



SQA Advanced Qualifications (China)

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2022

Economics

Verification group number 258

Introduction

All external qualification verification for the 2021–22 session was conducted through virtual events. To ensure that verification was manageable and to reduce duplication within verification reports, centres submitted evidence for generic criteria and for units separately. A single report was created for the generic criteria for each centre with the separate unit reports focusing mainly on different verification criteria. Virtual meetings were held between the verifiers and each centre, led by a primary verifier once the generic and unit reports were completed.

The following Business Management units were selected for verification:

J461 47	Economic Issues: An Introduction
HP6T 47	Economic Issues: An Introduction
HP6P 48	Economics 1: Micro and Macro Theory and Application
HP72 48	Economics 2: The World Economy

The following SQA Advanced Diplomas were selected for verification:

GM51 48	Business
GM52 48	Business with Accounting
GM57 48	Global Trade and Business
GP0N 48	Financial Services

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.

Economics units

Evidence included: CVs/resumes, CPD records, copies of certificates, publication details, research interest, employment history, attendance at SQA events, staff meeting minutes, internal verification and standardisation records.

All of the staff in assessor and internal verifier roles were academically very well qualified holding both an undergraduate and postgraduate degree or professional award. Many have considerable experience of delivering, assessing and internally verifying SQA awards often at more than one centre. Records evidenced a high degree of engagement through participation at internal training events as well as SQA sponsored events. There were examples of staff holding 'Best Teacher/Elite Teacher' awards as well as some having attended Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE) sponsored teacher training courses at UK universities. In some cases there was evidence of centre staff working with staff from other centres, and such co-operation is to be encouraged.

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

Generic

Evidence included: Book lists, records of meetings, staff/centre manual, subject materials, resource checklists, samples of teaching resources, internal verification and standardisation records, course minutes, safety checks, details of assessments, equipment lists, centre processes.

Centres often evidence criterion 2.4 by providing a range of documents and records as outlined above. Some centres provided a specific policy that explained the processes they applied in making the required checks and then supported the policy through supplementary records. Other centres omitted any policy and evidenced the criterion through a range of documents. Whilst the latter approach was generally successful the evidence sometimes appeared disjointed and it was easier to arrive at a verification decision when centres also provided an overall explanation of their review process.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

Generic

Evidence included: Entrance test records, admission requirements, candidate manuals, induction schedules and records, language test results, details of the language year, guidance systems, PDP processes, support services, details of staff availability, personal tutor records, individual/personal learning plans.

Meeting criterion 3.2 is best evidenced through the submission of a range of documents as it is unlikely that a single piece of evidence will not adequately demonstrate that the centre meets the requirements of criterion 3.2. Centres submitted a range of documents with some submissions containing a greater range than others. Centres have their own admissions policies, but all must offer an appropriate language training year and all candidates must meet the language requirements set by SQA. Language results were examined at the verification events. In addition, centres must demonstrate that candidates who meet the language requirements are then prepared for the further two years of study. This was evidenced through the provision of a range of documents such as details of induction, student support services and processes and other items of evidence listed above.

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

Generic

Evidence included: Assessment schedules, delivery schedules, individual tutor records, individual/personal development planning, WeChat records, out of class staff availability

details, student appraisal records, mentoring systems, support services, staff responsibilities regarding their students.

There is an overlap between criterion 3.2 and criterion 3.3 and some of the evidence submitted was relevant to both criteria. Centres provided details of scheduled classes with some being held online due to circumstances. The pandemic undoubtedly impacted centres and candidates alike and centres have worked hard to mitigate that impact. Centres usually specified how candidates were able to interact with staff outside class time — which is important. Some centres provided details of progress reviews, individual tutor sessions, etc, staff responsibilities and student support processes.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

Generic and Economics units

Evidence included: SQA assessments, prior-verified assessments, centre manuals, staff manuals, quality manuals, internal verification processes, standardisation and internal verification records, minutes of course team meetings, assessor summary and internal verifier reports, marking schemes.

Centres provided details of the internal quality assurance process and completed verification records, assessments and minutes of meetings. Centres understand the SQA requirements and the need for collaborative working between assessors and the internal verifier to ensure that standardisation is achieved through identifying the unit requirements and standards and ensuring that assessment decisions are consistently made and appropriate. Centres were familiar with the Economics units and two centres used the new Economic Issues unit with the examination. Several centres provided excellent narrative accounts of assessment decisions in their records. Some centres create assessor summary reports for each unit that contain an evaluative and reflective account of the delivery and assessment experiences. The best centres ensure that reflection and lessons learned are taken forward and acted on, and many embed this within their internal quality assurance process. This has been strongly encouraged through the SQA 'Circle of Success' model promoted at the 2019 SQA Professional Development Conference held in Beijing.

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

Economics units

Evidence included: SQA assessments, prior-verified assessments, internal verification records including the pre-delivery checks, unit specifications, minutes of meetings, standardisation records, invigilation records, assessor reports, quality manual, staff responsibilities.

Centres provided a range of documents with all submitting SQA and/or prior-verified assessments. Some submitted invigilation records for supervised assessments, attendance sign-in sheets, originality declarations, etc to demonstrate that assessments were used under the appropriate conditions. Centre staff studied the unit specifications and discussed the standards and identified the requirements. Critically, centres submitted internal verification records (including the pre-delivery check) that are essential to evidence that the staff involved have studied and understood the unit specification and checked that the assessments are valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair.

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

Generic

Evidence included: Quality manuals, internal verification process, staff responsibilities, plagiarism and malpractice policies, authenticity checks, internal verification records, invigilation records, assessment attendance records.

All centres use originality and/or authenticity declarations and all have appropriate policies and procedures relating to plagiarism and malpractice. Staff undertake checks as part of the process of making assessment judgements and all centres have staff and centre manuals that detail staff responsibilities. Candidates are provided with handbooks that contain details of their responsibilities and information relating to the course and assessment. Verification records include checks to ensure that staff have identified unit and assessment requirements. Some centres also provide examples of invigilation reports and other documents to further show that assessment conditions have been applied.

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

Economics units

Evidence included: Candidate scripts, projects, examination papers, internal verification records, assessor reports, candidate sample, and overall class results.

Centres provided suitable samples of candidate evidence as required for virtual verification events. Evidence submitted cut across grades in the case of graded units and across different quality of submissions for those units without grades. Results lists provided details of candidates achieving or not achieving units and the grades obtained in graded units. All units require an element of assessor judgement when making assessment decisions and the rationale of such decisions is best where there are clear and comprehensive internal verification records that contain a rationale for the decisions made. The best records contained examples where the assessor and internal verifier discussed particular cases before applying a reasoned and considered decision. Feedback to candidates about performance was mixed with some excellent examples, whilst it is an area where some centres could focus more effort. Two centres used the new Economic Issues unit with the examination assessment. This unit will replace the older HP6T 47 Economics Unit when the new awards are introduced.

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

Generic

Evidence included: Centre evidence retention policies, data handling and management policies, details of secure storage facilities, storage records, access records and details of secure document disposal.

All centres provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that they have a policy for evidence retention that meets the requirements set by SQA. The range of evidence submitted varied with some centres providing more evidence and detail than others.

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

Generic

Evidence included: Course team meeting minutes, flow charts, internal verification records, dissemination records, records of staff discussing and acting upon qualification verification feedback, attendance at feedback events.

Centres managed to evidence the dissemination of qualification verification feedback. Some centres provided stronger evidence than others through the provision of a clear communication policy that was followed up with supporting documents showing that the policy was being implemented.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

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

Criterion 2.1

Some of the staff are fortunate enough to have gained considerable experience in delivering, assessing and verifying SQA awards. Many have an enviable track record in attending both internal training as well as SQA sponsored events, and there was evidence that information from SQA events was being passed on to staff who had not been able to attend events.

Criterion 2.4

Details of the review process were comprehensively supported with a range of clear and coherent evidence that showed each element of the criterion was periodically reviewed.

Criterion 3.2

Some centres evidenced excellent levels of guidance and support through staff availability and guidance, language support, study skills, mentoring support from peers, etc. A specific example was where a centre holds a candidate symposium in week 8 of each semester where student delegates provide feedback and ideas for improvements. Another area relates to induction where some centres provided a very comprehensive induction to help inform and guide candidates, followed by ongoing candidate support.

Criterion 3.3

Mentoring systems to provide peer support, individual/personal learning planning that encouraged each candidate to reflect on their progress, regular scheduled support meetings with staff with ongoing tailored candidate support.

Criterion 4.2

Assessor summary, standardisation and internal verification reports that evaluated and reflected upon delivery and assessment followed by taking lessons learned forward to improve future delivery and assessment.

Criterion 4.3

Some of the internal verification records contained excellent narrative records of discussions relating to the assessments and their use. Some centres provide assessor summary reports that are very useful evaluative and reflective accounts of the delivery and assessment of individual units that can inform future changes.

Criterion 4.4

Use of a variety of checks including electronic plagiarism checks and questioning.

Criterion 4.6

- ◆ Some centres produced concise but, where necessary, detailed narrative accounts within their internal verification records with regard to some assessment decisions, and this is to be encouraged. Such records are transparent and provide an insight into decision making for external verification as well as being a useful record for future assessment and a guide for new staff.
- ◆ Some centres provided truly excellent feedback and comments on checklists that would enable candidates to make improvements in future submissions.
- ◆ The use of review comments for electronically submitted work by one centre was a good means by which assessors can provide feedback.
- ◆ One centre operated an excellent double marking system where a sample of scripts were double marked to help identify the required standards and to ensure better consistency in making assessment judgements.

Criterion 4.9

There were examples where not only was there clear evidence showing that qualification verification feedback is received, disseminated and, very importantly, acted upon to help improve future delivery and assessment. This is often evidenced in internal verification records and assessor reports that include actions to be taken forward and then acted upon to ensure that potential improvements to delivery and assessment are implemented.

Specific areas for development

The following areas for development were reported during session 2021–22:

Criterion 2.1

Some staff are newer and much of their training has come through internal training. The pandemic has undoubtedly caused disruption to SQA holding events and has put a strain on centres. It is important that as the pandemic recedes that staff are again given the opportunity to participate in SQA and other relevant training.

Criterion 2.4

Sometimes evidence appeared disconnected and disjointed because centres did not provide details of their review policies. Providing clear and coherent details of the centre review processes with a range of supporting examples of evidence to demonstrate that all elements of criterion 2.4 are regularly reviewed is desirable and to be encouraged. In addition, centres should ensure that evidence submitted supports all elements (assessment environments, equipment, etc) detailed in the criterion.

Criterion 3.2

Details of candidate induction would help strengthen some claims and centres are encouraged to ensure that resources are concentrated on this area followed by providing ongoing reviews and support for candidates. Some centres would benefit from providing a broader range of evidence to better show how their candidates are selected, prepared for the SQA awards and supported throughout their studies.

Criterion 3.3

Some centres would benefit from introducing personal tutor systems to ensure each candidate has a dedicated tutor from whom they can gain advice and support. Peer mentoring schemes can also be beneficial.

Criterion 4.2

Some centres internal verification records could include greater narrative feedback on candidate performance, assessment decisions, along with reflection and suggestions for improving future delivery and assessment. It is then important that centres embed a review of this evaluation and reflection within the internal quality assurance process to ensure that potential improvements are adopted. It is important that where a centre encounters problems such as language ability, problems relating to candidate attitude, or exceptional problems such as those caused by the pandemic, that these are fully recorded in the internal verification reports.

Criterion 4.3

Whilst many centres already create excellent internal verification and standardisation records some could improve their records by ensuring that narrative accounts of the meetings are better recorded. Assessor summary reports for individual units are also encouraged as a means of fostering improvements for future delivery and assessment. This would more clearly evidence that staff fully understand the unit and assessment requirements and the greater reflection and evaluation would assist standardisation as well as encourage the adoption of future improvements.

In the units HP6T 47 and HP6P 48, some outcomes allow the use of candidates' 'own notes'. It is essential that the notes used have been created by the individual candidates rather than being produced centrally and then a common set used by all candidates. It is also important that in the same units that the candidates do not know in advance of the assessment which evidence requirements have been selected for assessment.

Criterion 4.4

In the Economics units candidates sometimes use tables, charts and diagrams. When these are reproduced the source must be recorded.

Criterion 4.6

- ◆ Those centres whose internal verification records contain little insight into the making of assessment decisions for situations where a pass is debatable, would benefit from better recording of the basis on which those decisions are made.
- ◆ Some centres should provide greater feedback to candidates to cover not only where further work is required but to also cover how they might improve work overall as well as highlight what they have done well. Some candidates could be just achieving and without sufficient feedback highlighting areas where they could improve performance, those candidates will be less likely to attain those improvements.
- ◆ In the new Economic Issues unit with the examination assessment, centres must carefully study the rules in the unit specification and SQA ASP regarding marking.

Criterion 4.7

Some centres would benefit from providing their detailed retention policy along with supporting evidence that shows clearly that the policy is being implemented. Examples of potential evidence are provided under criterion 4.7 within this report.

Criterion 4.9

Some centres could better demonstrate the link between disseminating qualification verification feedback and taking that information forward to help improve future delivery and assessment. This could be facilitated through adding a review of QV feedback as a standing item on course team meeting agendas and in the pre-delivery checklist. Receiving and sharing feedback is one thing but it is important that lessons learned are applied and the 'Circle of Success' is closed.