

Vocational Qualifications (QCF, NVQ, NQF)

Business and Administration

OCR Level 1 Certificate in Business Administration – **10382**

OCR Level 2 Diploma in Business Administration – **10383**

OCR Level 3 Diploma in Business Administration – **10384**

OCR Level 4 NVQ Diploma in Business Administration – **10385**

OCR Report to Centres – September 2017

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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1 Overview:

This report relates to the Business Administration qualifications that started in 2014. The previous qualifications are dealt with by a separate Chief Verifier.

These qualifications are featured in the relevant apprenticeship frameworks or traineeships. Levels 1-3 of the qualifications combine the knowledge and competence requirements of those frameworks. Level 4 is not a combined qualification and for the higher apprenticeship framework, the separate knowledge technical certificate remains available. All new apprentices currently have to be registered on the new qualifications. The new standards for apprenticeships, which will replace the frameworks, have not yet been released for new starts. When they do the requirement for a qualification will not be included. Until that time the demand for the qualification is expected to remain high. The level 1 qualification has very little take-up and has now closed for new registrations. Levels 2-4 have a new review date of the 31st August 2018.

Assessment of the qualifications continues to be of a mainly good standard in centres. Centres generally assess the knowledge requirements of the units via written answers or the use of professional discussion both of which are acceptable. Other assessment methods are less likely to achieve the requirements of the criteria without the use of supplementary methods such as questions during an observation of performance. Centres do need to ensure that the requirements of the command verbs within the criteria are fully met and at the appropriate level that is being taken. This is the one area that does still pose some difficulty and centres need to ensure this is addressed in their assessment and quality assurance. A useful guide to the command verbs is provided on the OCR website.

Robust initial assessment, to establish the correct level for the learner, continues to be a crucial aspect of the process. It is often reported from EQAs, when visiting centres, that they do not feel the learner's role is suitable to provide the required evidence for level they are on mainly, at levels 3 & 4. There is pressure, through funding, to have learners on higher levels but without correct initial assessment and the right level selected, learners can struggle to produce evidence and this in turn provides difficulties for the assessor. Centres need to conduct clear discussions with employers to ensure that suitable opportunities are provided to support the development of the learners to meet the standards. This should also include the selecting of appropriate optional units. Funding rules make changing of levels difficult once started so this aspect of the process has to be correct at the outset. Additionally, careful and effective planning of assessments will also help the progress through the qualification to be as smooth as possible.

2 General Comments

Level 1: The qualifications at this level have traditionally been provided in specialist areas for development, learners with special learning needs or those returning to work. However registrations are extremely low and the qualification has now closed for registration. The little assessment that has been conducted has been of a good standard.

Level 2: The majority of registrations at this level, together with level 3, are those linked to the apprenticeship frameworks and is where the bulk of funding sits. The qualifications have been in place for 3 years and are well established. Overall assessment is of a good standard and the evidence produced of a good quality. Assessment methods used are appropriate with most centres using written or verbal questions for the knowledge criteria.

Some centres continue to run knowledge based workshops to support learners, which is seen as good practice, particularly where the knowledge is generic and may not relate directly to the work they undertake in their role or organisation. Observation, witness testimony and products should still be the core assessment methods for the performance criteria for all Business Administration qualifications.

Level 3: As with level 2 these form a large part of registrations as they are included in the apprenticeship frameworks. Assessment remains of a generally good standard. There are issues, as mentioned above, with learners being registered at this level when their work, role and experience may not be suitable. Most centres conduct good initial assessment to prevent this but there are cases where the evidence that is produced is not at level 3. Centres do need to work to ensure this is not the case and the integrity of the different levels is protected. The comments relating to level 2 are equally appropriate to this level with one exception which relates to the knowledge aspects of units and in particular the pure knowledge units within the mandatory group. This is dealt with further in the next section.

Level 4: The two qualifications at this level feature on the apprenticeship framework. In this case they are a separate qualification for competence and knowledge. Assessment is again overall of a good standard but the issues with initial assessment and the learner being on the correct level equally apply here. Learners will need to hold quite a senior position with associated levels of responsibility. It is rare that this may apply to a new starter and relate better to someone with previous experience.

For all levels, EQAs report that appropriate records have been maintained and internal quality assurance has been appropriate and effective although not always picking up on the initial assessment and knowledge criteria issues that have been mentioned and centres do need to ensure the quality assurance processes address these.

3 Comments on Individual Units

Reports and activity on verified visits for these qualifications do not focus on individual units so no specific information is available.

Generally the assessment of competence through performance has been well assessed and the appropriate methods used. Observation will always be a primary assessment method which produces the best evidence and through careful planning can achieve a lot of criteria. Centres are encouraged to plan to see specific activities and work that will be as holistic as possible. Examples have been seen of short observations that meet just one or two criteria, which is not effective for assessors or learners. Products are also a valuable source of evidence in administration and where these are not included within the portfolio, assessors need to ensure they have annotated their assessment records with the fact that they have seen them and where they are located.

Generally assessment records are good but can be improved with decisions from assessors, through annotations, on evidence or other records. Often products are included which mean little without an explanation and those reviewing the portfolio cannot identify why the criteria claimed has been met. The record of the assessment decision is crucial to validate the assessment made.

As mentioned earlier, the one area that has caused some concern from the outset with these qualifications is the level of knowledge being demonstrated through the written or verbal answers to the knowledge criteria. It was generally felt when they were introduced that the requirements were greater than the previous versions with the specific use of command verbs in the criteria. There are examples of good practice where centres have used workbooks to draw out the levels of knowledge required and guide the learners to suitable research sources. In addition centres hold workshops to either provide taught sessions on topics or to enable learners to come together to discuss them which helps with developing their knowledge. There are also good examples where learners are encouraged to provide examples in their answers to demonstrate their understanding of the topic and its applications. This can be from their own workplace where relevant or from their other experience or research.

Centres do need to ensure that the evidence they accept fully meets the requirements of the criteria, learning outcome and units and is a reflection of the level of qualification being taken.

4 Sector Update

The generalist nature of the sector means that there is no specific legislation or regulation that affects how it operates which would not relate to all staff or employees. In assessment, knowledge of the legislation would be tested and assessors need to keep up to date.

The introduction of the apprenticeship standards in all sectors is underway. The standards will replace the existing frameworks and once operating there will be a timeframe for the closing of the framework. At this time the release date of the Business Administrator standard, which is at level 3, is not known. The standard has been developed but until the assessment plan is also available they are not released. It is also therefore not known when the frameworks will be closed but is unlikely to be within the next year. Once the new standard is released it is not expected to include a qualification. This will have an impact on these qualifications but, as mentioned earlier, they have been extended with a new review date of 31st August 2018.

At the time of this report it is understood that there are no plans for any other Business Administration apprenticeship standards at other levels.

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