



Guide to Qualification Verification for Centres in China 2015–18

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Change log for August 2016

<p>Pages 6 and 7, Three phases of internal verification</p>	<p>Before assessment, first sentence changed to: 'This would include checking/agreeing the interpretation of assessment materials, and requirements; agreeing how assessment should proceed <i>and checking that resources are up to date and sufficient</i>'.</p> <p>After assessment, second sentence changed to: 'This will normally involve the review of previous assessment and verification decisions, processes, practices <i>and resources</i>'.</p>
<p>Page 13, Criterion 2.4, Guidance on evidencing the criterion</p>	<p>New first sentence added: 'The scheduling and carrying out of reviews is part of a centre's procedures, ensuring resources are checked ahead of assessment and reflected upon at appropriate points thereafter for quality improvement purposes'.</p> <p>Second paragraph, first two sentences changed to: 'Centres will differ in terms of how and when they <i>schedule</i> reviews. This may happen every time a new cohort of candidates commence <i>and/or complete</i> a specific programme'.</p> <p>New third paragraph added: 'Reviews of resources will also be triggered by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ changes to the qualifications being offered where resources will be required to support the introduction of new or revised Units ◆ feedback highlighting the need for updating resources, which may come from internal comments or reviews/IV or external quality assurance visits. <p>Fourth paragraph changed to: 'Systems Verifiers will look at the procedures and mechanisms for managing reviews, <i>encompassing the type of arrangements described above. This will be checked under a separate criterion (2.3). It is the Qualification Verifier's role to look at the evidence of systematic review taking place.</i></p> <p>New fifth paragraph added: 'As part of the review process, centres should ensure that all candidates undertaking an SQA qualification have equal access to available resources across all assessment sites'.</p>
<p>Page 14, Criterion 2.4, Examples of evidence</p>	<p>Added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Pre-delivery/assessment checks ◆ Course/programme reviews, action logs, minutes of meetings with review as a discussion item. ◆ Site checklists, or equivalent documents, may be considered as evidence of initial and on-going reviews of other campuses'.

Page 15, Criterion 3.2, Specific requirements	Changed to: 'In terms of prior achievement, candidates must meet any entry requirements <i>set by the awarding body or the approved centre</i> and be in a position to be assessed in accordance with the relevant Unit specification, Course Tutor handbook, Group Award Strategy document'..
Page 15, Criterion 3.2, Examples of evidence	Changed to: 'Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plans, Individual Learning Plans, Progress Reviews'.
Page 15, Criterion 3.2, Additional sources of information	Changed to: 'The Guide to Assessment provides more information on formative assessment <i>which is related to candidate development needs</i> '.
Page 16, Criterion 3.3, Rationale for criterion inclusion	Changed to: 'It is important that assessors maintain regular contact with candidates throughout the life of their qualification so that progression can be monitored and timely information and <i>effective</i> support provided'.
Page 16, Criterion 3.3, Guidance on evidencing the criterion	New first paragraph added: 'Centres may use other terms for assessment plans such as assessment schedules or Learning Teaching and Assessment plans'. Second paragraph changed to: 'Maintaining contact is a key assessor responsibility, the purpose being to review candidate progress <i>and achievement in relation to where they are within the assessment process</i> '.
Page 16, Criterion 3.3, Examples of evidence	Changed to: 'Any relevant documentation that shows progress reviews have taken place, <i>such as records of individual tutorial sessions, assessment plans, assessment schedules, learning, teaching and assessment plans, progress reviews</i> '.
Page 17, Criterion 4.2, Rationale for criterion inclusion	Changed to: 'This criterion is about assessors and verifiers applying their centre's assessment and verification procedures consistently, <i>in full and effectively</i> '.
Page 19, Criterion 4.3, Specific requirements	New first sentence added: 'This criterion requires assessment instruments/methods to be appropriately selected (prior to assessment), and used (during assessment)'. Second paragraph changed to: ' <i>All instruments/methods selected and used must meet the quality assurance principles of validity and reliability etc.</i> The abbreviated meanings of the quality assurance principles are:'
Page 21, Criterion 4.4, Examples of evidence	Added: 'Induction checklists, checks on assessment conditions, use of plagiarism software'.
Page 25, Criterion 4.9, Guidance on evidencing the criterion	First paragraph changed to: 'Centres must provide evidence of having disseminated the feedback contained in Qualification Verifier reports, <i>in a systematic way</i> , and wherever there are Required Actions, having agreed how they will be met, and who will be responsible for taking the required actions'.

	<p>Third paragraph changed to: 'Methods of dissemination will be dependent on each centre's <i>arrangements</i>. <i>These arrangements</i> will usually have a degree of flexibility to take account of report content, eg the amount and nature of the action points/feedback given on a visit, <i>but should not just be ad hoc</i>.</p>
<p>Page 25, Criterion 4.9, Examples of evidence</p>	<p>Changed to: 'Evidence of feedback being disseminated to staff <i>and evidence that it has been used to update/improve assessment practice</i>'.</p>

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Part A

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance has primarily been developed to support staff in SQA-approved centres in China that offer SQA Advanced qualifications through the qualification verification process.

Qualification verification is the process by which SQA ensures that centres are assessing their candidates in line with SQA qualification standards and that assessment decisions comply with SQA's Quality Assurance Criteria.

Qualification Verifiers (QVs) are experienced subject experts who are appointed by SQA to undertake qualification verification on SQA's behalf.

- 1.2 Part B provides specific guidance in relation to each quality assurance criterion for qualification verification, including:

- ◆ the reason for inclusion of the quality criterion in qualification verification
- ◆ specific SQA requirements relating to the criterion
- ◆ examples of types of evidence
- ◆ additional sources of information and guidance available from SQA

The Qualification Verifiers will work from exactly the same guidance.

- 1.3 There are other quality assurance criteria which are only covered in systems verification. There is a separate guide to systems verification.

Systems verification is the process by which SQA ensures centres are managing their systems and resources to meet SQA's Quality Assurance Criteria.

These criteria are not included in this guide, but the full criteria are available in the quality assurance section of SQA's website for China: www.cn.sqa.org.uk.

Where there are gaps in the numbering of criteria in this document, this is because systems verification criteria have been excluded.

2 Sources of support

Telephone number: +00 44 141 282 6428

Source of support	Nature of support
China Verification E-mail: china.verification@sqa.org.uk	Receiving prior verification requests. Verification scheduling, timetabling and logistics. Issuing reports and receiving, logging, tracking and forwarding to QVs evidence to address required action points. Dealing with quality assurance queries relating to verification activity.
China Country Manager Contact details E-mail: toni.yang@sqa.org.uk	First point of contact for specific centre queries
Subject Implementation Managers E-mail: SIMChina@sqa.org.uk	Providing support and guidance to tutors and course leaders of SQA Advanced Diploma Business-related qualifications in China. They provide support to centres and staff on the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ planning◆ preparing◆ delivering◆ assessing and◆ reviewing your SQA Advanced Diploma programme

3 SQA's values

SQA's corporate values are:

- ◆ **Trusted** — We follow agreed procedures and are open and honest in our communications
- ◆ **Progressive** — We view new and unfamiliar approaches with an open mind, whilst ensuring quality is maintained
- ◆ **Enabling** — We work in partnership with SQA centres to achieve common goals of excellence and consistency

You can expect that Qualification Verifiers will act in accordance with these values at all times in their dealings with you.

4 Planning qualification verification

4.1 Visiting verification

QVs are allocated centres and qualifications for qualifications verification visits and specific Units to verify during the visits. You will have a qualifications verification visit within the first year after gaining approval to offer a qualification, if you have registered candidates studying on the SQA Advanced Diploma. Thereafter, the visits will be scheduled according to the level of need established from the previous visit.

The SQA verification planning team will contact your SQA Co-ordinator and provide a list of all the Units your centre is approved to offer. You will be asked to provide information relating to the SQA Advanced Diploma Units you are offering that year and your preferred time period for visiting verification to take place.

The SQA Advanced Diploma Units to be verified will be selected by the SQA verification planning team.

Once Unit selections have been confirmed, the Quality Assurance (QA) Logistics team will use the information provided to complete a timetable of activity for your centre.

The QA Logistics team will confirm with your SQA Co-ordinator:

- ◆ the assessment location to be visited
- ◆ final Unit selections
- ◆ the mode of qualification verification activity (see below)
- ◆ schedules of activity
- ◆ the QV's details

4.2 Remote verification (sometimes referred to as postal)

SQA may determine the appropriate mode of verification activity to be undertaken at your centre is remote (postal) verification, instead of carrying out a visit. The term 'remote verification' means verifying a centre's compliance in relation to SQA's Quality Criteria from a distance.

4.3 Central verification

Central verification is currently used for verification of Graded Units of SQA Advanced Qualifications. It may, however, also be used to verify other SQA Advanced Units.

Central verification activity is planned in the same way as visiting verification activity, by the SQA Verification Planning team, and is co-ordinated by the Quality Assurance Logistics team.

The QA Logistics team will provide you with the following:

- ◆ a list of the SQA Advanced Diploma Units that have been selected for verification
- ◆ evidence submission deadlines

- ◆ the details of what evidence must be submitted
- ◆ central verification quality assurance criteria
- ◆ a blank Verification Sample Form (to be printed and completed by the centre for each Unit selected for verification)

Where central verification has been confirmed as the mode of verification activity, your centre will not be expected to provide the same level of evidence as would be expected during visiting verification. As a minimum requirement, your centre will be asked to provide evidence in relation to the criteria mapped to Central Verification in Appendix 1.

The QA Logistics team will provide your centre with a specific timeline to request changes to the proposed verification timetable in relation to dates of activity and the Units being verified. Once confirmed, the QA Logistics team will produce a final schedule of activity for each centre, which cannot be amended.

5 Information on sampling

5.1 The general purpose of qualification verification sampling is to confirm that centres are interpreting standards correctly and that they have in place internal verification and assessment systems that allow valid, reliable and fair assessment decisions to be made.

5.2 As qualification verification is based on the management of quality assurance risk, the sampling of an appropriate range of assessment and verification decisions is an important part of ensuring quality.

5.3 Visiting verification samples

Visiting Qualification Verifiers will verify assessment evidence for 12 candidates.

The specific sampling approach for each centre will be decided by the Qualifications Verifier based on a range of factors, including:

- ◆ the needs of the centre
- ◆ Units allocated by SQA to the verifier
- ◆ candidate numbers on each qualification and Unit
- ◆ sampling and interviewing all assessors and internal verifiers over time
- ◆ prioritising new assessors and internal verifiers
- ◆ verifying all assessment methods and assessment instruments
- ◆ prioritising new and revised qualifications and Units
- ◆ looking at qualifications and Units where issues have previously been identified

5.4 Remote and central verification samples

For remote (postal) and central verification, your centre will be asked to select a sample of 12 candidates for each Unit.

6 Candidate evidence retention for sampling purposes

- 6.1 SQA's candidate evidence retention requirement provides Qualification Verifiers with an opportunity to sample a centre's past completed assessment evidence where there is no or limited availability of current ongoing assessment evidence.
- 6.2 SQA requires centres to retain all candidate evidence for the Units until at least three weeks after the official completion date (the completion date provided by the centre to SQA).

All candidate evidence must be retained after verification planning activity commences and until any required actions are fully completed and closed off.

7 Documentary evidence

- 7.1 The QV will look at documentary evidence during the visit. Details of the types of evidence expected against each quality assurance criterion are given in Part B of this guide.

Appendix 1 provides details of the criteria which will be covered in central verification and the documentary evidence which must be sent.

- 7.2 Evidence should be in the form of electronic files or data sticks.
- 7.3 All documents for qualification verification must be in English.

8 Conduct and output of QV activity

- 8.1 At the beginning of a visit the QV will discuss and agree with you the schedule for the day.

This also gives you an opportunity to discuss any issues you might have prior to the verification visit getting underway and to explain the arrangements you have put in place in relation to:

- ◆ access to documents — procedures and records of implementation
- ◆ the sampling of assessment evidence — accessibility and location (rooms where the QVs can work privately)
- ◆ decisions of assessors and verifiers (to be sampled alongside evidence)
- ◆ availability of assessors, internal verifiers and candidates for interview
- ◆ domestic arrangements — location of fire exits and toilets, lunch arrangements (working lunches only), how to contact the SQA Co-ordinator
- ◆ who will be available at the end of the visit for feedback

There may be more than one QV visiting on the same day, so you may need to agree several schedules and consider where there will be joint activities — for example, you may agree a joint feedback session or make one copy of common documentary evidence available to all the QVs.

9 Sampling activities

9.1 Sampling of incomplete Unit evidence

SQA's guidance states that there should be enough evidence available to enable to the Qualification Verifier to make an informed decision and for centres to gain enough valuable feedback on the assessment of the Outcomes.

This means that centres do not have to have completed Units, although some completed Units are desirable as part of the sampling mix. The unit should be a minimum of 50% complete at least before being verified to enable the Qualification Verifier to make an informed judgement. In many cases, it is most appropriate to sample completed Units — for example, where the assessment is an end of Unit examination.

9.2 Evidence of internal verification

The QV will look at evidence of internal verification activities in all of the three phases of verification described below. The types of evidence expected against the criteria relating to internal verification are detailed in Part B.

9.3 Three phases of internal verification

SQA promotes a three-phase model of internal verification, which means that there are a number of opportunities to sample different aspects of the verification process on each visit. Those phases are:

- ◆ before assessment
- ◆ during assessment
- ◆ after assessment

9.3.1 Before assessment — This would include checking/agreeing the interpretation of assessment materials, and requirements; agreeing how assessment should proceed and checking that resources are up to date and sufficient'.

You should refer to the secure site for centres in china <http://cn.sqa.org.uk/login.html> for SQA assessment exemplars.

Even if an assessment exemplar is provided by SQA, you should check that it is still valid and that your assessors and internal verifiers agree on how to use it.

This must happen for new awards, and you should also review assessments before a new qualification block/semester runs.

9.3.2 During assessment — this can be further categorised into ongoing and final verification.

Ongoing verification informs the internal verifier as to the quality of assessment being carried out and helps identify where additional support for assessors may be required. This phase is especially important where new Units are being offered and/or where assessors are assessing Units for the first time.

Final verification is related to checking the quality of final assessment decisions on completed Outcomes/Units.

9.3.3 After assessment — this covers the review and evaluation of the overall assessment process, with a view to continuous improvement in relation to qualifications and Units. After assessment, second sentence changed to: This will normally involve the review of previous assessment and verification decisions, processes, practices and resources. This will normally involve the review of previous assessment and verification decisions, processes and practices. Reviews will normally take account of views from verifiers (internal and external) and candidates.

10 Interviews with assessors/verifiers/candidates during QV visits

10.1 Interviews with assessors and verifiers give the Qualification Verifier a valuable insight into how assessment and verification takes place and allows them an opportunity to find out information that can't readily be found from looking at records of evidence and assessment.

It is important that you ensure that assessors and internal verifiers are available to be interviewed on the day of the QV visit.

If assessor and internal verifiers cannot be available in your centre, they could be contacted by telephone or using other technology such as Skype.

10.2 Example areas for discussion with assessors and internal verifiers:

- ◆ internal verification
- ◆ how assessors are supported, eg support from internal verifiers
- ◆ how standardisation is achieved
- ◆ maintaining up-to-date subject knowledge through continuing professional development
- ◆ candidate induction
- ◆ ensuring access to assessment
- ◆ how the review process works

10.3 Interviewing candidates, individually or in groups, is valuable from the point of view of the QV finding out about the support they receive and how procedures are applied from their point of view.

10.4 Example areas for discussion with candidates:

- ◆ how often they have contact with their assessor
- ◆ induction to the SQA Advanced Diploma and Units
- ◆ support and guidance provided to them
- ◆ communication by assessors of their progress and achievement
- ◆ feedback by assessors to candidates on their assessments (written)

11 Electronically recorded evidence

- 11.1 Candidate evidence that has been recorded electronically (computer files, e-mail etc) must be subject to the same levels of security and access as hard-copy evidence. This helps ensure, but does not guarantee, that the evidence submitted remains the candidate's own work.
- 11.2 In all circumstances, where electronic evidence is being used, centres must ensure the evidence submitted by candidates:
- ◆ is received securely by the appropriate designated centre staff
 - ◆ cannot be altered by others — candidates must be able to protect/lock their evidence before they submit it
 - ◆ is stored securely in a restricted access file throughout assessment and until the completion of the assessment and quality assurance processes
- 11.3 Assessors and verifiers must be able to record that they have confirmed assessment/verification decisions.
- 11.4 If you can demonstrate the above requirements in your electronic system, Qualification Verifiers should not also require you to print off hard copies of assessment/verification records.
- 11.5 Where remote (postal)/central verification activity has been requested and evidence is to be submitted to SQA Glasgow office, your centre is encouraged to submit files electronically or on a data stick.

If your centre is submitting electronic evidence to SQA Glasgow office, it essential that you submit the files in a format that will allow Qualification Verifiers to have easy accessibility of the evidence, ie one candidate portfolio of evidence to one file.

12 Feedback on the verification activity

- 12.1 Once the Qualification Verifier has conducted all planned verification activities they will be in a position to make a judgement in relation to each criterion. You will receive feedback in relation to:
- ◆ the identification of good practice
 - ◆ recommendations
 - ◆ required action points
 - ◆ the sufficiency of evidence
- 12.2 The QV will provide verbal feedback at the end of the visit to the SQA Co-ordinator and/or any other staff you choose to have present. You should ensure that this takes place in a private, quiet area. There should be nothing included in the final written report which you were not made aware of on the day of the visit.

13 The report on the verification activity

13.1 The report will include a rating for every criterion, as described below:

Green: Sufficient evidence — this means that the centre has provided evidence that fully meets the criterion (no required action points, but there may be recommendations)

Amber: Insufficient evidence — this means the centre can provide some evidence in support of the criterion, but it is not sufficient (required action points will be set and there may also be some recommendations)

Red: Little or no evidence — this means that either no evidence has been presented or that the evidence provided by the centre falls well short of meeting the criterion (required action points will be set and there may also be some recommendations).

13.2 Some criteria have specific requirements which must be met in order to fully meet the criterion. If any of these requirements are not addressed, the rating for the criterion will be amber or red, and required actions will be set. If there are no specific requirements stated, the wording of the criterion provides all the necessary information.

13.3 The criteria have different impact levels, which are shown against every criterion in Part B.

13.4 Having made a decision in relation to each criterion, the QV will explain their decision to you along with the rationale for making it.

They will also tell you the confidence statement for each of the three categories of qualification verification quality assurance criteria, based on the evidence available. This will be one of the following statements:

- ◆ High level of confidence
- ◆ Broad confidence
- ◆ Reasonable confidence
- ◆ Minimal confidence
- ◆ No confidence

SQA reserves the right to change the rating for a criterion if the decision of the Qualification Verifier is overturned through the standardisation process.

13.5 For the purposes of qualification verification, we define good practice as effective practice within an organisation that is over and above expected practice and may demonstrate a particularly creative approach.

13.6 Recommendations are made so that a centre may enhance their existing provision. They are not mandatory and you do not need to act upon them. However, you are strongly advised to discuss these with your course team and consider whether to act on them.

Required action points must be acted upon and are given when a judgement has been made that there is either insufficient evidence, little evidence or no evidence (amber or red).

- 13.7 Where the verification decisions from a visit result in your centre being given a required action in relation to a specific criterion, the required action should be communicated to you by the QV verbally and in writing for each criterion using a Summary of Agreed Actions Form. This should be signed by your SQA Co-ordinator or centre representative and the QV before the end of the visit. A copy of the Summary of Agreed Actions Form will be given to the SQA Co-ordinator or their representative and a copy held by the Qualification Verifier.

The report should reflect the information that was communicated to you at the verbal feedback.

The comments section relating to each criterion should include comments on the sources of evidence seen by the QV to justify their verification decision.

The actions should also be clear and specific, with an agreed date for achievement.

- 13.8 Reports from remote and central verification.

Where the verification decisions from remote or central verification result in your centre being given a required action in relation to a specific criterion, the required action will be communicated to you in the Qualification Verification Report.

The comments section relating to each criterion should include comments on the sources of evidence seen by the QV to justify their verification decision.

The actions should also be clear and specific, with an agreed date for achievement

- 13.9 If required actions are set as a result of SQA qualification verification, an agreed timescale will be set for addressing these. Sanctions may be applied if you do not fully meet the action points within this timescale.

Where required actions have been identified, any sanctions in addition to an action plan will be discussed and standardised by quality assurance officers within SQA and advised to the centre in the report.

You should submit completed evidence for each required action point by the required date to china.verification@sqa.org.uk rather than to the QV. This ensures that required actions can be tracked by SQA.

The evidence must be in electronic form to be e-mailed, and should be in a format which is clear for the QV to review. Please contact china.verification@sqa.org.uk if you are not sure what format to send the evidence in.

Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, which should be notified to SQA as soon as they are known.

SQA will remind you before evidence is due. Risk ratings may be increased and sanctions applied if you do not submit evidence by the agreed date.

If you submit incomplete or insufficient evidence to fully meet the required actions you may be given another opportunity to submit. Again, risk ratings may be increased and sanctions applied if you do not submit evidence which fully addresses the required actions.

SQA will notify you of any further action required, or to confirm that the action point has been fully met by the evidence submitted and closed off.

13.10 You should contact china.verification@sqa.org.uk if you want to query anything in the report.

14 Appeals

14.1 If you disagree with SQA's decision on the outcome of qualification verification, required actions and/or sanctions placed as a result, you can appeal.

14.2 Appeals may only be submitted by the head of centre, or his/her representative, who should first contact the Head of SQA Advanced Diploma/Vocational Qualifications, within 10 working days of receipt of the written report to agree a time to discuss the matter. If, after this discussion, the head of centre is not satisfied, an appeal can be raised.

14.3 The appeal should be submitted to the Director of Operations at the Corporate Office at SQA's Glasgow office. It should be submitted in writing, clearly marked as an appeal, by the head of centre within 15 working days of the date of the discussion with the SQA manager.

14.4 The appeal must include a written account of why the head of centre thinks that SQA's decision is wrong, and this account must address the reasons given by SQA. The evidence which is submitted in support of the appeal must be relevant to the case being made.

14.5 See the SQA publication *Appeals Procedures* on the China website.

Part B: Qualification verification criteria

Category 2: Resource Management The centre procedures for managing resources must be documented, implemented and monitored to meet SQA requirements.	
Criterion 2.1	Assessors and internal verifiers must be competent to assess and internally verify, in line with the requirements of the qualification.
Specific requirements	<p>Assessors and internal verifiers must have the required up-to-date occupational experience and/or subject understanding. In some cases, specific qualifications will be required.</p> <p>Assessors and internal verifiers must undertake relevant continuing professional development activities and keep records of this.</p>
Impact rating	High
Why is this included?	To ensure the validity and integrity of the qualifications offered by SQA, it is important that assessors/internal verifiers have the appropriate qualifications and occupational competence in relation to the qualifications they are assessing/verifying.
Support information	
Guidance on evidencing the criterion	This SQA quality assurance criterion will also be covered during systems verification, where policies and procedures will be checked.
Examples of evidence	<p>Where a qualification requirement, records of relevant occupational/subject experience and qualifications, which must be in English or be accompanied by an English transcript.</p> <p>Records of continuing professional development, also in English.</p>

Criterion 2.4	There must be evidence of initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials.
Specific requirements	Initial reviews must take place before the assessment of a qualification(s) begins to ensure all of the appropriate resources are in place. Ongoing reviews of resources are required thereafter to ensure resources continue to meet qualification requirements.
Impact rating	High
Why is this included?	Reviews are firstly important in ensuring resources appropriately meet qualification requirements. On a second level, reviews can aid quality improvement.
Support information	
Guidance on evidencing the criterion	<p>The scheduling and carrying out of reviews is part of a centre's procedures, ensuring resources are checked ahead of assessment and reflected upon at appropriate points thereafter for quality improvement purposes.</p> <p>Centres will differ in terms of how and when they schedule reviews. This may happen every time a new cohort of candidates commence and/or complete a specific programme.</p> <p>Reviews of resources will also be triggered by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ changes to the qualifications being offered where resources will be required to support the introduction of new or revised Units ◆ feedback highlighting the need for updating resources, which may come from internal comments or reviews/IV or external quality assurance visits. <p>Systems Verifiers will look at the procedures and mechanisms for managing reviews, encompassing the type of arrangements described above. This will be checked under a separate criterion (2.3). It is the Qualification Verifier's role to look at the evidence of systematic review taking place.</p> <p>As part of the review process, centres should ensure that all candidates undertaking an SQA qualification have equal access to available resources across all assessment sites.</p>
Examples of evidence	<p>Evidence of initial and ongoing reviews which could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ policy and procedures for conducting reviews ◆ dates of planned and completed reviews ◆ records of reviews and their outcomes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ examples of quality improvements made as a result of review ◆ pre-delivery/assessment checks ◆ Course/programme reviews, action logs, minutes of meetings with review as a discussion items ◆ Site checklists, or equivalent documents, may be considered as evidence of initial and on-going reviews of other campuses
<p>Additional sources of information</p>	<p>Review is mentioned in the first and second phases of the ‘three phases of internal verification’ in Part A of this guidance.</p> <p>There is an Internal Verification Toolkit on the QA page of SQA’s website.</p>

Category 3: Candidate support

Candidates are supported and guided through the qualifications for which they are entered.

Criterion 3.2	Candidates' development needs and prior achievements (where appropriate) must be matched against the requirements of the award.
Specific requirements	In terms of prior achievement, candidates must meet any entry requirements set by the awarding body or the approved centre and be in a position to be assessed in accordance with the relevant Unit specification, Course Tutor handbook, Group Award Strategy document.
Impact rating	Medium
Why is this included?	Identifying development needs and prior achievement helps ensure a more targeted approach is taken in helping candidates achieve their qualifications.
Support information	
Guidance on evidencing the criterion	<p>This criterion relates to identifying the prior achievements and development needs of candidates before or at the start of their Units/qualification, and matching candidate needs against qualification requirements.</p> <p>Prior achievements may include previously gained experience, knowledge and skills or qualifications.</p> <p>The identification of prior achievement at the commencement stage helps ensure that candidates satisfy any qualification entry requirements.</p> <p>The matching of needs, based on the knowledge/skills candidates' already have, allows the centre to establish if the qualification the candidate is aiming for is at an appropriate level and likely to be achievable.</p>
Examples of evidence	Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plans, Individual Learning Plans, Progress Reviews.
Additional sources of information	The Guide to Assessment provides more information on formative assessment which is related to candidate development needs.

Criterion 3.3	Candidates must have scheduled contact with their assessor to review their progress and to revise their assessment plans accordingly.
Impact rating	Medium
Why is this included?	It is important that assessors maintain regular contact with candidates throughout the life of their qualification so that progression can be monitored and timely information and effective support provided.
Support information	
Guidance on evidencing the criterion	<p>Centres may use other terms for assessment plans such as assessment schedules or Learning Teaching and Assessment plans</p> <p>Maintaining contact is a key assessor responsibility, the purpose being to review candidate and achievement in relation to where they are within the assessment process, This process could be in relation to Outcomes/Units or in relation to the overall qualification.</p> <p>Contact should ensure candidates are clear in terms of their progress and in relation to where they are within the assessment process and what will be happening next. This is a two-way process between the assessor and the candidate.</p>
Examples of evidence	Any relevant documentation that shows progress reviews have taken place, such as records of individual tutorial sessions, assessment plans, assessment schedules, learning, teaching and assessment plans, progress reviews.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

The centre's internal assessment and verification procedures must be documented, implemented and monitored to meet qualification and SQA requirements.

Criterion 4.2	Internal assessment and verification procedures must be implemented to ensure standardisation of assessment.
Impact rating	Medium
Why is this included?	This criterion is about assessors and verifiers applying their centre's assessment and verification procedures consistently, in full and effectively.
Support information	
Guidance on evidencing the criterion	<p>The Qualification Verifier will sample a range of assessment practice in relation to documented assessment procedures in order to measure consistency.</p> <p>The term 'assessment procedure' covers the assessment cycle and generally includes assessment planning/scheduling, judging evidence, re-assessment, recording assessment decisions, giving feedback, review.</p> <p>The term 'verification procedure' generally includes planning, sampling, making verification decisions, review.</p> <p>Centres are required to document their assessment and verification policies and procedures. Systems verifiers will look at these written policies and procedures and whether they meet SQA requirements.</p> <p>The role of the Qualification Verifier is to focus on the centre's implementation of these policies/procedures. However, if the Qualification Verifier identifies any concerns about the content of a centre's assessment/ IV policies or procedures, they will flag this up in their report so that the issue can be referred to a Systems Verifier to follow-up.</p> <p>There are some assessment procedures that are specific to particular qualifications. They are covered under 'Conditions of assessment' under Criterion 4.4. The centre should ensure that any queries are raised with SQA and resolved.</p>
Examples of evidence	The completion of records showing assessors/verifiers consistently follow their centre's assessment/verification procedures.

Additional sources of information	<p>Refer to guidance in Criterion 4.6 regarding SQA's three stages of internal verification.</p> <p>The following documents are also useful reference documents:</p> <p>Guide to Assessment includes guidance on the assessment process for SQA Units</p> <p>Internal Verification: A Guide for Centres offering SQA Qualifications</p> <p>Internal Verification Toolkit on the QA page of SQA's website</p>
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Criterion 4.3	Assessment instruments and methods and their selection and use must be valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair.
Specific requirements	<p>This criterion requires assessment instruments/methods to be appropriately selected (prior to assessment), and used (during assessment').</p> <p>All instruments/methods selected and used must meet the quality assurance principles of validity and reliability etc. The abbreviated meanings of the quality assurance principles are:</p> <p>Valid — Appropriate assessment methods/ instruments have been applied.</p> <p>Reliable — Clearly-defined standards of performance were used during assessment.</p> <p>Equitable — Assessment is accessible to all candidates who have the potential to be successful in it.</p> <p>Fair — Assessments have been objectively devised/selected and are free from barriers to achievement. Assessment practice must ensure all candidates have equal opportunities to succeed.</p> <p>Practicable — Assessments have been carried out efficiently and effectively.</p> <p>The above principles are described in full in SQAs Guide to Assessment. Refer to link in Additional sources of evidence.</p> <p>To support validity in assessment, centres must ensure access to the secure area of SQA's China website remains restricted to approved personnel only. SQA or centre-devised assessments must be securely stored.</p>
Impact rating	High
Why is this included?	This criterion is about how a centre demonstrates its selection and use of assessment methods/instruments to ensure validity, reliability, equitability and fairness in assessment.
Support information	
Guidance on evidencing the criterion	<p>For SQA Advanced Diploma qualifications, assessment methods are the basis on which instruments of assessment are chosen. Some SQA Advanced Diploma assessments are SQA devised — all centres have access to these on the secure section of SQA's China website under 'Assessment Exemplars/ Assessment Support Packs'.</p> <p>The centre may choose to use SQA's assessments or use their own. Where centres use their own, these should be submitted to SQA for prior verification. Refer to Additional sources of information.</p>

	<p>Selection: regardless of whether assessments are SQA or centre-devised, they should be subject to the centre’s system of internal verification before qualifications are delivered.</p> <p>Assessments must be selected and used in a way that ensures they are a true measure of the candidate’s skills and /or knowledge. This helps give assessment its validity and reliability. The centre’s standardisation arrangements can support these assessment principles very well by ensuring at the outset, and on an ongoing basis, assessors/verifiers have a common understanding of how assessments are to be applied.</p> <p>The approaches to assessment used should not impose any unnecessary barriers to individual candidates undertaking the assessments, and appropriate adjustments should be made, where this can be done without affecting the integrity of the assessment.</p> <p>Refer to ‘Assessment Arrangements’ link in Additional sources of information.</p>
Examples of evidence	Documented evidence of methods/instruments having been selected and applied.
Additional sources of information	<p>SQA’s Guide to Assessment includes more detailed information on the principles of assessment and selecting and using suitable methods and assessments.</p> <p>Information on prior verification</p> <p>The selection of assessment methods/instruments forms part of first phase of the ‘three phases of internal verification’ in Part A of this guidance.</p> <p>SQA Assessment Arrangements</p>

Criterion 4.4	Assessment evidence must be the candidate's own work, generated under SQA's required conditions.
Specific requirements	Centres must ensure that the evidence on which the assessment decision is made solely belongs to the candidate under assessment. Assessors are only able to make accurate assessment decisions, if this is the case.
Impact rating	High
Why is this included?	Determining the authenticity of each candidate's work is of prime importance in ensuring the integrity of their achievement.
Support information	
Guidance on evidencing the criterion	<p>Ensuring only the work of each submitting candidate is considered for assessment is a key centre responsibility.</p> <p>Candidates should be informed of the requirement to provide only authentic evidence. The responsibility for providing this information could involve one or more people/departments.</p> <p>Evidence generated by candidates not directly authenticated through for example direct assessor observation, should be subject to proportional authenticity checks, which may comprise comparison checks against previous submissions or questioning. Many centres use plagiarism detection software.</p> <p>Specific qualification arrangements/conditions are included in Unit Specifications or Group Award Strategy documents. Course Tutor Guides should detail the conditions of assessment.</p> <p>For SQA Advanced Diploma they might be supervised assessment, invigilated and other examination conditions such as open-book or closed-book assessment.</p> <p>Assessors/verifiers should apply their centre's policy and procedures if they suspect or discover evidence that is not authentic. If malpractice is suspected, the centre should take the necessary steps to resolve the situation. System Verifiers look at these policies/procedures when they carry out centre visits. Malpractice includes plagiarism, copying and personation.</p>
Examples of evidence	Evidence of assessors and/or internal verifiers confirming candidates work is authentic, induction checklists, checks on assessment conditions, use of plagiarism software'

Additional sources of information	Malpractice in Internally-Assessed Qualifications
Criterion 4.6	Evidence of candidates' work must be accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements.
Impact rating	High
Why is this included?	Accuracy and consistency in making assessment judgements not only ensure integrity in SQA qualifications, but helps ensure that final assessment decisions made and communicated to candidates are fair.
Support information	
Guidance on evidencing the criterion	<p>Accuracy and consistency are achieved when all assessors have the same clear interpretation of the standards they are assessing and the type, quality and quantity of evidence that can be expected for assessments to be deemed successful/complete.</p> <p>In support of ensuring consistency in assessment, standardisation is of key importance for assessors/verifiers. It provides a forum for raising and resolving issues and it supports everyone in making accurate and consistent judgements/decisions in relation to evidence.</p> <p>The three stages of internal verification that SQA requires centres to build into their IV system appropriate and timely opportunities for standardisation. For example:</p> <p>Before assessment begins for new qualifications, assessors and verifiers have opportunities to agree methods/instruments of assessment, assessment approaches and assessment materials. This is also a requirement of the qualification approval process.</p> <p>During assessment, periodically throughout the life of the qualification(s), assessor/verifier collaboration and agreement can provide effective support for all team members — especially beneficial for new assessors/verifiers.</p> <p>After assessment, during a process of review, assessors and verifiers can collectively reflect on the overall effectiveness of the assessment process for a particular qualification(s) with a view to taking action/making recommendations in order to improve practice.</p> <p>Whenever standardisation takes place, whether through physical meetings or by electronic means (discussion forums, e-mail exchange, webinars, tele/video conferencing, etc), the outcomes of the process should be recorded through, for example, minutes of meetings and/or a</p>

	continuous standardisation log summarising the discussions and stating decisions reached and actions agreed.
Examples of evidence	Assessment and internal verification records showing accurate and consistent assessment decisions being made.
Additional sources of information	<p>There are examples of different types of standardisation exercise on page 4 of SQA's Internal Verification: A Guide for Centres offering SQA Qualifications.</p> <p>There is an Internal Verification Toolkit on the QA page of SQA's website.</p>

Criterion 4.7	Candidate evidence must be retained in line with SQA requirements.
Specific requirements	SQA requires centres to retain all candidate evidence for the Group Award/Units until at least three weeks after the official completion date. However, if the initial contact for the session is made by the Qualification Verifier before three weeks after the completion date, all candidate evidence must be retained until after the verification visit has taken place.
Impact rating	High
Why is this included?	<p>SQA requires that candidate assessment evidence is retained by centres for defined periods for the purposes of internal and external verification, and in case of any resulting queries, candidate internal assessment appeals or suspected malpractice.</p> <p>This requirement provides Qualification Verifiers with an opportunity to sample the optimum amount of evidence during a centre visit. Sampling will focus mainly on current 'live' candidate evidence, but may also include some past completed assessment evidence.</p>
Support information	
Guidance on evidencing the criterion	<p>Evidence of centres meeting this criterion should be evident from the access they allow Qualification Verifiers to information prior to the visit and then during the visit.</p> <p>The need for evidence to be retained for qualification verification purposes should not be confused with SQA's Retention Policy, which is about specific assessment records and is looked at by Systems Verifiers.</p>
Examples of evidence	Candidate evidence available for qualification verification.

Criterion 4.9	Feedback from qualification verifiers must be disseminated to staff and used to inform assessment practice.
Impact rating	Medium
Why is this included?	If the results of qualification verification are made known to all relevant centre staff, this helps affirm what the centre is doing well as well as highlighting areas for improvement.
Support information	
Guidance on evidencing the criterion	<p>Centres must provide evidence of having disseminated the feedback contained in Qualification Verifier reports, in a systematic way, and wherever there are required actions, agreed how they will be met, and who will be responsible for taking the required actions.</p> <p>Centres may use meetings to disseminate feedback and/or circulate QV Reports to the relevant assessors/verifiers.</p> <p>Methods of dissemination will be dependent on each centre's arrangements. These arrangements will usually have a degree of flexibility to take account of report content, eg the amount and nature of the action points/feedback given on a visit, but should not just be ad hoc.</p> <p>Qualification Verifier reports can be a useful source of information when it comes to conducting reviews of resources (see Criterion 2.4).</p>
Examples of evidence	Evidence of feedback being disseminated to staff and evidence that it has been used to update/improve assessment practice.

Appendix 1

Quality assurance

Central verification qualification criteria

	Criteria	Impact rating
4.2	Internal assessment and verification procedures must be implemented to ensure standardisation of assessment.	Medium
4.3	Assessment instruments and methods and their selection and use must be valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair.	High
4.4	Assessment evidence must be the candidate's own work, generated under SQA's required conditions.	High
4.6	Evidence of candidates' work must be accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements.	High
4.7	Candidate evidence must be retained in line with SQA requirements.	High