

## **Vocational Qualifications (QCF, NVQ, NQF)**

### **Business and Administration (NVQ)**

- Level 1 Award Business and Administration (NVQ) – **04702**
- Level 1 Certificate Business and Administration (NVQ) – **04703**
- Level 2 Award Business and Administration (NVQ) – **04704**
- Level 2 Certificate Business and Administration (NVQ) – **04705**
- Level 2 Diploma Business and Administration (NVQ) – **4706**
- Level 3 Certificate Business and Administration (NVQ) – **04707**
- Level 3 Diploma Business and Administration (NVQ) – **04708**
- Level 4 Certificate Business and Administration (NVQ) – **04709**
- Level 4 Diploma Business and Administration (NVQ) – **04710**

## **OCR Report to Centres 2016 - Legacy Qualifications**

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

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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# Business and Administration (NVQ) – 04702-04710

## 1. Overview

It should be noted that overall very few candidates remain now on these qualifications. However, EQAs report that these last remaining candidates continue to be well supported by the often well qualified and experienced staff undertaking the assessment and verification activities. Many of these staff are reported as holding teaching qualifications as well as assessor and updated recognised IQA qualifications or internal updating. Actions set by EQAs to achieve these qualifications are generally adhered to, with original certificates being checked and endorsed at first visits to Centres.

Once again, very few actions and no sanctions have been identified by EQAs as necessary in the reporting year which indicates that; overall, the assessment teams are continuing to operate effectively with the legacy qualifications.

The level of staffing in some Centres - which is often high in turnover - continues in some parts of the country, but new assessors and IQAs are well supported, observed and their work monitored effectively. All Centres are reported as being fully compliant with all aspects of health and safety, ensuring candidates are safeguarded whilst in the workplace particularly.

In a number of Centres, the majority of the assessors and the IQA's work across both the Business Administration and the Management qualifications to ensure consistency remains.

### Centre staff CPD

CPD activity is good and well documented in most Centres. EQAs helpfully highlight the e-portfolio product being used and report that comprehensive training has been given to the assessors and IQA teams as well as candidates- who in most cases are highly proficient in its operation.

EQAs reported that Centres arrange a variety of CPD activities including compulsory aspects as well as the choice of subject areas. Coverage has included areas such as Prevent Training. In one instance one college also encourages work experience in other departments within the college to ensure a fuller understanding of all requirements of support for candidates. Most Centres present the Staff development records for review and in some Centres this also highlights the cross-college updating and curriculum based updating. Examples included the fact that CPD is organised on an annual basis and includes as many as four days throughout the year on different days of the week.

Reports indicate that staff also receive updating on qualification issues, as and when required, that is incorporated into staff meetings and in addition they have had training in the use of their selected e-platform.

### Candidate induction

EQAs report that generally when candidates commence a programme, they are given full information relating to both the Apprenticeship framework and the qualification and undergo a rigorous induction programme. They report that in majority of cases candidates' first appointment with their allocated assessor takes place at their place of work with further visits every fortnight as a general rule. At this visit, where appropriate, the e-portfolio system is introduced with examples of the types of evidence and the learners are given full training. EQAs report that the learner's development needs are carefully matched against the requirements of the QCF with regular assessment planning.

In some Centres, candidates go through initial advice and guidance and employers are involved, they then go on to attend induction sessions and initial assessment for maths and English which is sometimes delivered at the Centre separately whilst in other cases the assessor is responsible for this training.

Physical resources to support learners often include an induction pack – both hard copy and electronic, a study pack, assessment planning records, dates of regular workplace visits and weekly teaching in various areas such as Functional Skills, Technical Certificate and portfolio building.

EQAs report that many assessors have company iPads and mobile phones, as well as facilities for scanning and photographing evidence and the recording of electronic signatures.

#### Initial assessment

Reports indicate that many Centres continue to use skills scans and in some companies, the final selection of units is not concluded with their candidate/s until the second or third meeting, where both parties have a clear understanding of the candidate's job role and the employer has been involved in the unit selection decision.

#### Feedback from candidates

Feedback from candidates interviewed during EQA visits is reported as being extremely positive in terms of assessor and work place support. In some instances, candidate feedback regarding support received from their respective assessors is often reported in terms of excellent. They recall being provided with a copy of the Appeals Procedure and understand the process.

EQAs have reported that candidates in Centres are very well supported. In many Centres additional support is provided to those candidates who have been identified as needing this.

Due to time pressures during the visit – EQAs undertake this aspect increasingly now by telephone rather than face to face unless learners are actually in the centre undertaking a formal session for example.

#### Candidate support

Learners receive induction, information about the programme, qualification, assessment and appeals. EQAs confirm that the evidence contained in portfolios sampled confirms this. Centres demonstrate a range of initial assessment techniques as part of the programme and use every opportunity to identify the appropriate level and optional units as well as drawing up individual training and assessment plans.

#### Standard of portfolios

The portfolios sampled at visits by the various EQAs, demonstrate that planning, reviews and feedback are as detailed as possible and candidates confirm that they are fully supported throughout. There is a wide variety of assessment methods used within the portfolios, with observation being primary evidence.

The assessor records seen by EQAs whether hard copy or electronic, were of a high standard. In some cases the EQA highlighted

*the good practice shown particularly the observation records, which included a detailed record of the activity, they were very well written and were accurately assessed against the standards. The assessor was also using a good mix of methods, which has to be commended, especially in the difficult circumstances their candidates work in.*

*The assessment and internal quality assurance (IQA) was of a high standard, with clear feedback given at every stage. The portfolios had a clear construction, with the work being accurately assessed, referenced to the standards and annotated.*

#### IQA Records and standardisation activities

IQA records are reported as including sampling all methods of assessment as well as pre-determined included portfolio sampling and assessor observations. Many of these records are reported as containing sufficient detail and constructive feedback.

*Some very good practice, both from the IQAs and assessors was noted today. Feedback throughout was of a high standard. Great attention to detail, accurate guidance and constructive feedback when actions were required.*

Good practice is demonstrated in larger Centres where the various IQAs have the opportunity to meet as a full IQA team to review all aspects of internal quality assurance and to standardise their activities with the necessary reports which highlight actions for assessment teams. Many large Centres have strict guidelines for the IQA activities and use internal documentation which is controlled by the quality department.

Standardisation Meetings are held in Centres – generally on a monthly basis - to ensure standardisation of assessment. Some Centres have other activities as determined by their management teams. EQAs report that standardisation practice would appear to be sound.

Most EQA reports confirm that Centre team meetings take place to ensure that all concerned are fully aware of the requirements of each qualification. In some Centres, a newsletter is distributed for updating staff promptly on any information or issues arising from the standardisation events.

#### E-portfolios

With regard to e-portfolio sampling, it is common practice that the respective EQAs are issued with a username and password in advance of the visit but that all sampling is undertaken within the Centre. Depending on the system used, candidates upload their evidence and the system uses colour coding which denotes candidate progression. Most systems would appear to be relatively simple to use and evidence can be added without difficulty. The assessor is able to make comments as to the validity of the evidence and also its sufficiency. Observations and professional discussions are uploaded as they are completed, they are holistic, are recorded in sufficient detail and mapped to the respective units. EQAs have reported that many of the observation reports are written in detail, stating when and where this took place and many Centres use digital recording of these together with photographs to support their findings which are used across a number of units, confirming holistic observational assessment.

Review dates are also included for each candidate and also a record of attendance. Comments and feedback are clearly written with any action points recorded.

EQA reports confirm that IQA activities are both formative and summative with records uploaded onto the e-portfolio system. The feedback reports to the assessors are often detailed as are the resulting list of actions to be taken. Observation of assessors is often carried out early into the programme with the subsequent reports being clear and in depth. Some Centres RAG rate their assessment team and increase support for assessors on return from maternity leave, for example.

*IQA records are viewed with the electronic system, which also contained candidate interviews, IQA planning and meeting minutes.*

*The centre is fully electronic with regards to portfolios. The sampling demonstrated a good ratio of IQA to assessments carried out. Clear feedback to assessors noted.*

Assessment planning forms part of the some of the e-portfolio systems with progress being charted by the use of colour coded bar and pie charts.

Most Centres require that each candidate is seen, face to face, by their assessor every 3 or at most, every 4 weeks. Additional support is offered via email by the assessor or further support via e-portfolio communication. A wide range of evidence is encouraged and the personal reports or case studies in some Centres are reported as being particularly noteworthy.

In those Centres where all candidates use an electronic portfolio, the major benefit is that all of their records are available prior to the visit and are simple to follow, therefore dispensing with the need to select candidates prior to the visit.

However, the major concern with e-portfolio systems is the time it takes for an EQA to become familiar when faced with what might be yet another e-portfolio system. It takes time to become proficient in its operation and can be frustrating when systems crash or the EQA experiences problems. For example, in this current year EQAs experienced as many as 5 different systems in 5 different Centres. This takes time out of the visit.

#### Policies and Procedures

EQAs report that within their allocated Centres all policies and procedures are maintained within a central file which details the roles and responsibilities of the team. In many cases these policies and procedures are uploaded onto the e-portfolio system and are reviewed annually to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

#### Organisation of visits

EQAs report that in all cases their visits are well organised and that all requested information and personnel were available during the day as well as access to e-portfolio systems.

#### Records

Information relating to the learner's achievements is maintained electronically using the same e-portfolio system as used by the candidates and all the information is accurately maintained.

#### Support from Senior Management

EQAs report that there is full support from Senior Management with some playing an active role as a member of the Assessment and IQA team.

The staff confirmed the centre management commitment to the success of these courses.

*Senior management clearly express an interest in the centre as they ensure attendance at today's EQA visit*

#### Communication

Good communication between the centre staff and also between OCR is consistently reported in EQA reports with no specific issues being reported.

#### Reviews

Candidates on apprenticeships are reviewed every 8 weeks and their reviews include British Values, health and safety and equality and diversity as well as progress towards the qualification achievement.

### Training

Work within colleges has also improved for example EQAs reported that

*The college has timetabled input sessions and external placement days. The group I met today had a combination of three days in college and two days in work placement. This had proved very successful last year when a high percentage were offered full-time posts after the placement was completed.*

There have been no queries on standards or on assessment by email or telephone this year from the EQA team on the legacy qualifications as reported herein or have there have been any significant issues with Centres this year.

## **2. General Comments**

### Candidate profile

Many of the candidates for the legacy qualifications are reported as being in very responsible and important roles within their respective workplaces and many have high levels of authority for areas of finance or within HR departments for example. As a result, they may well be able to undertake additional units of the qualification which reflect their specific job roles more fully particularly at the higher levels of qualification. EQAs report that within those centres offering the legacy quals they do encourage this resulting in additional units being achieved for a small number of learners. Higher level candidates' selected units do reflect the varying work roles and responsibilities undertaken and the evidence presented is often very interesting and of course at an excellent standard in many cases.

In some Centres, EQAs report that the candidates are employees of the organisation and the qualifications are offered as personal development on a voluntary basis. In others, the Centre's purpose is to provide training and qualifications for the employees of the organisation and it is therefore fully supported in its objectives.

All candidates are confirmed as being in the specific role which will provide suitable evidence for the particular qualification. EQAs report that in many cases, Centre teams are forward thinking, flexible and unrestricted in the forms of assessment they use; consideration is always given to the needs of the candidates.

### Unit certification

Whilst Unit certification is available as required it is not often used by Centres confirming the holistic assessment by assessment teams.

The only instance of where this is still offered is in the Secure Estates, where candidates are generally only able to complete on a unit by unit basis whilst they await transfer to other establishments. Very few other instances of unit certification are reported.

### Assessment methods

A wide range of assessment methods was reported as being evident in portfolios sampled - observation, work products, personal statements and written and oral questions and EQAs report some very good and consistent Centre practice with high standards of portfolio presentation.

EQAs report wide use of professional discussions undertaken with all levels of candidates. Evidence that is not clear is encouraged to be annotated and often this is done very well by candidates with some evidence being very clearly referenced and descriptive. EQAs continue to report pride in presentation with portfolios put together in a systematic way with each section being clearly labelled, particularly where this applies to hard copy folders. This has been the case for many years where administrators are clearly filing and presenting work competently.

EQAs have worked hard over the years with these qualifications to ensure good quality witness testimony. Many Centres provide detailed information to witnesses which help in the production of quality testimony and ensure that these are on headed paper with necessary contact details which can be followed up by IQAs or EQAs accordingly. Some of these are particularly complimentary about how much of an asset the candidate is within the workplace.

Centres over the years had been encouraged to leave work product in the workplace and this would seem to be handled well in most Centres where they accurately signpost where the assessor has seen it along, with an assessment decision which supports the criteria being claimed. Many of the Knowledge and Understanding questions relate directly to workplace scenarios showing candidates' deep understanding and subsequent application in respective companies and organisations.

#### Training materials

Some EQAs are able to review supporting training materials and there continues to be much sharing of good practice across teams both within Centres and across partnerships. Employers are often involved in the ILP's, reviews and feedback.

The legacy qualification standards are coming to an end and as would be expected all Centres are very familiar with the requirements and the associated assessment strategies including those of the imported units from other schemes such as ITQ or Customer Service.

### **3. Comments on Individual Units**

As in previous reports for this qualification specific units are not able to be accessed or analysed from the current EQA reports.

#### Offer of units

With the run out of these qualifications however, those Centres offering them continue to offer as wide a range of units as possible and where applicable offer the opportunity to choose specialist units. Good practice is often demonstrated in the preparation of detailed assessment plans where a range of assessment methods are used and a holistic approach is taken to ensure efficiency of assessment time.

#### Assessment

As previously, the full range of assessment methods is being used and favourable comments are often made by EQAs in relation to observations and the use of this method. As would be expected, the mandatory units are often the final units to be completed and evidence from optional units continues to be used well to cross reference into these. This ensures that competence over time is confirmed. The optional units selected certainly do reflect job roles well and candidates often confirm their enjoyment at being able to undertake some interesting work projects to provide evidence of competence.

#### Standard of work

In general, EQAs continue to find that assessment of the legacy qualifications is of a good standard and meets the requirements of the qualifications and regulations. No sanctions to my knowledge have been applied to centres offering the schemes.

#### Records

Records in Centres are generally good and there are no reports of any issues with Centre records in the last year.

Some Centres do not always promptly notify OCR of staff changes but this did not affect performance at all during this year and there were no issues reported where DCS was compromised.

New Centres to OCR do not always fully understand the processes with regard to registrations and claims particularly where a centre has previously been with another awarding organisation. This was reported informally and was also experienced by myself.

#### Centre visits

EQAs report that Centres are well prepared for the visit and provide access to all information, portfolios, staff and learners that were requested. EQAs confirm their sample reflects as many optional units as possible as well as examination of the mandatory units. They are aware of the need to increase the sampling where they may have any concerns but this has not appeared to be the case this year with the legacy qualifications.

This year has continued to present many challenges to centres – introduction of e-portfolio systems across the board, mergers, inspections, funding restrictions etc and the following years with the advent of apprenticeship reviews and funding changes will also be challenging.

## **4. Sector Update**

As we see the run out of these legacy qualifications, the new standards are complimenting the work roles of administrators in the sector very well.

Companies continue to “grow their own” workforce and find the qualifications an ideal pathway of supporting this. The newly introduced standards last year are working well and ensure that today’s administrators can continue to be as flexible, going forward.

Ofsted reports continue to highlight the importance of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Particularly for business administration learners, these skills are absolutely crucial and Centres have been regularly monitoring their effectiveness. As administrators, learners (and their tutors/assessors/IQAs) are making sure that there are no errors in personal reports, statements, work products or witness testimonies as many reports indicate that EQAs support this aspect and it would appear that this aspect is improving over time.

In the previous year’s report, I highlighted the need for centres and candidates to be more digitally competent. Assessor and IQAs have a range of impressive kit to support their work and the e-portfolio systems are becoming more refined over time. However, the increasing use of social media, blogs and on line meeting and webinar technology is a challenge for some learners and assessment teams and many have not yet risen to the challenge which this presents.

There continues to be a lack of sufficiently skilled staff whilst they are perhaps confident with some aspects of technology, they do not always have the same confidence with business or administrative technology. Competent and digitally aware administrators are needed urgently and a range of qualifications or units to reflect this competence should be considered in due course. Companies are not operating a typical 9 – 5 working day as many of them work globally across time zones and centres will have to work hard to replicate this fact and ensure that both training and assessments reflect these subtle changes transforming the way we communicate, do business, work and live. Investing in the appropriate technology and staff training will ensure success in the future.

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