



Vocational Qualifications (QCF, NVQ, NQF)

Professional Services

Level 4 Diploma in Business Accounting - **10352**

Level 4 Diploma in Business Accounting Practice - **10353**

Level 4 Diploma in Accounting and Business - **10354**

Level 4 Diploma in Audit Practice - **10355**

Level 4 Diploma in Tax - **10356**

Level 4 Diploma in Tax Practice - **10357**

Level 4 Diploma in Management Consulting Practice - **10358**

Level 7 Diploma in Professional Services (Audit and Accountancy Practice) - **10338**

Level 7 Diploma in Professional Services (Tax Practice) - **10339**

OCR Report to Centres 2013-2014

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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1 The qualifications and standards

- Structure and content

Centre Assessment:

Centres have improved and evolved their practice and assessment methods. Feedback from moderation and standardisation has been acted upon and improvements have been implemented across assessor teams and often shared across the provision.

Learners are following pre-determined assessment plans and using workbooks which include the development of underpinning knowledge and understanding. This includes the use of pre-set activities and the access to resources. Evidence presented has included both learning activities and those used for assessment purposes. Centres must ensure that learning activities can be distinguished from those being used for assessment purposes with the former not included within the submission.

In one centre some activities required learners to meet requirements set by the employer, which are not criteria within the standards. Only those activities which are required to meet the learning outcomes and assessment criteria within the standards must be used to assess learner competence.

Cross-referencing must be robust; every aspect of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria must be specifically referenced. Assessors must ensure that where audio reports, observations and witness testimony are used they are also matched to the criteria, as vague inference is insufficient. If a piece of work is to be used to satisfy more than one unit, then it must cover the full criteria for all the units claimed.

Tasks set by the centre must be consistent with the required outcomes. For example, in Unit 8, Organising and Facilitating Meetings, students are required to consider both a meeting and a workshop (not just one of them).

Due to the limitations of their role responsibilities some learners have had difficulties accessing and providing workplace evidence and/or evidence at the appropriate breadth and depth, particularly at Level 4 and 5. These units require considerably greater evidence than those at Level 3.

In some instances the learners were not showing that they understood the theory and knowledge required. This was especially the case at Level 5 and above, where relevant the learners' responses must be supported with the appropriate theory. This is the case, for example in sections 1 and 2 of Unit 7 Level 4 and in sections 3, 4 and 5 in Unit 34 Level 5.

Internal Moderation:

Feedback to learners is comprehensive and regular. Some internal standardisation has taken place and it is clear that improvements to future submissions have been identified. A range of assessment techniques has been used and these have been continuously refined. Weaknesses have been identified, recorded and subsequently addressed.

Centres should plan and arrange moderation visits in advance and as a minimum allow at least six weeks between the moderation visit request and the moderation visit date.

It is good practice to ensure that learner work is internally moderated prior to being presented for external moderation. It also reduces the possibility of work being deemed unworthy of a pass.

Administration/Documentation:

Centres are using comprehensive learner assessment plans, which are being regularly used, revised and updated. Learners are geographically dispersed and centres have developed electronic systems to enable learners to store their evidence on an intranet and to enable assessors and verifiers to access, retrieve and review evidence. Centres have been able to provide clear audit trails for learners' work.

Before setting an assessment date centres should ensure that learner evidence is available for the units being submitted. One centre had to have learners withdrawn during the external moderation visit due to the work not being available. This could lead to the added expense of an additional visit if the learner completions are time bound.

OCR Support and Resources:

In 2013 OCR reviewed the assessment method for the Professional Qualification suite and a decision was made to change from external verification to visiting moderation by 1 November 2013. As a result of this change any staff assessing or quality assuring are no longer required to hold an assessment qualification, although this remains best practice.

Centres continue to receive two visits a year where a sample of learners' work is reviewed and centres' assessment decisions can be confirmed.

Centres have found the VSM visits useful as they have enabled discussion and exploration about the depth and breadth of the Level 4 and 5 unit requirements to take place.

Assessment Summary:

Centres have continued to improve and develop assessment practice and to address identified weaknesses.

Learners are well supported and receive regular feedback about their progress.

Cross-referencing between the evidence and the individual learning outcomes and assessment criteria to be covered by the evidence presented must be clear and robust. Evidence and supporting knowledge and understanding must be provided to the appropriate level and depth. Only those activities which have been set to meet the learning outcomes and assessment criteria within the standards must be used to assess learner competence.

Centres should inform OCR at least six weeks in advance that they require a VSM visit and evidence must be available for the learners and units selected.

2 Developments

Demand for the skills involved in the Professional Services sector is expected to continue to rise, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills:

- expects 600 000 additional UK jobs to be created in this sector in the next decade
- wants to treble the number of Professional Business Services (PBS) Higher Apprenticeships in the next five years
- Is establishing a PBS taskforce to look at ways to boost engagement between employers in the sector and young people aspiring to a PBS career.

OCR Report to Centres – 2013-2014

Historically PBS has drawn from a relatively narrow social stratum, which has resulted in a workforce which could be more representative of clients and society. The major challenge, therefore, is to access the widest available talent pool.

As half the current work force is already qualified to degree level it is also expected that there will be a need to provide advanced skills for those who are already qualified.

PBS services are seen as key to successful business growth both at home and internationally and, therefore, next year UK small and micro businesses will have access to £30 million of funding via the 'Growth Voucher Scheme' to be spent on PBS services.

There has been a sharp rise in the number of organisations outsourcing PBS services and it is anticipated that the sector will become more international, maintaining and extending its comparative advantage to win bigger shares of established and emerging markets. In addition to the well-known national and international firms, small and medium size PBS enterprises also flourish in the UK.

The key skill areas for consideration in regard to these industries are, unsurprisingly, data collection, management and security.

The full UK Commission for Employment and Skills report can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/211842/bis-13-922-growth-is-our-business-professional-and-business-services-strategy.pdf

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