

Moderation Feedback – Central - 2005

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
included in this report**

**HN Administration and Information Technology:
Group Award Graded Unit 1**

General comments on moderation activity

Generally, candidates achieved well in the Graded Unit, however, the majority of candidates did not provide more than the minimum required by the questions and it was disappointing how few candidates fully expanded their points or showed an in-depth understanding of the topic areas.

The exemplar used by the centres did not allow sufficient headroom for increased allocation of marks for more considered responses. The result was that many candidates achieved a level of award, which it was felt, did not appropriately reflect their level of ability. Similarly, it did not allow the more able candidates to be given credit and recognition for their superior performance.

Areas of good performance

Candidates generally performed well in the multiple-choice paper and in a number of areas within the restricted response questions and the extended response paper. These were:

- ◆ restricted response: the question relating to business travel was handled well. In all other questions, most candidates picked up at least half of available marks, which resulted in a reasonable performance by most candidates across the centres.
- ◆ extended response paper: candidates' responses for the questions relating to database design, file management and meetings were generally good and many picked up maximum marks in these areas. For one centre, candidate responses to the database question were exceptional.

Areas of weak performance

A general weakness for most candidates was in failing to answer questions fully, for example, many did not provide examples or expand their points as required. Responses were often limited to descriptions or bulleted lists. Candidates also offered the same point a number of times (simply explained differently):

- ◆ restricted response paper: the main areas of weakness related to finance and IT (macros and filter/queries). Whilst most candidates were awarded some marks, most failed to fully answer the question. The question re filter/query was particularly poorly answered.
- ◆ extended response paper: there were two questions in which candidates performed least well — question 1 and 3:
 - Question 1 — candidates did not discuss or expand points as required and offered methods of communicating rather than stages in evaluating communication systems. In part (b), candidates offered ways of communicating change rather than for implementing change.
 - Question 3 — the majority of candidate responses for the cost/benefit analysis were poor. Costs were limited entirely to monetary costs. Part (b) was also weak and many candidates simply identified the legislation involved rather than explaining the implications for the organisation.

Specific issues identified

The Graded Unit was new to centres this year and there was a varied approach to assessment and marking. All centres used the SQA exemplar assessment paper and most followed the processes and procedures required by SQA.

The majority of centres approached the assessment and marking of the Unit appropriately, however, errors in the exemplar marking scheme meant that colleges were forced to modify how marks were allocated — this was not always done appropriately and resulted in inconsistencies in how candidates were marked across the centres. In some centres, candidates were disadvantaged, they were required to provide more in their responses than the exemplar demanded.

The issues identified were:

- ◆ centres were not clear on the policy relating to awarding of ½ marks
- ◆ there may be confusion regarding the extent to which changes can be made to an exemplar before it is considered to be a different paper altogether
- ◆ centres were not clear on when to expect central moderation – it was clear some papers had been marked hastily to ensure completion and one centre was not ready to meet the moderation date

The way in which centres annotated marks on papers was not always easy to follow. Markers often were not clear where they were allocating marks, nor did the individual allocations always correspond to the final mark for the question. Instances of changes to marks (either by a double marker or internal verifier) caused some confusion for Moderators as the reason for these changes were not always clear.

In general, centres are to be commended on their efforts with this Unit, especially in the light of the difficulties experienced with the exemplar material.

The moderation of the Unit was successfully completed and the team is to be commended on the hard work, which went in to achieving this outcome. There were a number of issues, which affected the moderation event:

- ◆ Central moderation is entirely new to moderation of Higher National awards and the team involved in the event had not been involved in central moderation before. Added to this, a number of the team were new, inexperienced Moderators.
- ◆ It was felt that the training and level of information supplied by SQA did not adequately prepare the team for the task.
- ◆ The exemplar assessment and associated marking scheme used by the centres were flawed and this had resulted in centres interpreting the assessment in different ways and making changes to the mark allocation contained in the exemplar-marking scheme. (For some questions, the suggested marking scheme was unworkable eg allocation of 2 marks per point up to a maximum of 5). However, the majority of centres did not provide an amended marking scheme for reference. On some occasions the modifications made by centres were not appropriate and some interpretations of questions were not correct. This, in effect, resulted in Moderators double-marking the candidate scripts.

As a result of this, the team was put under considerable pressure to complete the moderation on time. There was also inadequate time for the moderation reports to be adequately standardised and co-ordinated.

Feedback to centres

The following guidance should be offered to centres:

Centres should ensure exemplar material is fully internally prior moderated in order for any difficulties in the material to be identified and actioned.

Centres should seek SQA guidance if there are any doubts over the interpretation of questions or difficulties in applying the marking schemes.

Any modifications to marking exemplar schemes should be clearly annotated and provided for the moderation event.

Centres should ensure any modification of marking schemes does not place additional demands on candidates or disadvantage them in any way.

Markers should clearly indicate where individual marks are being allocated for questions and these should correspond to the final mark given.

Centres adopting a double-marking approach should ensure that any changes to marks are annotated and clearly shown.

Greater provision of exam technique may benefit candidates in improving their approach to answering questions in order to raise standards of candidate responses. Centres could take advantage of the *Understanding Standards* website to facilitate this.