



NQ Verification 2015–16 Key Message Reports

Verification group name:	Administration and IT
Levels	N3 - Higher
Date published:	October 2016

This Report combines all Verification Key Messages for the academic session 2015-2016.



NQ Verification 2015–16 Key Messages Round 1

01

Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Administration & IT
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	March 2016

National Courses/Units verified:

H27Y	National 3	Administration in Action
H1YW	National 4	IT Solutions for Administrators
H1YV	National 5	Administrative Practices
H1YW	National 5	IT Solutions for Administrators
H1YY	National 5	Communication in Administration
H4KB	Higher	Administrative Theory and Practice
H1YW	Higher	IT Solutions for Administrators
H1YY	Higher	Communication in Administration

02

Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

All centres used SQA Unit assessment support packs (UASPs), with Package 1, the Unit-by-Unit approach, being more commonly used; however more centres used Pack 3 compared to last year. All centres accurately and consistently used the UASPs.

Generally candidate evidence was well presented, tasks clearly labelled, and assessment approaches included. Centres are advised to use the most up-to-date version of both the UASP and its accompanying e-files. Centres must highlight the version of the UASP used (eg 1.2 or 1.1). The most up-to-date version can be downloaded from SQA Secure.

Another common approach evident at external verification was the use of tasks from other UASPs to re-assess candidates on specific Assessment Standards. This helped ensure re-assessment and judgements were clear.

Assessment judgements

Generally centres were making assessment judgements in line with national standards and the quality of judgements has improved from Round 1 last year. Candidates also appeared well-prepared for Unit assessment, with more candidates meeting the Assessment Standards than last year. However, there are a few points worth noting to ensure all centres follow best practice:

Check candidate evidence thoroughly for keyboarding errors

The error tolerance for each level is:

National 3:	1 error for every 10 words
National 4:	1 error for every 15 words
National 5:	1 error for every 20 words
Higher:	1 error for every 25 words

Errors can appear anywhere in the task. Errors that are included within the tolerance are: typing errors, minor layout errors (reference and date in wrong place) and spacing errors (eg one return between paragraphs and inconsistent spacing in a report). There is flexibility over layouts but a sensible business layout should be used.

However, if a key piece of information includes a typing error which would result in the document not being fit for purpose, the candidate would not achieve the Assessment Standard. For example, if the cost of the trip in the task was £49, but the candidate keyed in £94, although this is a typing error, it does in fact communicate inaccurate information and results in the document not being fit for purpose.

As noted in previous Key Messages Reports, any keyboarding errors should be identified on the candidate's printout. A few centres had not identified any or all of the errors on candidate evidence. Assessors should underline every typing, spacing or layout error within a task.

Keyboarding errors were most commonly missed on word processing, desktop publishing and e-mail tasks. Common errors not identified by assessors were:

- ◆ formatting punctuation
- ◆ inappropriate punctuation
- ◆ inconsistent capitalisation (this counts as one error across the task)

Centres need to be diligent in checking candidate evidence for errors. It is critical that all errors are identified and counted by the assessor, to ensure the candidate has not exceeded the error tolerance for the task. This will allow the assessor to correctly judge whether or not the candidate has met the Assessment Standard.

E-mail

Misuse of 'CC' function

A few candidates incorrectly used the 'cc' function. This facility should only be used when sending a copy of the e-mail to a person. If the task does not indicate that a copy is to be sent, then no e-mail address should appear in the 'cc' section. If candidates are asked to e-mail two people, then two e-mail addresses should be added to the 'To' address box.

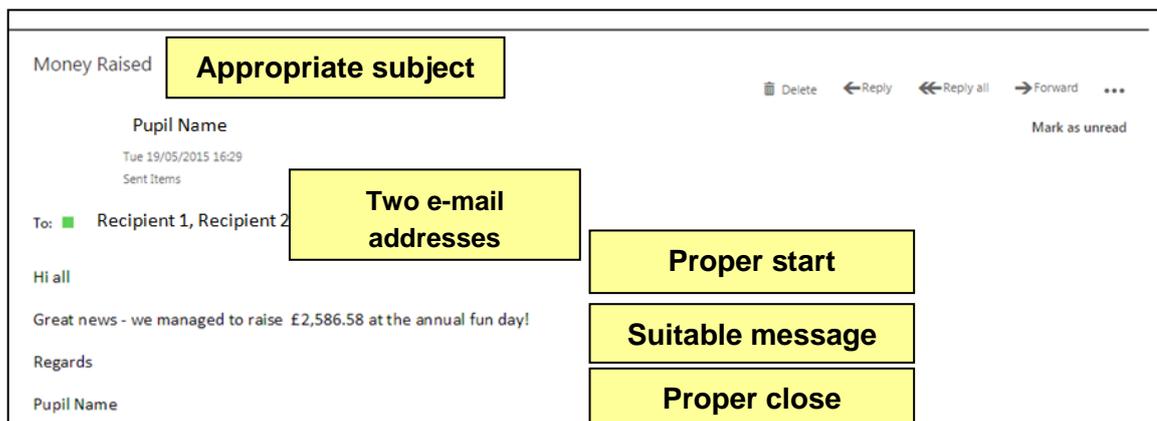
E-mail structure

All e-mails should have:

- ◆ a subject (some business systems automatically filter out e-mails which have no subject heading)
- ◆ a proper start, eg 'Hi' or 'Hello'
- ◆ a sensible, relevant main message
- ◆ a proper close, eg 'Thanks' or 'Regards'

Many candidates also had inappropriate punctuation in their e-mail, with the use of commas at the end of the start and close. This is to be counted as one error.

See the layout below:



A few candidates structured their e-mail like a letter (Dear Sir/Madam and Yours faithfully). This is not appropriate for e-mail communication.

National 5 Administrative Practices Unit

Generally, candidate responses for Outcome 1 (Provide an account of administration in the workplace) achieved the minimum competency, however, there were a number of candidates who did not. These candidates provided an

identification but the Assessment Standard required a description. If a candidate has not described when the Assessment Standard specifically requires a description, then the candidate has not met the Assessment Standard.

The table below gives examples of candidate responses for Assessment Standard 1.1 (Describing the tasks, skills and qualities of an administrative assistant). The first column represents responses that are basic identification and therefore not acceptable in meeting the Assessment Standard. The second column represents responses that would be acceptable as descriptions and therefore would meet the Assessment Standard:

Identify	Describe
Answering the phone.	An Administrative Assistant will answer the phone politely at all times and deal with any enquiries.
Using databases.	An Administrative Assistant will create and update databases containing records about employees, customers or even suppliers.
Good communication skills.	An Administrative Assistant must have good communication skills. They will contact people on a daily basis in person, through e-mail and over the phone.
Well organised.	An Administrative Assistant will need to be organised as they will be dealing with lots of information and need to be able to make sure they can find it again at a later date.

For Assessment Standards 1.3 and 1.4, candidates are also expected to describe, this time describing the responsibilities of the organisation.

The table below gives examples of candidate responses for Assessment Standard 1.4 (Describing the key organisational responsibilities in terms of the security of people, property and information). The first column represents responses that are basic identification for the security of property and therefore not acceptable in contributing towards the achievement of Assessment Standard 1.4. The second column represents responses for the security of property that would be acceptable as descriptions and are therefore acceptable in contributing towards the achievement of Assessment Standard 1.4:

Identify	Describe
Lockers for employees.	Provide lockers or lockable drawers for employees to keep their personal items in.
Lock doors at the end of the day.	Have a policy that staff should lock their offices at the end of the day or employ security staff to check all rooms are locked at night.

Please note that if a candidate describes CCTV for the security of property and then they also describe it for the security of people, then this second occurrence of CCTV cannot be used to achieve Assessment Standard 1.4.

Higher IT solutions

A few candidates did not change the font in a query or a table of contents to the same font as the rest of the document. In mail merge letters, often the mail merge fields were a different font or different size. Inconsistent fonts in a letter, report and minutes should be counted as a presentation error. All presentation errors (eg inconsistent font, inconsistent line spacing, inappropriate page breaks) count as one error within the error tolerance for each task.

Some centres accepted pivot tables for Package 1 that did not provide all the required information. The task asks candidates to:

'Create a pivot table that summarises the total number of items of furniture and equipment that need to be purchased per room.'

Therefore the candidate's pivot table must at least show the total number of items of furniture and equipment per room otherwise they have not met the Assessment Standard.

03

Section 3: General comments

It was clear that most centres had made a concerted effort to ensure the standards had been consistently applied and they are to be commended for this. We would continue to encourage centres to maintain standards by reading the Assessment Standards carefully, checking work thoroughly against these standards and taking on board any recommendations given in the External Verification Report, if they have been verified.

Verification documentation

The vast majority of centres completed and included all the documentation required for external verification:

- ◆ Verification Sample Form
- ◆ The assessment task and judging evidence table
- ◆ Candidate evidence
- ◆ A checklist of candidates and the assessor's assessment judgement for each Assessment Standard
- ◆ Internal Verification/Quality Assurance Policy
- ◆ Evidence of the internal verification actually being carried out



NQ Verification 2015–16 Key Messages Round 2

01 Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Administration and IT
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	June 2016

National Courses/Units verified:

H201 74 Administration and IT Assignment (National 4) added value unit

02 Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

The approaches used by all centres verified were valid. All centres accurately and consistently used SQA unit assessment support (UAS) packs.

Across the centres sampled, all three packs were used: *Island Secondary School*, *Youth Beat* and *Eagle Eye*. *Youth Beat* was used significantly more than the others, followed by *Island Secondary School* and then *Eagle Eye*.

Some centres had also used the UAS packs for re-assessment. Where a candidate had been unsuccessful at their first attempt to achieve an assessment standard, they had been re-assessed using the relevant tasks from another pack.

Generally candidate evidence was well presented, tasks were clearly labelled, and assessment approaches were included. All centres are reminded to include the actual instrument of assessment (assessment tasks) and corresponding judging evidence table along with their candidate evidence.

Assessment judgements

There was a big improvement in the accuracy of the assessment judgements this year compared to last year. It was clear that the main issues leading to inaccurate assessment judgements highlighted in last year's Key Messages Round 2 Report had been taken on board.

There are, however, still a few issues:

Error tolerance

Assessors should underline every keyboarding or spacing error within a task. These must be counted. The candidate should only be awarded a pass if the number of errors is within the tolerance for that task. The error tolerance for National 4 is one error for every 15 words. It was quite common to see candidate evidence where the assessor had not identified any or all of the keyboarding errors.

Errors can appear anywhere in the task. Errors that are included within the tolerance are: typos, minor layout errors (eg reference and date in wrong place) and spacing errors (eg one return between paragraphs, inconsistent spacing in a report). There is flexibility over layouts but a sensible business layout should be used.

Keyboarding errors were most commonly missed on word processing, desktop publishing and e-mail tasks. Common errors not identified by assessors were:

- ◆ inconsistent date formats within a task (see 'Date format' section below)
- ◆ inappropriate/inconsistent time formats within a task (see 'Time format' section below)
- ◆ formatting punctuation
- ◆ inappropriate punctuation
- ◆ confusion between a dash and a hyphen (this counts as one error across the task)
- ◆ inconsistent capitalisation (this counts as one error across the task)
- ◆ no space after a colon (this counts as one error across the task)
- ◆ task numbers included, eg as the database report title

It is crucial that assessors identify all errors to ensure they can correctly judge if the candidate is within the error tolerance.

Time format

The table below lists the various time formats that are acceptable:

1000 hours	1000hrs	10 am	10am
10:00 hours	10.00 hrs	10.00 am	10.00am
Do not accept 'a.m.' or 'p.m.'			

Consistency within a document is essential. If candidates have more than one time format within a document, this must be underlined and counted as one keyboarding error.

If an e-file given to a candidate has a time stated, candidates should continue to use the same time format, otherwise the time format is inconsistent and is counted as one keyboarding error.

Date format

If a task requires a date, candidates must always include the year. Acceptable date formats are listed below:

7 May 2016	07/05/2016
7th May 2016	May 7 2016
7/5/16	
Do not accept 'the 7th of May 2016'	

Consistency within a document is essential. If candidates have more than one date format within a document, this must be underlined and counted as one keyboarding error.

If an e-file given to a candidate has a date stated, candidates should continue to use the same date format, otherwise the date format is inconsistent and is counted as one keyboarding error.

E-diary entries

If the printout of the view requested in the task truncates recorded event(s), then extra printouts of the event(s) must be provided, so that keyboarding and exact times can be checked. A screenshot is acceptable as long as it is clear from the screenshot that an e-diary has been used.

For an all-day event, candidates must use the 'all-day' facility in their e-diary. Recording the event from 8 am to 5 pm is not correct for an all-day event. If candidates do not use the 'all-day' facility, they cannot pass the corresponding assessment standard.

Formatting

A few centres were too harsh in their marking of two or more formats. If a task requires the candidate to apply two or more formats, any of the formatting options listed below should be accepted (as long as they are not already present in the original e-file):

Size	Bold
Underline	Italics
Shading	Colour
Font change*	Right alignment
Centring	Justification
Borders	Bullet points
Word Art	
* unless change of font is asked for separately	

Spreadsheet formulae

Some candidates are still incorrectly using the SUM function and this is being accepted by some assessors. The SUM function should only be used to add a cell range. If a candidate uses the SUM function incorrectly, eg =sum(B10-B9) this should not be accepted and the candidate has therefore not achieved the corresponding assessment standard for that task.

03

Section 3: General comments

Assessors should read the assessment standards carefully, check evidence thoroughly against these standards and take on board the key messages given to them in this report.

Verification documentation

All centres are reminded that the column for pass or fail on the Candidate Sample Form should be completed with their assessment judgement. There are only two options for this column — ‘pass’ or ‘fail’. This column is to record the overall final assessment judgement for the evidence that has been included for each candidate. It is not a final judgement on their passing or failing the whole unit. Recording ‘interim’ in this column is not an option.

Centres are reminded to include the UAS pack used along with the candidate evidence.

Internal verification — internal quality assurance

It was clear that most centres had cross-checked candidate evidence using different coloured pens and most provided a short narrative detailing assessment judgement discussions between the assessor and internal verifier, clearly highlighting the agreed final outcome, if there was disagreement. However, a number of centres had not included their internal verification policy. It is an SQA

requirement that all centres submit their internal verification/moderation/quality assurance policy when selected for external verification.

There was also a common theme that both the assessor and the internal verifier missed keyboarding and instruction errors. It is essential that any internal verification procedure is as effective as possible. Our advice to both parties is to be extremely diligent when checking candidate evidence.

SQA has produced an Internal Verification Toolkit which provides great advice and support on designing and implementing the best model and approach to internal verification depending on your subject, centre and candidate needs. It can be found here: www.sqa.org.uk/IVtoolkit.

Local authority nominee(s)

All centres are encouraged to contact their local authority nominee(s) for extra help, advice and support. Nominees have received extensive Understanding Standards training and are a valuable resource in your authority.