**SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY**

**QUALIFICATIONS SUPPORT TEAM FOR HN ACCOUNTING, ADMINISTRATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL SERVICES**

**ACTION GRID – MEETING 19 HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29 OCTOBER 2014  
  
Present:** Qualifications Manager (QM), Accounting and Finance Qualifications Officer (AFQO), Business and AIT Qualifications Officer (BAQO)

| **Ref** | **Agenda/Minute Title** | **Agreed Action** | **Action to be taken by** | **Target Date** |
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| 19/1 | Welcome | The QM welcomed everyone to the meeting. As there were three new members of the brief introductions were conducted.  The QM gave a summary of the remit of the group. |  |  |
| 19/2 | Action Grid from Meeting 18 | There were no issues of accuracy raised with the Action Grid.  In the course of reviewing the actions from the previous meeting the following points were discussed:  Prior Verified Assessments are available on SQA secure site. These are a mix of assessments devised by centres and SQA ASPs that have been amended by centres and prior verified by SQA.  ITIB: Spreadsheets is the only Unit across the mandatory section of the three Business-related HNs to have a prior-verified assessment available, although there are a number for optional Units across the frameworks with assessments.  This led to some discussion of communication between SQA and centres, and also within centres. It was felt that the new Centre News bulletin is an improvement in streamlining SQA communications. Although it is sent to SQA co-ordinators automatically, it was highlighted that individual staff within centres can subscribe to the bulletin.  The QM advised that this will be promoted at the Network Events early next year and a link circulated to QST members.  QM stated that the respective Subject-pages for the three HNs are kept as up to date as possible. Any content generated by the Qualifications team is always posted to these pages so it is recommended that centre staff bookmark the relevant pages.  BAQO advised that the Business GU1 query raised at the last meeting was whether the examination could be split into two separate sessions, and confirmed that this is not possible as all questions are based on a single case study. | SQM, AFQO, BAQO | October 2014 (QST)  February 2015 (Network) |
| 19/3 | Subject Updates | Accounting    Alternative ASP for Graded Unit 2 is available. This was produced to replace a previous ASP which was withdrawn due to a security breach.  Graded Unit 1 ASP 4 is scheduled for completion in January 2015. It is being written in line with FRS102  Unit specifications have been updated with FR102. Those completed in the first tranche are – 6 HNC mandatory units, RFT, Business Accounting and the 2 generic Accounting Units - *Financial Accounting Statements: An Introduction (F93K 34)* and *Using Financial Accounting Statements (F93H 34)*.  All specifications have been revised with new terminology. They will not be available until January/February 2015. As they are not for delivery until 2015/16 session SQA will use an indicator to show this.  The Review Team will continue into January to update ASPs as appropriate. The second tranche of Units, within this project, will be revised in the next financial year. This will include the HND mandatory Units and Accounting optional Units.  Administration and IT  Work is focused on Support Materials. Alternative ASPs are being produced for some of the Units with a single ASP available. There are nine in total:  Graded Unit 1, Graded Unit 2, Graded Unit 3, Office Administration, Office Technologies, Office Management, Advanced Databases, Advanced Spreadsheets, Advanced Word Processing.  The target is to have all nine available by 31st March, however they will be published as and when they are complete. The Office Technologies ASP is already complete and available on SQA Secure Site.  BAQO is attending the EV Update meeting on 1st November which may influence plans for operational year 2015/16.  Business  The review of the three Entrepreneurial Optional Units is complete and work on ASPs is getting underway. The Units concerned are:  Developing Entrepreneurial Skills  Preparing a Formal Business plan (previously Preparing and Presenting a Business Plan)  Preparing to Start a Business (previously Getting Started in Business)  The Units have been purposely revised to complement each other while avoiding duplication. Some consideration is being given to packaging the three Units (4 HN credits) as a PDA Award and the QST where asked for their views. The group felt that there may be some merit in such a proposal but that pressures in colleges are likely to inhibit uptake as the trend is to reduce the number of qualifications offered rather than introduce new ones.  In addition to the ASPs above, alternatives will be produced for Economics 1: Micro and Macro Theory and Application and Economics 2: The World Economy. |  |  |
| 19/4 | Unit Comment Forms/Emails | Preparing Financial Forecasts (F84R 35)  There was a query about the application of error tolerance, whether this should be per Outcome or across the Unit. It was confirmed that the error tolerance applies to each Outcome.  As the Units Financial Forecasts and Business Accounting do not sit within the HN Accounting Group Awards they were not subject to the review of Error Tolerances carried out earlier. The error tolerances within these Units will be checked to ensure they remain appropriate. Any amendments will be for session 2015/16  Record Keeping and Accounting for a Small Business (F93J 33)  Query regarding HMRC pro forma for calculation of gross and net pay. HMRC pro formas are no longer available as this is now done directly through HMRC website. Pro forma tables should be provided by centres. Guidance on delivery/assessment of Outcome 3 to be updated to include this information.  Financial Accounting Statements: An Introduction (F93K 34) and Using Financial Accounting Statements (F93H 34)  Comment was received that the content is very technical for non-accounting students which is a problem when used as servicing units for other HN Group Awards. The group agreed that a change in emphasis from final accounts to cash flow may enhance the suitability of the Units for non-accounting students. It was agreed a review of both Units could be provisionally included in the 2015/16 operational plan.  ESOL for Work: Intermediate Operational (F1HY 33)  A proposal was received to include this 3 credit SCQF Level 6 Unit within HNC/D Administration and IT and HNC/D Business as an Optional Unit. The group agreed unanimously that it should not be accepted. Communication is a key skill throughout both HNs, i.e. being able to analyse and convey business-related information.  Communication: Business Communication (H7TK 34)/Communication: Analysing and Presenting Complex Communication DE3N 34 (SCQF 7) is a mandatory unit in both frameworks. If candidates are unable to meet the standard for operational English at SCQF Level 7 they are unlikely to be able to meet the standard for this, and other units throughout both frameworks  The Unit ESOL for Work: Intermediate Operational has not been included in any nationally devised HN Group Award so there is no precedent for its inclusion in the HN Business related Group Awards, further suggesting it would not be appropriate.  Visual Communication: Social Media (H387 34)  The centre which originally requested the inclusion of this Unit within the HN Administration and IT and Business frameworks have advised that they no longer intend to deliver the Unit, having determined that the Evidence Requirements place too much emphasis on the Art and Design aspect for their Business and Administration and IT candidates. They went on to enquire as to whether the unit could be amended to produce a less Art and Design oriented unit on use of Social Media.  QM explained some of the operational constraints around this, including SQA policy preventing the proliferation of a number of very similar Units.  BAQO advised that the Marketing Qualifications team are beginning a project looking at how to incorporate Social Media in that subject area. This is something that could be adopted by the Business and Administration and IT subjects depending on the result of that work.  There was some discussion around areas of the Business and Administration and IT frameworks where Social Media could be incorporated. ICT in Business and Office Technologies were two Units the group felt might be particularly suited to this. BAQO agreed to discuss with the relevant EV groups on 1st November to explore further  ITIB: Spreadsheets (F84V 34)  A query was raised regarding the assessment of this Unit. It was confirmed that assessment is competence-based – as with the other Units in HN Business and Administration and IT – therefore all of the Evidence Requirements must be met. There was a discussion around standardisation and Internal Verification and the importance of this within centres, particularly those which have recently merged. | AFQO  LAFQO  QM/AFQO  BAQO  BAQO | January 2015  January 2015  April 2015  October 2014  November 2014 |
| 19/5 | HN Enhancement Project (HN Business) | Alternative Assessment Support Packs (AASPs) are now available for the respective Units – Economic Issues: An Introduction; Business Law: An Introduction; Business: Graded Unit 2 and Research Skills; Business Culture and Strategy, and Behavioural Skills for Business.  Eight centres have confirmed their participation in the project, with a few others expected to do so.  Members of the QST with experience of the new AASPs commented favourably on the changes.  It was confirmed that SQA will be seeking feedback from centres at the conclusion of the project.  It is likely the project will continue as part of a corporate SQA plan to reduce assessment in HN. |  |  |
| 19/6 | HN Surveys | The response rate to the surveys was lower this year than last. The group felt that this was likely to be due to centres being in a period of transition with regionalisation and therefore the competing priorities and time available to staff.  QM emphasised that the surveys are a useful tool to gauge long term trends and inform future review but will not be used to justify changes to Units in isolation.  There were no issues of concern identified from the qualitative data and comments on specific issues from both centres and candidates tended to be isolated.  It was noted that a high percentage of Business and Administration and IT candidates complete optional Units in Human Resource Management. This seems to be due to a combination of combining classes across the two Group Awards and articulation to HE degrees.  The group discussed the data and agreed that Part-Time/Day-release and Open Learning provision has declined sharply in recent years due to pressures on budgets. However, there was evidence of some Open Learning provision in the HN Administration and IT. |  |  |
| 19/7 | Graded Unit Statistics | The figures were discussed and again the QM emphasised that conclusions cannot be drawn on the basis of these figures alone, however the spread of A, B and C grades suggest that the content and level of all Graded Units is appropriate. Accounting Graded Units 1 and 3 continue to see more As than Graded Unit 2 and the Business and Administration and IT Graded Units. However this is largely due to the computational nature of the assessment. |  |  |
| 19/8 | Network Events | QM advised that Network Events will be held once again in February and March 2015 and asked the group for input as to possible content. The following suggestions were put forward:  A centre representative to talk about integrating centres’ processes and quality systems/internal verification etc. (possibly UHI rep).  A centre representative to share experience of the HN Enhancements project. One of the centre representatives present agreed to take this on.  A presentation/session on the benefits of Course Teams. This could be linked to integration.  QM asked the group to have a think about any further suggestions and to email them by Friday 7th November | CR  All | February/March 2015  7 November 2014 |
| 19/9 | Any other Business | BAQO asked the group to contact him if interested in being involved in the writing of Support Materials in future and to forward the details of any colleagues who may be interested  AFQO advised the group that Formative Assessments are now available on the SQA Secure site. These consist of the Assessment Exemplars for the old versions of the Units across the three Group Awards so therefore do not match exactly with the current versions but can be used for preparation for Summative Assessment. | All | November 2014 |
| 19/10 | Date of Next Meeting | The precise date will be agreed in due course and will be in the middle of May 2015 |  |  |