



Business & Computing Examinations (BCE)

LONDON (UK)

BCE Standards

Standards provide a framework for Qualification Development and Assessment Management improvement. In meeting standards, BCE and Approved Centres can reflect on effective working practices for the continual advancement of services.

We define standards as a basis of comparison in measuring or judging quality. A set of standards provides a framework for judging the quality of our Qualifications and Assessment. Standards identify expectations and become a basis for determining whether these expectations have been met for both BCE and stakeholders.

As a profession, qualification sector relies on standards to set the stage for lifelong learning, improving teaching, qualifications development and assessment management to meet industry needs. We use standards to assess teaching/learning, assess qualifications currency, examinations effectiveness, demonstrate accountability and measure progress against benchmarks. For us to meet standards, we must embrace lifelong learning and continuously evaluate our products and services.

What are Standards and how do they help

- Have you ever stopped to wonder why you can use your bank card almost anywhere in the world?
- Or been thankful that the dashboard symbols in the Japanese car you have hired in Australia are the same as in your own home country?
- Or noticed that you can watch video footage (MPEG) delivered via the Web on any of the different computers you have access to?
- Or been confident that the imported packaged food you eat is fresh and safe?

These and many other examples of convenience in our everyday life show why standards are directly relevant for efficiency.

Need for Standards at BCE

1. Standards identify what BCE and Approved Centres should know and be able to do.
2. BCE and Approved Centres are involved in continuous improvement, assessing daily processes to ensure adherence to professional qualification and educational requirements.
3. Help in measuring accountability.
4. Used for benchmarking best working practices.

BCE and Approved Centre personnel should be able to:

1. Have command of a core body of knowledge for and about their organisations.
2. Integrate vocational and academic learning, including learner-based and work-based activities.
3. Understand how individuals develop and learn.
4. Create instructional opportunities that meet the needs of diverse learners.
5. Assist learners in processing information and making decisions at progressively higher cognitive levels.
6. Provide articulated instructions and programmes that allow learners to progress smoothly from one QCF Level to the next.
7. Value diversity and cultural differences.

Our qualifications are built around professional standards provided by Regulatory Agencies, Professional Associations, Industry and other Educational Entities. Our personnel have the knowledge, skills, abilities and commitment to guide Centres in their operatives.

Standards:

- i. Define quality.
- ii. Build the baseline for assessing contributions by prospective and practicing personnel and stakeholders.
- iii. Are a driving force in Qualifications Development/Assessment Management.
- iv. Serve as the catalyst for meeting strategic plans, policies, procedures and operational evaluations.

BCE Standards

1. Ethical Standards

Our Code of Practice, Ethical and Equal Opportunities policies, clarify expectations of BCE employees and Approved Centres on our ethical standards. Ethics refers to well-founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what personnel ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues. Ethical standards also include those that enjoin virtues of honesty, compassion, and loyalty. It is necessary to constantly examine our ethical standards to ensure that they are reasonable and well-founded. BCE continuously review its own moral beliefs and moral conduct, and strive to ensure that we, and the Centres we help to shape, live up to standards that are reasonable and solidly-based.

2. Recognition Standards

Specific objectives of the recognition programme are:

- To improve the quality of Qualification Development and Assessment Management programmes through self-evaluation.
- To assure learners, Approved Centres and other stakeholders that BCE has the organisational structure and resources necessary to provide Qualification Development and Assessment Management activities of acceptable quality, i.e., activities that should assist participants in providing an enhanced level of professional education to learners.
- To promote uniform standards for continuing professional Qualification Development and Assessment Management that can be accepted nationally and internationally.
- To assist regulatory agencies and/or other organisations responsible for granting credit in identifying BCE as an Awarding Body whose activities are acceptable for credit toward recognition.

Regulatory Standards

A regulatory body is a professional body with the primary activity to protect the public. Unlike professional bodies, it is established on the basis of legal mandate.

Regulatory Standards are benchmarks promulgated by a regulatory agency, created to enforce the provisions of a legislation; exercise regulatory functions by imposing requirements, restrictions and conditions, setting standards in relation to any activity, and securing compliance, or enforcement.

3. Service Standards

In carrying out Qualifications Development and Assessment Management, BCE strives to meet specific standards of service. These standards represent the professional approach and level of quality expected from each staff member. We approach our work:

With Safety in Mind

We cultivate a safe environment that imparts both physical and emotional security. We regularly evaluate our decisions, actions, and strategies to mitigate and respond to conditions within our activities that may jeopardize the physical security, property, or well-being, of learners, staff, and Centres.

From a Developmental Perspective

We consider that all aspects of our work can be carried out as opportunities for learning, personal development, and critical thought. When we communicate with learners, staff and Centres, we strive to educate and inform our stakeholders about our practices and advocate for learner/Approved Centre-centered approaches to build dynamic learning environment.

As Responsible Stewards

We ensure that our work is ethical in nature, legal in practice, effective in outcome, responsible in use of resources, and transparent to others. We strive to discover and achieve what is in the best interest of our Centres and constituents through continual evaluation of our practices and programmes.

With Respect for Others

We approach our work with learners, staff and Centres with genuine care and concern for one another. We strive to convey care in our interactions, we assume that others are acting with positive intent, and we do our best to act with positive intent. We employ professional ethics in our communications and our work, and strive for an organisational culture that is empathic, compassionate and fair.

From a Social Justice Paradigm

We are committed to a socially just environment. It is central to a healthy and dynamic community. We look at our work through multiple perspectives, while balancing the interests of the individual and the communities we serve. We strive to provide equal access to resources, services, and programmes for all members of the community. We actively work to eliminate disparity, ignorance, and intolerance, and we advocate for those who join our sector with less power and influence in the broader society.

With Accountability

We expect all members of our team to be dependable and dedicated to accomplishing our core functions in order to achieve our mission. We practice persistence and follow-through in completing our tasks. We honour the commitments we make. We approach our work thoughtfully, provide defensible rationale for our actions and decisions, and adhere to our policies. In all our efforts, we hold ourselves accountable to core values and BCE Code of Practice.

With Regard for Qualification Development and Assessment Management

We use Qualification Development and Assessment Management to inform the foundation of our operations. We strive to incorporate learner and Centre experiences to ground, influence, and direct our work in areas including academic development, leadership, innovation, growth and learning.

Legal Services/Standards

Legal Services/Standards create a regulatory structure, which allow BCE and stakeholders to work together. BCE and Approved Centre personnel have a duty to promote the following regulatory objectives:

- Protecting and promoting public interest;
- Supporting the constitutional principles of the rule of law;
- Improving access to justice;
- Protecting and promoting the interests of stakeholders;
- Promoting competition in the provision of services;
- Encouraging an independent, strong, diverse and effective appeal/complain system;
- Increasing public understanding of the citizen's legal rights and duties;
- Promoting and maintaining adherence to the professional principles.

Assurance Services Standards

BCE Assurance Services Standards provide a basis for planning and monitoring our qualifications and assessment. The standards help us maintain compliance and improving control.

4. **Best Practice for Risk Management Standards**

Risk management, like other management systems, is designed to meet our organisation's specific needs. Risk management plays a central role in decision making process.

We formally consider risks:

- in our Qualification Development and Assessment Management
- in our strategic, business and workforce planning processes
- in our budgeting processes
- when developing and implementing: – new or revised policies or programmes
 - new strategies, projects or activities
 - significant changes to an initiative, project or level of activity
- all capital projects
- procurement processes

Our contingency plan include time and financial cushions to handle unforeseen risks. The Contingency Plan Team output includes executing the risk management plan and tracking changes that occur and subsequently to the risk events.

5. **Qualification Standards**

Learners need to be clear about the requirements of the qualifications to which they are committed, and about the levels of achievement expected of them. BCE is focused on the maintenance, assurance of standards of qualifications and quality of provision across all levels.

BCE is responsible for the quality and standards of its professional awards and as such has a set of quality control policies and regulations for maintaining appropriate standards and enhancing the quality of qualifications and assessment.

Qualification Development Standards

BCE Qualification Development Standards ensure qualifications will:

- be needs based
- focus on outcomes
- be flexible
- require both trust and accountability

[for more information see Accreditation Handbook; Chapter 5; The Designing of BCE Qualifications]

Unit Standards

BCE work with professionals to explore ways of adapting and developing qualifications and unit schemes; including

- embedding ICT across the curriculum
- combining units from different subject schemes

6. **Approved Centre Teaching Standards**

We help develop teaching standards to assist Centres in evaluating accomplished teaching.

[as stated in Accreditation Handbook; Section 2.3.1; Teaching and Learning Policy]

7. **Performance Standards**

Performance Standards define specific performance levels as well as the level of learner work that matches each performance category in each qualification unit.

[see Assessment and Key Elements of the Qualification Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO) on BCE website; BCE Assessment Quality Assurance Policy].

Employee Performance Management Standards

Setting and clearly communicating performance standards and expectations, observing and providing feedback, and conducting appraisals enable us to achieve the best results through managing employee performance.

To begin the process, BCE and the employee will collaborate on the development of performance standards by developing a performance plan that directs the employee's efforts toward achieving specific results, to support organisational growth as well as the employee's professional growth. We discuss goals and objectives throughout the year, providing a framework to ensure employees achieve results through coaching and mutual feedback. At the end of the rating period, BCE will appraise the employee's performance against existing standards, and establish new goals together for the next rating period.

Performance expectations are the basis for appraising employee performance. Written performance management standards let us compare the employee's performance with mutually understood expectations and minimize ambiguity in providing feedback.

Having performance standards is not a new concept; standards exist whether or not they are discussed or put in writing. When observing an employee's performance, we usually make a judgment about whether that performance is acceptable. *How do we decide what's acceptable and what's unacceptable performance?* The answer to this question is the first step in establishing written standards.

Standards identify a baseline for measuring performance. From performance standards, line managers can provide specific feedback describing the gap between expected and actual performance.

8. Educational/Academic Standards

Educational Standards define the knowledge and skills learners should possess at critical points in their educational career.

The standards are designed to ensure learners progress into further education or enter the workforce. The standards are clear and concise to ensure that Centres, Learners, and Stakeholders have an apparent understanding of the expectations in learning outcomes, employability skills, contextual learning, interpersonal skills and learner proficiency (communication, computation, creative/critical/analytical thinking and discipline).

In response to concerns over the educational achievement of learners, BCE establishes a set of learning standards defined by QCF Levels. Curriculum and assessment systems are organised around expectations in all core unit areas of each qualification.

9. Centre Management Standards

BCE Approved Centres should continue to comply with the Centre Recognition Criteria as stated in BCE Accreditation Handbook. Other BCE documents provided to help Centres in improving standards are:

- Centre Management Forms
- Centre Procedures

BCE policies, procedures, forms and other documents are available on BCE website to help Centres comply.

10. Assessment Standards

Assessment Standards assist BCE staff and Approved Centres in continuing to design and implement good policies and procedures for the Level 3 Certificate to Level 6 Diploma qualifications. Assessment Standards assist in the evaluation of best practices.

Other BCE documents which helps improve Assessment Standards are:

- Assessment Management Principles
 - Examination Questions Management Process Review
 - Assessment Management Evaluation
- Assessment Calendar
- Exam Marking Scheme

- Exam Setter, Reviser/Scrutiniser Reports
 - Examination Questions Validity Criteria Template
 - Reviser/Scrutiniser Examination Questions Review
- Standardisation Policy/Meetings
- Assessment/Exam Regulations Policies

What is consistency in assessment?

Consistency in assessment involves the achievement of comparable outcomes. An assessment process would be considered to deliver consistent outcomes if assessment panel assessing learners against the same specification of outcomes in different contexts made comparable assessment decisions.

A framework of competence for assessment panel to use combines:

- Knowledge competence
- Cognitive/problem solving competence
- Business competence
- Ethical/personal behavioural competence

The function of quality assurance activities will be:

- To verify that assessments are fair, valid and consistent.
- To identify where there is any need for redesigning assessment activities, or for reassessing candidates.
- To adjust interpretations of the assessment criteria for the future.
- To provide a mechanism for handling appealed assessment.
- To provide feedback on the quality of the outcomes/assessment criteria.
- To provide feedback to assessors on the quality of their judgements.

Marking Standards

BCE ensures marking standards for individual questions should include:

- Clear identification and explanation of the ranges of marks available for each question.
- Clear explanation of how marks are distributed for both essay and coursework)
- Clear description of mode of assessment (multiple choice, essay, coursework)

BCE also give guidelines to ensure marking is not a "pressurised system" by stating

- Marking period
- Marking procedure; unacceptable marking times and places i.e. down the pub with the football on in the background or at the end of a 12-hour day.

11. Content Standards

Content standards are designed to encourage better understanding by detailing:

- a) Specification
- b) Learner Study Materials
- c) Assessment
- d) Other documents

by including outcomes of intrinsic value and significance.

BCE website has detailed divided into different categories for clarification and ease of use.

12. Health and Safety Standards

Health and Safety Standards outline good practice for BCE (describes legal responsibilities of the organisation) and workers (range of rights and responsibilities that affect employees).

13. Quality Standards

Enable BCE to set out clear procedures for all business operations and processes through policies and procedures and reinforced through staff training. Regular audits and evaluations are carried out to ensure that processes are being carried out consistently according to standards.

Maintaining Standards

Our standards are formally maintained through reflection and evaluation of the delivery and management of provision.

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