Business & Computing Examinations (BCE)
LONDON (UK)

Assessment Quality Assurance Policy

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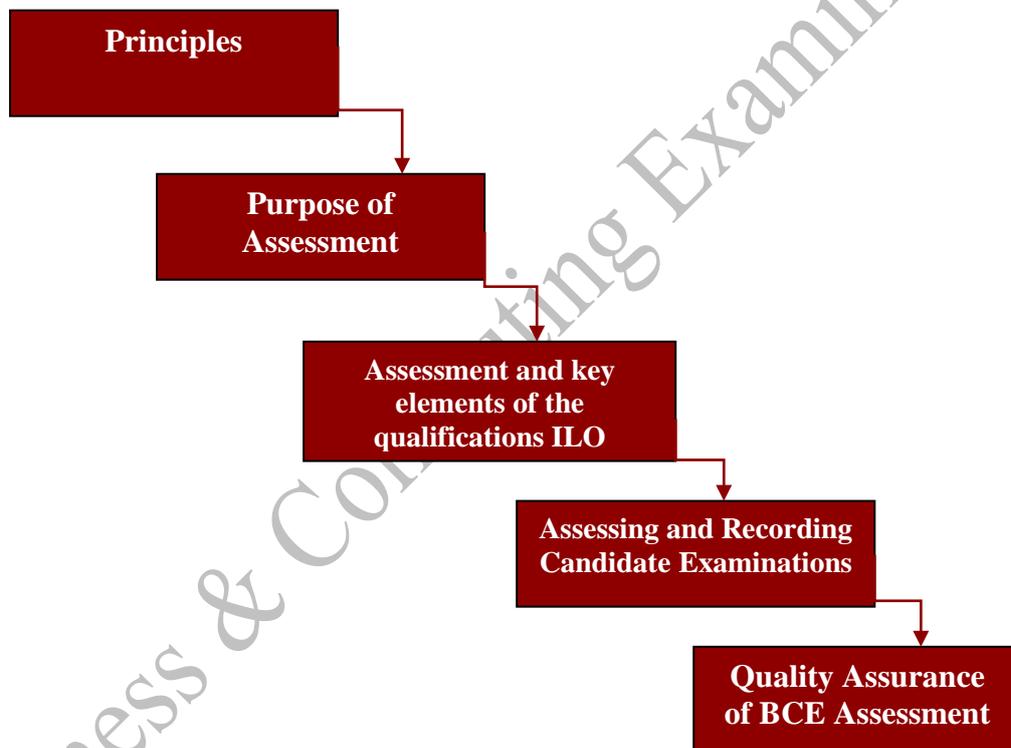
Introduction
This document describes how learner achievements are assessed and quality assured in BCE Qualifications.

Principles
This policy is based on the following principles:

Fairness: The procedures for assuring the integrity of BCE assessment are fair to all candidates.

Transparency: The procedures for assuring the integrity of BCE assessment are explicit and open to scrutiny.

Cooperation and collaboration: Centres, other learning providers, and BCE have complementary responsibility for the management of procedures that assure the integrity of BCE assessment.

Interdependence and responsibility: The procedures for assuring the integrity of BCE assessment are based on the interconnected and complementary responsibilities of the learners, tutors, Centre Heads, and BCE Assessment Panel in the assessment process.

Comparability: The procedures for assuring the integrity of BCE assessment maximise the consistent application of standards to all learner assessment in all places of learning.

Operationally manageable: The procedures for assuring the integrity of assessment that contribute to BCE qualifications are operationally manageable by Centres and BCE, and are as cost-effective as possible without compromising the integrity of learner results.

Purposes of Assessment
Assessment is part of, as well as an activity at the end of the learning process. It provides valid and reliable information, giving the learner and the wider community confidence that learning has been assessed consistently and appropriately against the stated performance standards.

BCE recognises that high quality assessment practices play a fundamental role in learning. It acknowledges that learners and tutors use assessment information for a variety of purposes. Learners, for example, use assessment information to explore their ideas, to demonstrate what they know, to reflect on and monitor their learning, and to determine areas of growth. Tutors use assessment to reflect on their teaching practices and the learning programmes, and to help in planning, teaching, learning, and assessment activities.

BCE assessment process emphasises the role of tutors. It places a strong reliance on the judgment of tutors, as they are best placed to make decisions about when, where, and how assessment can be used to promote learner learning. Tutors make judgments based on each learner's evidence of learning.

Assessment and Key Elements of the Qualification Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)
Assessment involves making inferences about learner achievement on the basis of the evidence available. Key elements of the qualification outlines that relate to the assessment process include the:
- learning requirements, intended learning outcome and assessment criteria
- evaluation methods
- performance standards.

i.   Learning Requirements, Intended Learning Outcomes and Assessment criteria
The learning requirements summarise the knowledge, skills, and understanding that learners are expected to develop and demonstrate through learning in a unit. They focus on what learners are expected to know, understand, and be able to do.

The assessment criteria are based on the learning requirements of each unit and are used by Approved Centre tutors and BCE Assessment Panel to:
- clarify for the learner what he or she needs to learn
- design opportunities for the learner to provide evidence of his or her learning at the highest possible level of achievement
- assess the quality of a learner's learning in relation to the performance standards.

Assessment criteria are the key elements that describe the performance standards. The performance standards for a unit are constructed using four assessment criteria (**knowledge and understanding**, **analysis and interpretation**, **application**, and **communication**). Each assessment design criterion is described in one or more specific features of performance.

ii.   Evaluation Methods
An assessment consists of (multiple choice for Level 3 and 4 Certificate only), essay questions and coursework. Assessment tasks are designed to support the balance, collection, and organisation of evidence of candidates' achievement of the learning requirements.

Level 3 and 4 Certificate: A 2-hour written examination paper with Section A and Section B. Section A has 40 multiple choice questions. Section B has three essay questions, each carrying 20 marks. Candidates are required to answer all questions. Candidates also undertake project/coursework in each unit with a weighting of 100%, then the actual mark recorded is the average of all coursework units.

Level 5 Diploma: A 2½-hour written examination paper with five essay questions, each carrying 20 marks. Candidates are required to answer all questions. Candidates also undertake project/coursework in each unit with a weighting of 100%, then the actual mark recorded is the average of all coursework units.

Level 6 Diploma Level: A 3-hour written examination paper with five essay questions, each carrying 20 marks. Candidates are required to answer all questions. Candidates also undertake project/coursework in each unit with a weighting of 100%, then the actual mark recorded is the average of all coursework units.

Coursework/Project

Coursework is submitted in electronic form (on CD, DVD or flash drive). Coursework cannot be emailed directly to BCE. [Courseworks have deadline submission dates and Centres are responsible for enforcing this]

Coursework minimum number of words *per unit* are as follows:

Level 3 and 4 Certificate	500 words
Level 5 Diploma	1,000 to 1,500 words
Level 6 Diploma	3,000 words

However, candidates can produce more words if they so wish, the above are minimum requirements.

Exam Setters design assessment tasks that enable learners to meet the learning requirements of each unit and demonstrate the quality of their learning against the performance standards. They use the assessment criteria to design each assessment task. They select relevant specific features from the assessment criteria to assess the quality of learning that learner exhibit in the tasks.

BCE record candidates' achievement against each assessment type, using the following grades

Grade	Mark
Distinction	>=80%
Merit	>=65%
Pass	>=50%
Fail	<50%

iii.   Performance Standards

A performance standard defines what a learner must know and/or be able to do to attain a certain level of scoring proficiency using a measurement scale i.e. Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.

Performance standards for each unit in BCE Qualifications are designed to make explicit the characteristics that define the quality of learners' learning in each unit, and to provide the means of differentiating between candidate levels of achievement. The performance standards should be applied by both Centres and BCE.

Performance standards enable the learner to:
- ☐ understand what is expected at the end of a learning program
- ☐ demonstrate what it means to progress in a specified area of learning
- ☐ monitor his or her progress.

Performance standards enable the tutor to:
- ☐ show learners what is needed to be successful in their learning
- ☐ design assessment tasks that will help learners to demonstrate their learning at the highest possible level of achievement
- ☐ make decisions about the quality of learning
- ☐ provide clarity, consistency, and validity in assessment
- ☐ support high-quality teaching and learning.

Performance standards enable BCE to:
- ☐ provide clarity, consistency, and validity in assessment
- ☐ ensure that decisions about the quality of evidence of learning are comparable by applying a common standard
- ☐ report on levels of learner achievement fairly, validly, and reliably.

The overall percentage (%) mark defines the performance standards based on the total mark of the overall unit questions. Performance standards describe four proficiency levels of achievement, **Distinction**, **Merit**, **Pass** and **Fail**. Each proficiency level of achievement describes the knowledge, skill, and understanding that tutors and examiners/assessors refer to in deciding, on the basis of the evidence provided, how well a learner has demonstrated his or her learning in a unit.

The performance standards are general descriptions of learner achievement at the end of a qualification of study. As generalised descriptions, they may not provide the detail necessary to discriminate between learners' achievement in particular assessment tasks, or to give meaningful feedback to learners. In order to assess the quality of learners' learning, BCE Centres may therefore create marking schemes that incorporate the specific features of the assessment criteria.

Assessing and Recording Candidates Examination
The BCE uses marks and/or grades to assess and record achievement in assessment.

BCE Final Summative Examinations
- The assessment criteria and the performance standards for each unit are used in designing an external examination. Examination setters and scrutinisers are appointed by the BCE to design and verify assessment tasks that allow learners to provide evidence of the quality of their learning.
- The assessment criteria and the performance standards for each unit are used to develop a marking scheme that is applied to the questions or sections in BCE examinations. The marking scheme is based on a selection of specific features from the assessment criteria and is designed to assess the quality of learning that learners exhibit in the examination.

Investigations or Similar Activities
- BCE Examiners are responsible for setting the marking tasks according to relevant BCE guidelines, the assessment criteria and the performance standards in the qualification outline.
- The examiners provides the first mark for learners' investigation or similar activity, using the assessment criteria and the performance standards.

Performances or Products
- BCE Examinations are responsible for setting a performance or product according to relevant BCE guidelines, the assessment criteria and the performance standards in the qualification outline.
- The assessment criteria and the performance standards are used to develop a marking scheme that is applied to different aspects of the performance or product. The marking scheme is based on a selection of specific features from the assessment criteria and is designed to assess the quality of learning that learners exhibit in the performance or product.

In all qualifications the same marking scheme is used by examiners, who provide the first mark, and by verifiers appointed by BCE, who provide the second mark [verification] on sampled exams.

Quality Assurance of BCE Assessment
Each candidate's work is marked by an independent examiner who is appointed and trained by BCE.

The following quality assurance processes are used for assessment:
Setting and Verifying Examination Questions
- BCE Programme Development Manager selects and trains qualification experts to set the examination questions in qualification units.
- Assessment tasks in examination papers are designed according to the content of the unit, the assessment criteria, and the performance standards.
- Panel of Revisers/Scrutinisers (who are not members of the exam setting panel) are established to interrogate the draft examination papers and ensure that they comply with the specifications in the qualification outline. The panel is managed by BCE Programme Development Manager who engages personnel from different computing and business professional backgrounds.

[All members of the Assessment Panel are required to complete a declaration statement]

Training and Marking
- The BCE Chief Examinations Officer train qualification unit experts to form the qualifications marking panel [examiners].
- Examination scripts are batched and then marked. Performances or products and investigations are marked in Centre/qualification group batches and examiners are required to exonerate themselves if they identify a Centre or Candidate they know or associated with. Where there are many exam scripts, each examiner marks one question (to minimise errors).
- Examination scripts and performances or products, are marked with due account given to performance standards.

Comparisons between Markers
- In single-marked examinations or sections of examinations, coursework or similar activities and performances or products, the degree of comparability between the marker and the marking supervisor is identified. If the judgment of the marker of an examination paper is in question, the marking supervisor advises the marker to re-mark the scripts, making appropriate adjustments to the interpretation of the performance standards.
- In double-marked examinations or sections of examinations, coursework or similar activities and performances or products, the degree of comparability between two markers is identified. If, there is a significant discrepancy between the judgments of the two markers, a marking supervisor (Chief Examination Officer) re-marks the relevant questions or sections of the examination. If, in the case of a performance or product, there is a significant discrepancy between the judgments of the two markers, a supervisor's mark is taken into account.

Comparisons of Relative Learner Achievement within an Assessment Group
- The assessment result groups are tested for significant discrepancies between Centre learners who sat exactly the same qualifications and different examiners marking exactly the same units/qualifications. Any significant discrepancies for each assessment are investigated and may involve re-marking. Assessment must comprise at least fifteen candidates from different Centres for this procedure to be undertaken.
- Very low or high marks across a number of Centres may signify need for assessment to be investigated and may involve re-marking.

Determining the Assessment Grade
- BCE unit examination questions are made up of several individual assessment tasks. The marks gained in the individual assessment questions/tasks are totalled. A grade determination process is used to interpret the quality of the evidence of learning, as indicated by the total marks for the examination questions, against the performance standards, and to assign the appropriate assessment grades.
- When the assessment is a single assessment task, such as an investigation, a performance, or a product, the assessment is single-marked with reference to the performance standards. The marks gained in the investigation, performance, or products are totalled, and assessment grades are assigned.

Statistical Analysis
BCE uses statistical analysis to flag assessment groups in which candidate' achievements need scrutiny. These statistical analysis serve three main purposes:
- To identify when the relationship between a data set generated/produced by the different examiners marking the different Centres may demonstrate a potential difference in the interpretation of the performance standards.
- To provide a further integrity check in the quality assurance processes for assessment, ensuring that the procedures have been followed appropriately.
- To provide a further integrity check in the quality assurance processes for assessment, ensuring that different examiners have interpreted the performance standards appropriately.

The data sets used in the statistical processes are the numerical values (overall % marks) used to derive to the grading of the assessment by different examiners. Both use the performance standards as their point of reference.

The statistical purpose of using Excel Analysis is:

- to identify anomalies in an assessment group
- to identify anomalies between assessment units for a qualification

The exam percentage marks will not automatically or systematically be adjusted because of a statistical flag. A statistical flag simply prompts an integrity check to ensure that: the assessment grades for an assessment group were assigned appropriately against the performance standards; and/or that the processes for deriving the assessment grades were followed.

External Verifiers (Quality Assurance Integrity Panel)

The External Verifiers reports to BCE Programme Development Manager and works with Chief Examinations Officer. Assessment proceeding reports from both [Chief Examinations Officer and External Verifier] are presented to the CEO. The information generated by a statistical flag, outlined in the preceding section, is referred to the External Verifiers. Their role is to use the statistical analysis to strengthen the integrity of the quality assurance processes of the assessment components in each qualification. It has the following functions:

- To identify possible discrepancies in the interpretation and application of performance standards.
- To analyse potential causes of any discrepancies identified.
- To direct action to be undertaken in relation to the quality assurance processes of the assessment.
- To check that the quality assurance processes of BCE assessment and that the assessment have been undertaken according to established processes.

The External Verifier undertakes these tasks for those BCE qualifications where there is sufficient number of candidates to make such statistical comparisons valid.

BCE appoints Assessment Panel on the basis of their:

- knowledge and understanding of specification and qualifications
- skills in analysing and interpreting assessment data (including comparative data) for significance and probable causes of discrepancies
- ability to determine the action necessary to ensure that learner results for the assessment reflect a consistent interpretation and application of the performance standards within a given time.

Follow-up Action

The External Verifier is responsible for determining, initiating, and overseeing the follow-up action relating to the occurrence of statistical flags.

Quality Assurance of Assessment

The External Verifier may initiate a compliance check on the quality assurance processes for the assessment of a qualification. This may include confirming, for example, that:

- the marking of the qualification was supervised according to established processes;
- any significant differences in marking patterns between particular pair of markers were properly addressed at the supervision stage;
- breaches in procedure by Centres or learners, such as word-count breaches or plagiarism, have not been overlooked.

The External Verifier reports any departures from the established process for the quality assurance of assessment to both the Chief Examinations Officer and Programme Development Manager and recommends corrective action.

Fair and equitable candidate results

Notwithstanding the procedures outlined in this document to assure the integrity of BCE assessment, there may arise exceptional situations where BCE Chief Executive Officer may take additional steps to ensure that results are fair and equitable to all candidates.

Post-Hoc Analysis of Results

The External Verifier prepare reports on sampled units. These reports include information and analysis of the assessment processes that were undertaken. These reports are discussed by members of the Assessment Panel. The External Verifier recommends improvement to the quality assurance processes. The External Verifier prepares a report and the Programme Development Manager in turn, passes the report on the conformity to the quality assurance processes for the CEO to review and evaluate.