

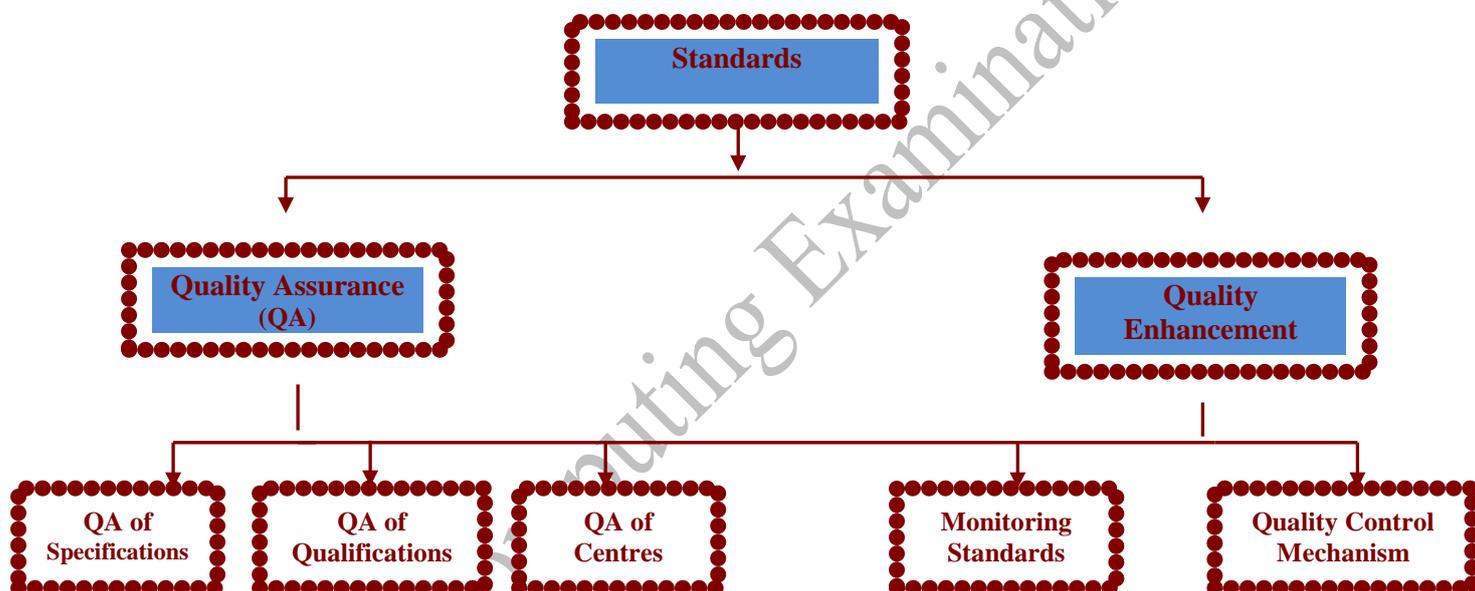


Business & Computing Examinations (BCE) LONDON (UK)

Quality Management Policy

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Quality Management Framework



As an Awarding Body, we pride ourselves on the delivery of high quality assessment. The quality management system provides a framework for continual effective improvement. It provides us, our Centres and learners with the confidence that qualifications will be delivered consistently to predetermined high standards.

BCE like every other awarding board in the UK, is responsible for the quality and standards of its educational provision ensuring that it operates with appropriate academic standards and offering learners learning opportunities of acceptable quality.

To ensure that we meet these requirements, a number of quality assurance procedures operate.

Academic Standards – academic standards are a way of describing the level of achievement that a learner needs to reach to gain an award, for example, a Level 5 Diploma. It should be the same nationally and internationally.

Quality is a way of describing how well the learning and assessment opportunities available to candidates help them to achieve their awards. It is about making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided for them.

The management of quality is generally understood to consist of two complementary strands: *quality assurance* and *quality enhancement*. In the context of the management of our qualifications, BCE define these strands as follows:

Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance refers to a range of review procedures designed to safeguard academic standards and promote learning opportunities for learners of acceptable quality. Quality assurance is the implementation of systematic processes to ensure that a threshold level is reached in both the academic standards of the qualifications offered; quality of learners academic experience and quality of institutions (Centres) running our qualifications.

It is our responsibility to define regulations, policies and processes which meet regulatory requirements and align with the assessment infrastructure.

The core quality assurance processes are:

- Qualifications approval (Sectors Skills, Employers, Industry Recognition and Regulators)
- Annual reviews
- Periodic reviews

BCE divides quality assurance into 3 divisions; namely *Quality Assurance of Specifications*, *Quality Assurance of Qualifications* and *Quality Assurance of Centres*.

Quality Assurance of Specifications

Quality assurance of specifications includes the following:

1. The aims of the specification, including Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO) and Assessment Criteria, which focus on skills.
2. The teaching and learning strategy. The aim of teaching and learning strategy is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning across all Centres by assisting BCE Centres on a variety of issues in areas such as the:
 - formulation of the Centre's teaching and learning policy
 - giving direction to the enhancement of teaching and learning
 - provision of a framework for the teaching qualifications of tutors ensuring consistency of standards across the Centres.

In keeping with the BCE's Teaching & Learning Strategy requirements for quality assurance procedures, Centres will undergo an Annual Review Monitoring based on comments from Quality Assurance and participant evaluations.

3. Specification content, with the number of contact hours allocated for instructions of each unit.
4. Assessment methods that matches the intended learning outcomes and qualification levels.
5. Learning materials, including lecture notes, student handbooks and recommended textbooks.
6. Facilities required for teaching/learning of the specification, including physical facilities and infrastructure.

There are two types of quality reviews: those that focus on individual assessment disciplines or specification units and those that address practice and procedures at Centres.

BCE Quality Assurance of Specifications review examines:

1. Number of learners who sat for the different assessment and examinations
2. Learner assessment results, including percentages of learners passing and failing.
3. The distribution of learners passing i.e. male/female; country etc.
4. Examiners' comments.
5. Examination time-table, conduct of examinations and invigilation procedures.
6. The examination and review of specification standards, and associated methods of teaching, learning and assessment.
7. The quality of methods of teaching, learning and assessment, and the various resources that support learners' learning.
8. The robustness of procedures intended to assure academic standards and promote quality of learning opportunities.
9. Promotion of quality as a process of strategic management.
10. Quality Teaching Assessment. Reports include summary on the quality of teaching, which is rated as either unsatisfactory, satisfactory or excellent. Centres rated as unsatisfactory risk their approval being revoked whereas those rated excellent are given an award (certificate of excellence). Another option we are thinking of is raise stakeholder awareness of the variability of the teaching qualities between Centres by creating league tables.

Other things taken into consideration are:

- a. learner teaching and learning
- b. learner progression and achievement
- c. learner support and guidance
- d. learning resources
- e. quality assurance

The quality review procedure involves:

- Self evaluation documents (Centre and learner feedback)
- Analysis of the evaluation by management
- Visit to Centres to meet staff and learners
- Producing reports which comment on strengths, areas for improvement and recommendations for further action.

11. Implementation of Applied Focus in Curriculum/Specification
12. The principles underpinning the construction of examination papers, other test instruments; compliance with the general conditions of Recognition and Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and

Credit Framework; including management principles, corrective measures and processes to ensure validity, reliability, comparability and manageability of BCE assessment.

Centre Quality Assurance of Specifications review examines:

1. The specification topics actually covered and the number of hours actually taught as compared with the specifications (including explanation of discrepancies)
2. Methods of internal assessment used.
3. Facilities and teaching materials used, including plan of work.
4. Administration constraints in following the teaching/learning strategy to achieve the Intended Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria.
5. Instructor's responses together with proposals for improvement.
6. Specification quality enhancement proposals.
7. Use of instructional strategies.

Quality Assurance of Qualifications

Quality assurance of qualifications includes the following:

1. Academic standards to be achieved, including minimum duration.

Academic standards specify what learners should achieve. They include *content*, *performance*, and *proficiency* standards. Content standards refer to what learners should know and be able to do. Performance standards tell how learners will show that they are meeting a specified level of achievement. Proficiency standards indicate how well learners must perform.

Standards serve as rigorous goals for teaching and learning. Setting high standards enable learners, parents, educators, and citizens to know what learners should have learned at a given point in time. The absence of standards has consequences similar to lack of goals in any pursuit. Without clear goals, learners may be unmotivated and confused.

Contemporary society is placing immense academic demands on learners. Clear statements that learners must know and be able to do are essential to ensure that Centres offer learners the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for success.

2. Qualification admission requirements and the level at which the qualification starts. On qualification enquiry - standards of admission, qualification time-table etc. should be made available.

Admission of learners - admission to the BCE qualifications shall be based on the entry qualifications of the applicant and shall be granted in a non-discriminatory manner. A Centre should define and publish admission procedures so that all applicants may know of the policies, standards and admission requirements of the institution.

Academic regulations

- (a) Regulations pertaining to length of year, definition of credit hours and holiday breaks.
- (b) Learner records.
 - i. Centres should maintain a permanent individual academic record of all learners.
 - ii. All other records of the Centre should be held in accordance with relevant government regulations.

- (c) Centre catalogue. The Centre should publish a catalogue containing the academic standards and regulations, the requirements for admission; tuition and fees; and regulations and policies pertaining to the dismissal of candidates.
 - (d) Centre calendar. The calendar of scheduled academic and co-curricular activities should give close consideration to avoid conflicts with high religious holidays of the major faiths.
3. Regulations concerning progression – (from Level 3 and 4 Certificate, Level 5 Diploma to Level 6 Diploma)
 4. Quality management, including comments on: (i) effectiveness of system management in meeting intended learning hours (ii) the method of involvement of the regulators, Approved Centres, auditors, Programme Design & Review Panel and Assessment Panel (iii) Quality Assurance reports, Programme Design & Review and Assessment Panels reports.
 5. Learner Proficiency.
 “Learning Outcomes are statements of the knowledge, skills, and abilities the individual learner possesses and can demonstrate upon completion of a learning experience or sequence of learning experiences. Learners completing a qualification are expected to have gained the knowledge, skills and attitudes (dispositions) and to demonstrate competency in:

Communication - learners should be able to demonstrate effective knowledge, skills and attitudes in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, presentation of self and information.

Computation - learners should be able to demonstrate effective knowledge, skills and attitudes in technology, computer proficiency, maths proficiency, decision analysis (synthesis and evaluation), understanding of and ability to apply mathematical concepts and reasoning, analysing and using numerical data.

Creative, Critical and Analytical Thinking - candidates should be able to demonstrate effective knowledge, skills and attitudes using curiosity, learning strategies, information gathering, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, creativity, research, and problem solving.

Community/Global Consciousness and Responsibility - BCE qualification holders should be able to demonstrate effective knowledge, skills and attitudes involving respect, citizenship, cultural awareness, interpersonal skills, ethics, lifelong learning, community service, self-esteem, integrity and empathy.

Discipline Content - qualification holders should be able to demonstrate effective skills and attitudes that are specific to a discipline or career.

6. Proposals for qualifications development, including qualification structure.

The purpose of the qualifications development process is to ensure that all proposals to develop new qualifications of study or to change previously approved qualifications are scrutinised thoroughly on academic grounds. This scrutiny should ensure that each qualification of study offered by BCE is designed to the highest possible academic standards and offer learners the best possible teaching and learning experience. It should also ensure that resource implications are identified and resolved at the earliest stage.

7. Action plan that incorporates all the corrective actions

BCE Quality Assurance of Qualifications review examines:

1. Rules of Combination
2. Progression routes
3. Quality management, including comments on: (i) effectiveness of system management in meeting good practices (ii) the extent to which BCE regulations are observed by Approved Centres (iii) response of teaching staff and Approved Centres to external assessors' report and quality assurance review (iv) BCE compliance with regulator requirements.
4. Guided Learning Hours, Qualifications/Units credits and Credit Framework Levels.
5. Qualifications Recognition.
6. Learner employability skills.
7. The currency of BCE qualifications and design principles.

Approved Centre Quality Assurance of Qualifications review examines:

1. Minimum qualification duration including learning hours
2. Rules of admission
3. Number of learners who complete qualifications
4. Minimum number of learners required to start a programme
5. Relevance of subject matter, the internal assessment methods and learner achievements.
6. The quality of learning opportunities in comparison with (i) Intended Learning Outcomes and Teacher/Learning Strategy (ii) support available to learners (iii) learning resources actually available.

Quality Assurance of Centres

Quality assurance of Centres includes the following:

1. **Mission statement**
2. **Governance and Administration**
 - organisational structure as it defines academic duties and responsibilities
 - method of recruiting academic leaders
 - policies and systems in place
 - responsiveness to changing priorities, emerging needs and managing resistance to change
3. **Teaching staff**
 - Statistics including qualifications
 - Staff development programs
4. **Educational programmes**
 - the rules and regulations that govern educational programmes
 - number of programmes
 - number of learners for each programme
5. **Academic standards**
 - internal assessment methods
 - communication of important information i.e. exam structure, exam dates, exam fee deadline dates coursework etc.
 - whether learners are given feedback on their internal assessment
 - policies for implementing appointing examining board procedures

6. **Learner retention and progression**

- qualifications for which retention and progression rates are high
- qualifications for which retention and progression rates are low

The most common reasons learners drop out of Centres are:

- wrong qualification
- financial
- bored with qualification
- failing assessment

Wrong qualification

This reason is not that significant, and there is little a Centre can do to respond to this problem except for ensuring that pastoral care is available in these circumstances.

Financial

The impact of learner fees and the reduction in the availability of learner grants.

Bored with the qualification

This reason for withdrawal can be responded to by tutors. In particular, the introduction of innovative teaching methods (for example making use of new technology, or learner centred learning) may create a more committed learner.

Failing assessment

Evidence shows that this is the most significant reason for learner losses. Learners may fail for a variety of different reasons:

- poor quality teaching
- lack of attendance
- lack of ability

7. **Learner achievements**

- qualifications which the percentage of learners taking summative assessment is high (reasons for this)
- qualifications which the percentage of learners taking summative assessment is low.
- the institution's vision for learners' employment possibilities, including availability of jobs, the appropriateness of academic qualifications for employment
- an assessment of learners performance and the standards achieved

8. **Quality of learning opportunities**

- adequate facilities
- learner support programmes, including special provisions for outstanding and challenged learners, financial services for learners
- learning resources
- learner feedback on progress including the availability of the mechanism of compliance with the assessment system and teaching staff response.

9. **Quality management and enhancement**

- the Centre's vision for quality enhancement - the strategy, procedures, means to monitor its effectiveness and mechanism for disseminating and implementing policies
- the extent to which the Centre's policies and regulations have been implemented.
- the extent to which stakeholders have been engaged to gain trust in the academic programmes and the extent to which the institution has responded to the stakeholders' views
- the extent to which the internal review system for quality assurance has been effective
- the impact of review reports on overall learner performance
- action plan for improving the quality of education that includes specific actions, their time frame, the persons responsible, resource needs and the origin of said resources.

10. **Community development**

- the contribution of the Centre to the community, society and environmental affairs

- training programmes, workshops, conferences and technical services at national and international level
- action plan with the list of actions, agencies responsible, time frame, resource needs, origin of resources and expected outcome.

Quality Enhancement

Quality enhancement is the implementation of systematic processes to identify good practice and areas of improvement, and to support innovation and development to improve the quality of learners' academic experience. Quality enhancement is taking steps further to bring about continual improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experience of learners. The core aspects of the learner learning experience are:

- The Specification** – its structure, aims, intended learning outcomes, assessment criteria, method of evaluation and development activities for Centre staff and learners.
- The promotion and support of effective learning** – include types of teaching and learning; provision of learner support services, library and IT facilities, measures to involve candidates in monitoring and enhancing the Centre's educational provision and relevant training.

BCE will therefore:

- Educate and train personnel and Approved Centres to support delivery of high quality work
- Establish and measure performance against appropriate quality targets
- Continually review and improve our processes and levels of service.

The quality assurance processes described above also provide evidence to support quality enhancement, by identifying both good practices to be disseminated and problems to be addressed.

- Annual review – The CEO identifies good practice and areas for development throughout the year and then bring together the key issues in action plans.
- Reports include:
 - Annual overview on issues raised by examiners
 - Reports on learners results statistics
 - Reports from periodic reviews identifying good practice and areas for development
 - Reports from external agencies such as local Regulatory Bodies, Sector Skills
- Centre and learner feedback
- Information on national and international developments and priorities

Quality Enhancement framework is based on the

- The ability of the internal review systems to monitor and maintain quality and standards at Centre and awarding body levels.
- Arrangements for ensuring that the information we publish about quality is complete, accurate and fair.
- The effectiveness of the Centre's approach to promoting an effective learning experience for learners.
- The combined effect of BCE and Approved Centres' policies and practices for ensuring improvement in the quality of teaching and learning.
- The effectiveness of the Centre's implementation of its strategy for quality enhancement.

Both quality assurance and quality enhancement processes need to:

- Enable us to discharge our responsibilities for the quality and standards of our awards
- Be institutionally directed so that there is consistency of approach across Centres and coherence in the operation of processes at BCE and institutional levels
- Be able to own and implement our policies bottom-up and also top-down
- Have a clearly articulated rationale so that the various processes work together within a coherent structure
- Be robust but economical so that the opportunities both to assure and to enhance quality are maximised

Standards

To maintain standards, the framework looks at BCE and Centre procedures. Standards are made of three primary elements:

- the composition of qualifications in terms of prescribed units/subjects and proficiency levels
- the aims and learning outcomes of qualifications
- the method(s) of awarding marks which are based on assessment criteria and marking schemes

Maintenance, verification and monitoring of academic standards

1. Validation of individual qualifications by the Programme Development & Services, including conformation to external standards (i.e. Sector Skills, Employers and Regulators)
2. Recognition of qualifications, specifications and awards by regulators
3. Internal qualification reviews
4. Monitoring learner registration on qualifications
5. Thorough and rigorous marking process
6. Examiners' meeting (Standardisation)
7. External assessors/verifiers verifications

Quality Control Mechanisms

We have established several mechanisms for quality control to verify whether our Assessment and Centre Teaching/Learning is satisfactory and leads to quality enhancement.

1. **Qualifications review.** Our qualifications are reviewed annually. Information Technology, Networking, Graphics and Web Design are likely to be changed every 5 years, as technology changes frequently. All other qualifications are changed as and when necessary.

To assist in undertaking qualification review, we use:

- a) Industry changes i.e. new computer programs being introduced in the market
- b) Centre requests
- c) Employers' requests
- d) Programme Design & Review Panel evaluations

The aims of qualifications review:

- a) to ensure that qualification levels and learning outcomes are up-to-date
- b) to ascertain whether the design, delivery and assessment of a qualification are appropriate to allow the aims, learning outcomes and assessment criteria to be achieved and demonstrated.
- c) to ensure that the academic standards are in accordance with the Qualifications and Credit Framework
- d) to ensure that the quality of the learning experience give learners the opportunity to achieve high standards

2. **Learner feedback.** Pre-set questions designed by the Programme Development & Services seeking learners' views on the quality of the teaching and learning on a particular qualification. The exercise is taken at the end of each qualification period. BCE quality assurance visit Centres and they can deal with major problems which require immediate attention.
3. **Examiner's report.** Chief Examinations Officer and External Verifier are required to submit a formal report at the end of each exam window marking period. Examinations are held in April, August and December.
4. **Security of examinations papers.** Examinations papers are dispatched only 5-10 working days before the examinations to minimise Centre malpractice. Exam questions are packed in sealed plastic containers and exams can only be opened in front of candidates ready to sit for the exam [within exam room].
5. **Candidate and examination results data.** All data is backed up after each exam recording and an electronic copy is kept off-site.
6. **Safety of learner exam fees.** Learners are encouraged to pay by bankers' draft and insist on being issued a receipt as proof of payment. Learners can also pay directly to BCE.
7. **Impersonation.** To be sure of the actual learner sitting for examinations, Centres should issues ID cards and verify learners. [see BCE Verification Policy for more information]
8. **Exam answer sheet integrity.** The Centre Head and Centre Examinations Officer are responsible for learner answer sheets safety during the week of examinations, up to the time candidate scripts and coursework are freighted to BCE London.

Internal Reviews

The internal reviews are the cornerstone of our quality assurance procedures. The aims are:

- a) to provide a formal opportunity for BCE to reflect on, and critically evaluate on qualifications specification content levels, assessment (including creation of exam time-tables, despatch of examination material procedures, examination marking process and release/distribution of examination results).
- b) to provide a formal opportunity for Centres to reflect on, and critically evaluate on their teaching and learning procedures.
- c) to monitor and conform to our stakeholder arrangement and requirement (i.e. Sector Skills, Employers and Regulators) for quality approval.

The internal review process is as follows:

- Submission of reports by Approved Centres, Assessment Panel, review of “qualifications currency” by Programme Design & Review Panel and Quality Assurance Manager
- Review of reports by relevant functional units

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