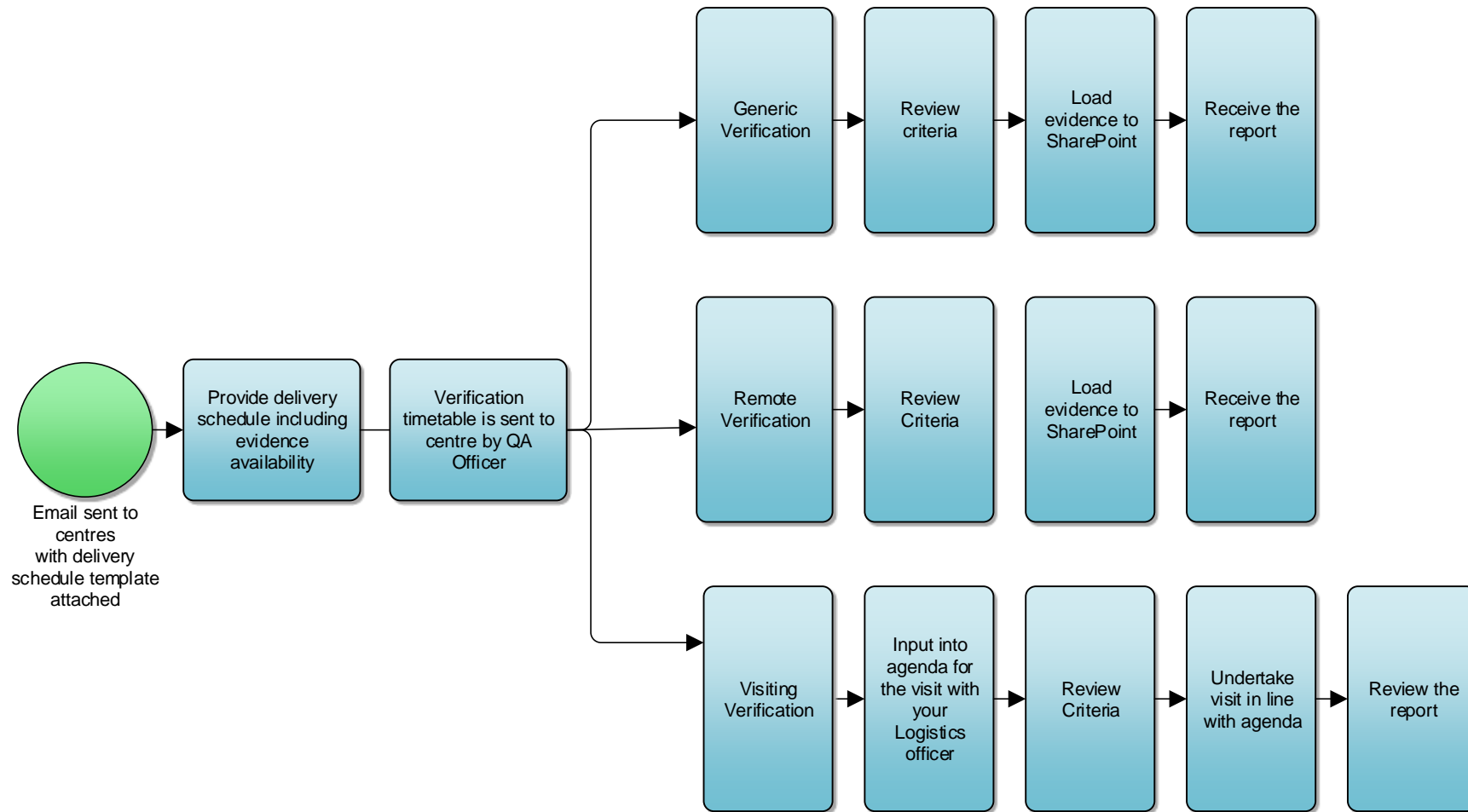
| | |
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| Criterion 4.6 | Evidence of candidates' work must be accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements. |
| Impact rating | High |
| Why is this included? | Accuracy and consistency in making assessment judgements not only ensure integrity in SQA qualifications, but help ensure that final assessment decisions made and communicated to candidates are fair. |
| Support information | |
| Guidance on evidencing the criterion | <p>Accuracy and consistency are achieved when all assessors have the same clear interpretation of the standards they are assessing, and of the type, quality and quantity of evidence that can be expected for assessments to be deemed successful/complete.</p> <p>In support of ensuring consistency in assessment, standardisation is of key importance for assessors/verifiers. It provides a forum for raising and resolving issues and it supports everyone in making accurate and consistent judgements/decisions of evidence.</p> <p>The three phases of internal verification (section 6.5) that SQA requires centres to build into their IV system give centres appropriate and timely opportunities for standardisation. For example:</p> <p>Before assessment begins for new qualifications, assessors and verifiers have opportunities to agree methods/instruments of assessment, assessment approaches and assessment materials. This is also a requirement of the qualification approval process.</p> <p>During assessment, periodically throughout the life of the qualification, assessor/verifier collaboration and agreement can provide effective support for all team members — especially beneficial for new assessors/verifiers.</p> <p>After assessment, during a process of review, assessors and verifiers can collectively reflect on the overall effectiveness of the assessment process for a particular qualification with a view to taking action/making recommendations in order to improve practice.</p> <p>Whenever standardisation takes place, whether through physical meetings or by electronic means (discussion forums, e-mail exchange, webinars, tele/video conferencing, etc), the outcomes of the process should be recorded through, for example, minutes</p> |

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| | of meetings and/or a continuous standardisation log summarising the discussions and stating decisions reached and actions agreed. |
| Examples of evidence | Assessment and internal verification records showing accurate and consistent assessment decisions being made. |
| Additional sources of information | <p>There are examples of different types of standardisation exercise on page 4 of SQA's Internal Verification: A Guide for Centres offering SQA Qualifications.</p> <p>There is an Internal Verification Toolkit on the QA page of SQA's website.</p> |

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| Criterion 4.7 | Candidate evidence must be retained in line with SQA requirements. |
| Specific requirements | SQA requires centres to retain all candidate evidence for the group award/units until at least three weeks after the official completion date. However, if the initial contact for the session is made by the External Verifier before three weeks after the completion date, all candidate evidence must be retained until after the verification visit has taken place. |
| Impact rating | High |
| Why is this included? | <p>SQA requires that candidate assessment evidence is retained by centres for defined periods for the purposes of internal and external verification, and in case of any resulting queries, candidate internal assessment appeals or suspected malpractice.</p> <p>This requirement provides External Verifiers with an opportunity to sample the optimum amount of evidence during a centre visit. Sampling will focus mainly on current 'live' candidate evidence, but may also include some past completed assessment evidence.</p> |
| Support information | |
| Guidance on evidencing the criterion | <p>Evidence of centres meeting this criterion should arise from the access they allow External Verifiers to information prior to the visit and then during the visit.</p> <p>The need for evidence to be retained for qualification verification purposes should not be confused with SQA's Retention Policy, which is about specific assessment records and is looked at by systems verifiers.</p> |
| Examples of evidence | Candidate evidence available for qualification verification. |

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| Criterion 4.9 | Feedback from External Verifiers must be disseminated to staff and used to inform assessment practice. |
| Impact rating | Medium |
| Why is this included? | If the results of qualification verification are made known to all relevant centre staff, this helps affirm what the centre is doing well as well as highlighting areas for improvement. |
| Support information | |
| Guidance on evidencing the criterion | <p>Centres must provide evidence of having disseminated the feedback in External Verifier reports, in a systematic way, and wherever there are required actions, of having agreed how these will be met, and who will be responsible for taking the required actions.</p> <p>Centres may use meetings to disseminate feedback and/or circulate External Verifier reports to the relevant assessors/verifiers.</p> <p>Methods of dissemination will depend on each centre's arrangements. These arrangements will usually have a degree of flexibility to take account of report content, eg the amount and nature of the action points/feedback given on a visit, but should not just be ad hoc.</p> <p>External Verifier reports can be a useful source of information when it comes to conducting reviews of resources (see Criterion 2.4).</p> |
| Examples of evidence | Evidence of feedback being disseminated to staff and evidence that it has been used to update/improve assessment practice. |

Appendix 1: Process map



Appendix 2: Verification timetable

NAME OF CENTRE

Verification Timetable Session 2018-2019

Please find below a summary of your allocated verification activity for the forthcoming session 2018/2019.

- This document is for reference only
- A 'live' version will be uploaded to your SharePoint site - ensure you check this document regularly as it will advise you of any changes to your planned verification activity
- If you would like to discuss this further, please contact your QA Logistics Officer via the China Mailbox; china.mailbox@sqa.org.uk or get in touch with the China Manager, Jimmy Zhang, Jimmy.Zhang@sqa.org.uk

| Activity 1 | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Group Award: | |
| Generic Criteria: | |
| Verification type: | |
| Submit evidence to SharePoint by: | |
| Activity 2 | |
| Group Award: | |
| Generic Criteria: | |
| Verification type: | |
| Submit evidence to SharePoint by: | |
| Activity 3 | |
| Group Award: | |
| Unit Codes: | |
| Criteria being verified: | |
| Verification type: | |
| Submit evidence to SharePoint by: | |
| Activity 4 | |
| Group Award: | |
| Unit Codes: | |
| Criteria being verified: | |
| Verification type: | |
| Submit evidence to SharePoint by: | |

| Activity 5 | |
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| Group Award: | |
| Unit Codes: | |
| Criteria being verified: | |
| Verification type: | Visit |

| Activity 6 | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Group Award: | |
| Unit Codes: | |
| Criteria being verified: | |
| Verification type: | Visit |

SYSTEMS VERIFICATION:

Please be advised that you will also receive a systems verification visit throughout this academic session – your Quality Enhancement Manager will be in touch to confirm specific arrangements around these visits.

ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

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| Timetable produced by: | |
| <u>Date:</u> | |

Appendix 3: Quality assurance criteria by type

Generic verification qualification criteria China

| Criteria | Impact rating | Suggested evidence |
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| 2.4 There must be evidence of initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials. | High | Evidence of initial and ongoing reviews which could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ policy and procedures for conducting reviews ◆ dates of planned and completed reviews ◆ records of reviews and their outcomes ◆ examples of quality improvements made as a result of review ◆ pre-delivery/assessment checks ◆ Course/programme reviews, action logs, minutes of meetings with review as a discussion items ◆ Site checklists, or equivalent documents, may be considered as evidence of initial and on-going reviews of other campuses |
| 3.2 Candidates' development needs and prior achievements (where appropriate) must be matched against the requirements of the award. | Medium | Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plans, Individual Learning Plans, Progress Reviews. |
| 3.3 Candidates must have scheduled contact with their assessor to review their progress and to revise their assessment plans accordingly. | Medium | Any relevant documentation that shows progress reviews have taken place, such as records of individual tutorial sessions, assessment plans, assessment schedules, learning, teaching and assessment plans, progress reviews. |
| 4.2 Internal assessment and verification procedures must be implemented to ensure standardisation of assessment. | Medium | The completion of records showing assessors/verifiers consistently follow their centre's assessment/verification procedures. |
| 4.4 Assessment evidence must be the candidate's own work, generated under SQA's required conditions. | High | Evidence of assessors and/or internal verifiers confirming candidates work is authentic, induction checklists, checks on assessment conditions, use of plagiarism software |
| 4.7 Candidate evidence must be retained in line with SQA requirements. | High | Candidate evidence available for qualification verification. |

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| 4.9 Feedback from qualification verifiers must be disseminated to staff and used to inform assessment practice. | Medium | Evidence of feedback being disseminated to staff and evidence that it has been used to update/improve assessment practice. |
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Visiting verification qualification criteria China

| Criteria | Impact rating | |
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| 2.1 Assessors and internal verifiers must be competent to assess and internally verify, in line with the requirements of the qualification. | High | Where a qualification requirement, records of relevant occupational/subject experience and qualifications, which must be in English or be accompanied by an English transcript. Records of continuing professional development, also in English. |
| 4.2 Internal assessment and verification procedures must be implemented to ensure standardisation of assessment. | Medium | The completion of records showing assessors/verifiers consistently follow their centre's assessment/verification procedures. |
| 4.3 Assessment instruments and methods and their selection and use must be valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair. | High | Documented evidence of methods/instruments having been selected and applied. |
| 4.6 Evidence of candidates' work must be accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements. | High | Assessment and internal verification records showing accurate and consistent assessment decisions being made. |

Remote verification qualification criteria China

| Criteria | Impact rating | |
|---|----------------------|---|
| 2.1 Assessors and internal verifiers must be competent to assess and internally verify, in line with the requirements of the qualification. | High | Where a qualification requirement, records of relevant occupational/subject experience and qualifications, which must be in English or be accompanied by an English transcript. Records of continuing professional development, also in English. |

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| 4.2 Internal assessment and verification procedures must be implemented to ensure standardisation of assessment. | Medium | The completion of records showing assessors/verifiers consistently follow their centre's assessment/verification procedures. |
| 4.3 Assessment instruments and methods and their selection and use must be valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair. | High | Documented evidence of methods/instruments having been selected and applied. |
| 4.6 Evidence of candidates' work must be accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements. | High | Assessment and internal verification records showing accurate and consistent assessment decisions being made. |

Appendix 4: Reporting by Group Award

This table is an example of how Group Awards and units will be verified and reported on.

| Verification Activity No. | Group Award selected | Unit to be verified | Mode of verification | Report required? |
|---------------------------|---|--|-----------------------|---|
| 1. | Business (B) GE7X16 Travel & Tourism (TT) GG2716 | N/A | Remote – generic | 1 x report for GE7X16 (B) generic 1 x report for GG2716 (TT) generic |
| 2. | Business (B) GE7X16 | F84K35 (VG142) F84M34 & F84R35 (VG266) | Remote activity | 1 x report for VG142 (GE7X16) (B) 1 x report for VG266 (GE7X16) (B) |
| 3. | Travel & Tourism (TT) GG2716 | F84M34 (VG266) D75X34 (VG288) | Remote activity | 1 x report for VG266 (GG2716) (TT) 1 x report for VG288 (GG2716) (TT) |
| 4. | Business (B) GE7X16 Travel & Tourism (TT) GG2716 | F7J834 & F7J635 (VG258) (B) F7J735 (VG254) (B) F6VY34 (VG192) DK0733 (VG192) | Visiting verification | 1 x report for GE7X16 (VG258) and (VG254) 1 x report for GG2716 (VG192) |
| | | | Total Reports: | Business = 4 reports Travel & Tourism = 4 reports |

