



Higher National Qualifications

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2022

Accounting and Finance

Verification group number: 266

Introduction

The frameworks which are covered in China remain as they have been in the recent past. Each framework has accounting elements and the number of units of a finance nature differs depending on the specialism focus.

All of the reviews were remote and as such, limited criteria are covered within this report. In order to prepare this overall review of the year, 18 reports were reviewed, which cover the units noted below.

HP04 47 Recording Financial Information
HP7K 47 Business Accounting
HP05 48 Management Accounting for Decision Making
HP08 48 Financial Reporting and Analysis
HP70 48 Preparing Financial Forecasts

Category 2: Resources

Criterion 2.1: Assessors and internal verifiers must be competent to assess and internally verify, in line with the requirements of the qualification.

On the whole, the teams who are delivering and supporting the students hold appropriate academic qualifications and carry out regular continuing professional development (CPD). However, there are still circumstances where teams have not recorded accounting-specific CPD activity, which is a requirement of delivery of these units. It is clear from conversations that the teams undertook accounting-specific CPD activity, but this was included in the records presented for review only in a few cases. A great deal of generic CPD was recorded, which is acceptable, but it must be supplemented with clear records of accounting activity and reflection on how this will assist the delivery, assessment and overall support of the learners.

Criterion 2.4: There must be evidence of initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials.

All of the activity during this session has been remote; therefore, this criterion has not been reviewed specifically for Accounting and Finance. Instead, it is included in the generic reviews.

Category 3: Candidate support

Criterion 3.2: Candidates' development needs and prior achievements (where appropriate) must be matched against the requirements of the award.

All of the activity during this session has been remote; therefore, this criterion has not been reviewed specifically for Accounting and Finance. Instead, it is included in the generic reviews.

Criterion 3.3: Candidates must have scheduled contact with their assessor to review their progress and to revise their assessment plans accordingly.

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Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

In most cases, the internal verification documentation provided for review detailed the attendees at meetings, and any actions required were clearly labelled relating to responsibility; but in a few cases, there were some issues.

For one or two reviews, the unit code, name and period of review were not clearly labelled on the documentation; this made it difficult to determine that the criterion had been met. It is recommended that centres should ensure the documents are appropriate and useful in future.

In some cases, the documentation noted that teams had reviewed previous years' activity and action points had been raised; but unfortunately, not all teams had reviewed the action points and evidenced that they had acted upon the reflections.

In one or two instances, teams had noted that there had been a difference of opinion about assessment outcomes between assessors and internal verifiers, but none had included details or outcomes of the discussions in their submissions. This should be included in the submission to enable the external quality assurance process to be reviewed as a whole.

In one case, the internal verification had not been fully effective because it had missed that the assessor had not adhered to the unit specification requirements fully and the decisions made did not meet the requirements. This was regrettable and the candidates were unavoidably disadvantaged by the finding. It is essential that any internal verification reviews carried out cover the match between the candidate submissions and the unit specification requirements. Candidate performance must always be measured against the unit specification in detail.

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

In most cases, the centres had used SQA China Assessment Support Packs (CASP) to assess candidates, with centre-devised assessment instruments being used as alternatives to reassess candidates when needed. There were one or two occasions where centres had uploaded assessment instruments as requested, but unfortunately, they were not the assessment instruments which had been used to assess candidates. This meant that actions were raised before the external quality assurance activity. It was not possible to measure whether assessment decisions were appropriate because there was no measure to review the decisions against; this resulted in a number of unfavourable initial review outcomes.

For the most part, the reasons behind the specific choice of assessment instruments were not covered in the internal verification documentation, but instead was discussed during feedback meetings. This criterion requires that the reasons for the choice should be included in the review.

In most cases, the assessment instruments used were either SQA CASPs or prior verified assessment instruments. It is a requirement that each centre has at least one verified alternative assessment instrument available for each outcome of each unit in order to ensure smooth delivery and assessment of candidates with no delays.

It is recommended that centres build up their assessment instruments for each outcome of each unit to use on a rotational basis. This will mean that candidates will not be assessed using the same instrument of assessment over time.

Criterion 4.4: Assessment evidence must be the candidate's own work, generated under SQA's required conditions.

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

In most cases, the judgements made by assessors were appropriate and in line with the requirements of the unit specification. However, in some cases, the reviews were delayed because the teams had not uploaded the assessment instruments used, so it was not possible to determine if assessment judgements were accurate.

Centres should ensure that the assessment instruments which were used in the process of judging candidates are made available for the external verification review.

In one or two cases, the candidates' analytical submissions were deemed to be insufficient for the level of study. It is worth noting that at SCQF level 8, significantly in depth and

detailed analysis is required. In many cases, the unit specification allows for the use of IT in the preparation of reports during assessment; centres should encourage this not only for the personal development of candidates, but also for their preparation for either future study or the workplace.

If there is no mention that IT cannot be used, then it is permissible to use IT within the noted assessment conditions.

In some cases, in particular in Management Accounting for Decision Making, candidates would benefit from the provision of graph paper to prepare work for assessment as a permissible arrangement.

In other units, it is permissible to use pro forma layouts for assessment purposes. This is not to make the task easier, but instead, to reduce the time spent on writing out information instead of calculating figures in a timed assessment. It is recommended in such cases that candidates are provided with a copy of the layout that they will be given in the assessment, so that they can prepare by practicing using it.

In one case, it was not possible to confirm that the submissions for Business Accounting outcomes 3–5 were appropriately judged. This was because the permitted notes which could be used during the assessment event had not been included in the submissions. Any permitted notes in an assessment, which is detailed in the unit specification, must be included in any candidate submission. During any re-assessment, the candidates must use the same notes.

In most cases, the assessors had noted clearly on scripts the number and type of errors; but in one or two cases, this had not been shown and the internal verifier had not picked it up. It is a requirement of the unit specification to show the number and type of errors clearly. In most cases, candidates who had successfully completed assessments within the error tolerance thresholds were noted as passing that assessment. But in one or two cases, assessors had required candidates within the error tolerance threshold to re-work or re-do the work until it contained no errors. This is not required. If an assessment decision shows that the candidate submissions are within the error tolerance threshold, then they have passed and there is no need for further work. Only if the candidate submission contains more errors than permitted, then a re-assessment is required.

Criterion 4.7: Candidate evidence must be retained in line with SQA requirements.

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Criterion 4.9: Feedback from qualification verifiers must be disseminated to staff and used to inform assessment practice.

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Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

The following good practice was reported during session 2021–22:

- ◆ In one case, an Assessment Summary Record was prepared for each unit; it was a self-reflection on the unit and identified areas for improvement for future delivery. This document noted any areas where all candidates had performed below expectation and enabled the assessor to adapt learning resources to cover any gaps in the future. It is good practice to review candidate submissions to ensure that all aspects of the topics have been covered.

Specific areas for development

The following area for development was reported during session 2021–22:

- ◆ CPD must be accounting specific to ensure compliance with the assessment criteria.
- ◆ Samples of student work submitted for review must include a range of results, not just passes and fails which have been easy decisions to reach; samples should come from all groups and should be representative of the cohort.
- ◆ Centres should ensure that the assessment instruments and documentation uploaded for review are those which relate to the candidate group, the particular topic and the period under review.
- ◆ If the unit specification allow for the use of templates, then these should be provided for candidates during assessments. In addition, it is recommended that centres provide the candidates with the templates in advance to enable them to practice before the assessment. The reason that templates are provided on occasion is to reduce the time spent on writing out layouts and preparing figures in a given format during a timed assessment.
- ◆ Teams should consider the use of IT in the preparation of reports, and not just require candidates to handwrite all submissions, unless stated in the unit specification.