

Chief Co-ordinator's Annual Report

Business 03634-03637

September 2007 – August 2008

**OCR Level 2 National Award in Business
OCR Level 2 National Certificate in Business
OCR Level 3 National Certificate in Business
OCR Level 3 National Diploma in Business
OCR Level 3 National Extended Diploma in Business**

QUALIFICATIONS

Level 3

Approximately 50% of active centres are delivering the OCR Nationals in Business at Level 3. The Level 3 programme comprises three separate qualifications:

- Certificate = 6 units (4 mandatory and 2 optional units)
- Diploma = 12 units (4 mandatory and 8 optional units)
- Extended Diploma = 18 units (4 mandatory and 14 optional units).

Out of those centres currently following the Level 3 qualifications, the majority are running the Certificate, with just under half following the Diploma and the Extended Diploma.

Centres have chosen to deliver a variety of optional units. However, the most common are:

Unit 5: Marketing for business
Unit 9: Career planning for business
Unit 12: Skills and the entrepreneur
Unit 15: Human resources management
Unit 17: Recruitment and selection.

Through these qualifications, candidates are developing skills in carrying out research, independent learning, organisation of their own time and problem solving. The qualifications are also developing candidates' ability to work in teams and to communicate effectively with other people.

Level 2

The number of centres offering the OCR Level 2 National Certificate in Business has grown considerably this year, with many centres finding it to be a suitable successor to the GNVQ. Candidates have coped well with the level of work and many have achieved higher grades. The most popular optional units have been:

Unit 7:	Promotion in business
Unit 10:	Office administration
Unit 11:	Keeping customers happy
Unit 13:	Work experience.

CENTRE PRACTICE

Delivery methods

Centres have delivered the qualifications using a variety of methods. Some centres have opted for the 'long and thin' method, where candidates study up to six units at a time. This on the whole has been less successful, especially with Level 2 candidates, as they are undertaking too many pieces of work simultaneously. Other centres have opted for the 'short and fat' method, where candidates study for two units at a time. An advantage with the 'short and fat' method is that candidates can achieve units more quickly. This can be very motivational, as learners receive unit certification for each completed unit. There is also less work for candidates to be managing at any one time. Some centres report that the 'long and thin' method creates a greater sense of cohesion to the course but this can be more difficult to manage and any candidates who do not complete the programme may not gain any units.

Units

On the whole, centres have been well organised. Candidates' work has generally been neatly presented and has been thoroughly marked with detailed assessor comments. Visiting Moderators do however find it helpful if candidates' work is annotated, so that the location of evidence within portfolios is made more explicit.

Many centres have found it useful to grade each assessment objective individually, before holistically grading a whole unit. This not only makes marking easier, it also motivates candidates as they are given an indication of their performance level on an assessment objective by assessment objective basis. Centres are reminded that grades are awarded for assessment objectives not model assignment tasks and the OCR grading grids must be used.

If a candidate has evidenced an assessment objective through a presentation there must be reliable evidence such as the candidate's slides, prompt cards, visual aids or handouts. Each presentation will need to be accompanied by a detailed and signed witness statement which describes the competencies demonstrated by the candidate.

Centres are advised to use the model assignments especially for the Communications units (Level 2 and 3). The nature of these units means that all tasks should be delivered holistically. When marking the model assignments, assessors must be aware that each task will cover multiple assessment objectives and therefore the final grade for each assessment objective is built up over a number of tasks.

If centres devise their own activities and assignments they must ensure that they use the correct command words and cover all appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills.

Some units require candidates to relate their evidence to a selected business that they have investigated. If this is the case, an assignment that is purely theoretical or poorly related will not achieve the assessment objective.

Level 2

Unit 1: Investigating business

Centres need to be aware that Assessment Objectives 3 to 8 must be related to a selected business. Assessors need to ensure that candidates' choice of business will enable them to access all of the information required to achieve the assessment objectives. Assessment Objective 3 is often only partly achieved as many candidates do not cover the second section which requires them to show other ways in which the business could be organised. Assessment Objective 7 and Assessment Objective 8 are often linked together, with Assessment Objective 8 being very weak as candidates have failed to suggest and justify changes that the business could make to their location. If candidates feel that their selected businesses would not benefit from a relocation they should suggest and justify a possible redevelopment of the current location in order to meet business needs.

Unit 2: Enterprise and operations

The choice of business venture is key to candidates' success in this unit. If candidates choose a business venture that is too large and complicated they are unlikely to be able to achieve Assessment Objective 3 as they will have insufficient knowledge. A smaller business is often a wise choice. In order to achieve Assessment Objective 3 candidates should be encouraged to work through the knowledge, understanding and skills ensuring they evidence all relevant bullet points. The finance section is often best left until last. The other sections will enable candidates to consider their costs which can then be used within the finance section.

Unit 3: Finance in business

If setting a case study for this unit, tutors must ensure that it covers all of the assessment objectives fully. OCR has released a model assignment for the unit. If centres choose to use this, candidates should be encouraged to use the checklist at the end of the assignment in order to ensure that they have included all the required evidence. In order to achieve the higher grades for Assessment Objective 5, candidates need to produce 'what if' scenarios, to illustrate different break even points. This can be accomplished through the use of spreadsheets. However, candidates must explain fully what variables they have changed and why. Assessment Objective 6 is often extremely weak as candidates fail to cover the full range of the knowledge, understanding and skills. Candidates that produce their own documents and illustrate how they could record financial transactions related to the case study often achieve the higher grades for this assessment objective. This is an area that needs development.

Unit 4: Communication in business

As noted above, this unit should be delivered holistically and therefore centres are advised to use the model assignments produced by OCR. Candidates should also be encouraged to make use of the checklist that can be found at the back of the model assignment, in order to ensure that they have completed all the tasks.

When producing evidence for Assessment Objective 4 centres need to ensure that all candidates are supplied with a detailed and signed witness statement which explains how the candidate has met this assessment objective. If a candidate has participated in a presentation, a copy of their slides, handouts, prompt cards etc should also be included within the portfolio. In order to achieve Assessment Objective 6 candidates must analyse the impact of the continuing development of ICT as a tool for communication in relation to the selected business and society in general. This is often an area that needs development.

Unit 5: Working with people in business

This has proved a popular optional unit, as it covers aspects of employment that would be relevant to most candidates. Centres have produced practical assignments that have motivated their candidates to achieve the higher grades.

Unit 6: Managing money

Many candidates have enjoyed completing this unit after they have gained a good knowledge of Business finance in Unit 3. Assessors must encourage candidates to ensure that the changes and profits calculator for Assessment Objectives 2 and 3 are realistic as well as accurate.

Unit 7: Promotion in business

This unit has produced some interesting candidate work. However, centres must be aware that it is not until Assessment Objective 7 and 8 that candidates can become creative. They are required to produce theoretical evidence for Assessment Objective 1 and 2, whereas Assessment Objectives 3 to 6 requires candidates to investigate how and why their selected business chooses their promotional activities.

Unit 10: Office administration

This unit needs to be linked with a work experience placement or work simulation, in order to allow candidates to demonstrate the practical skills required to achieve Assessment Objective 3 and Assessment Objective 6. The remainder of the assessment objectives are achieved through theoretical coverage with some linkage to an office environment. Witness statements will be required as proof of competence. These need to be detailed, explaining what the candidate actually did.

Unit 11: Keeping customers happy

This unit has also proved very popular as many candidates work, part time, within the retail business sector. The unit can therefore be made very relevant for them. Candidates are required to investigate a single business to find out who its customers are and how good customer service can benefit the business. They also need to investigate consumer legislation. In order to achieve Assessment Objective 4 and Assessment Objective 5 candidates are required to participate in a range of customer service situations (five in total which should be clearly stated). They are then required to demonstrate their sales skills and review their own performance. For both of these assessment objectives detailed witness statements are required. Centres are reminded of the OCR guidance on creating witness testimonies.

Unit 12: Career planning for business

This unit has also proved to be popular as it helps candidates to focus on their future career development. Assessment Objective 1 has caused some problems. This is the start of the filtering process for this unit. Within Assessment Objective 1 candidates are required firstly to consider the business sector that they would like to work within. Having selected one of the sectors outlined under the heading business sectors within the knowledge, understanding and skills candidates are then required to research and write up the second set of bullet points under the heading 'Within the selected business sector, describe:'. In order to achieve Assessment Objective 2 candidates then select two career areas within their selected business sector and using a range of research methods find out information on the career areas using the bullet points in knowledge, understanding as guidance. Detailed research undertaken for Assessment Objective 2 will help candidates develop their coverage of Assessment Objective 3. The remaining assessment objectives require candidates to analyse their own skills, produce a CV, complete application documentation and finally plan and take part in an interview.

Unit 13: Work experience in business

This unit has been successfully linked to work experience placements. Some centres have made use of one or two week placements whilst others have arranged a day a week placement throughout the duration of the course. In order to achieve Assessment Objective 5 candidates do have to demonstrate how they have planned some of their working day following the bullet points outlined in knowledge, understanding and skills. A good way to evidence Assessment Objective 6 is through the use of a table where the candidate can describe the task in the first column and then identify which skills they demonstrated through the completion of this task. In order to achieve the higher grades candidates will need to then develop a written explanation of exactly what each task entailed and the relevant skills used.

Level 3

Unit 1: Investigating business

This is often the first unit candidates undertake, although this does not have to be the case. However, it does provide a sound background to business, particularly for those who have not studied the subject previously.

Assessment Objective 1 is based on **three** businesses and then in Assessment Objectives 3 to 8 candidates must focus on **one** selected business. When delivering this unit, centres must be aware that Assessment Objective 4 requires candidates to focus on the **role** of internal and external shareholders not their influence on the business. Assessment Objective 3 is a complex assessment objective that requires candidates to do three things. They must first of all explain the internal structure of the business. Next they must describe the functional areas and finally state how the selected businesses' internal structure and functional areas have changed over time. Candidates must be encouraged to make reference to and evidence the relevant bullet points outlined in the knowledge, understanding and skills. With regard to Assessment Objective 6, some of the legislation outlined in the knowledge, understanding and skills has been replaced by the Competition Act. Candidates' evidence for Assessment Objective 8 should contain their presentation slides, prompt cards, presentation notes and a signed and detailed witness statement. When completing Assessment Objective 7, recent statistics should be used (post 2000), backed up with diagrams and graphs.

Unit 2: Customer service

This is a well-liked unit as it combines a sound theoretical knowledge of the subject with practical skills. Most assessment objectives are clear, but should consider the following:

In order to achieve the higher grades for Assessment Objective 2 candidates should be encouraged to use a range of different businesses as examples of how they respond and adapt to the needs of a range of customers and diverse situations. When completing Assessment Objective 3, candidates must focus their investigation into the customer service function of a selected business. Candidates will need to be able to access a medium sized business, which enables them to explain fully its structure, operation and interactions. To achieve Assessment Objective 5 candidates need to take part in four role-play situations. These will need to be backed up with a witness statement supplied by the assessor. Alternatively candidates could obtain detailed witness statements, showing that they have covered the four scenarios in a work placement. The four situations must include face-to-face, telephone and written interactions. Candidates must be reminded to fully evidence the last section of Assessment Objective 5 'and propose appropriate actions for development'. Centres should also be aware that any evidence generated at a work placement must be authenticated.

Unit 3: Business communications

As noted above, this unit should be delivered holistically. Centres are therefore advised to use the model assignment produced by OCR or a locally created assignment based on this. Candidates should also be encouraged to make use of the checklist that can be found at the back of the model assignment, in order to ensure that they have completed all the tasks. Candidates must be encouraged to evaluate fully the impact of ICT on business practice (Assessment Objective 7). This is often very poorly covered and can often lower a candidates overall grade for the unit.

Unit 4: Finance for business

Many centres have created lively and interesting assignments to cover this unit. Traditionally Finance units can be seen as daunting by candidates but a relevant and well crafted assigned can get over this. In order to achieve Assessment Objective 4 candidates need to develop the skills necessary to analyse and make recommendations based on the preparation of a cash flow forecast. The use of 'what if' scenarios should be encouraged, with candidates illustrating how the different scenarios impact on the cash flow forecasts. In order to achieve Assessment Objective 5, candidates must produce evidence to show that they have evaluated the costs involved in the purchase of fixed assets. This assessment objective is evidenced in task 4 part (b) of the 2006 model assignment. To achieve Assessment Objective 6 candidates need to relate their explanations of the financial institutions to the role they play within the economy.

Unit 5: Marketing

This unit has proved to be a very popular choice. Assessment Objective 1 is purely theoretical and should give the candidates a good background into the 4Ps. Assessment Objective 2 is crucial for the remainder of the unit. If extensive and detailed primary and secondary research is not undertaken, candidates will be unable to justify fully their pricing strategy (Assessment Objective 4), distribution methods (Assessment Objective 5) and promotional techniques (Assessment Objective 6). Assessment Objectives 2 to 6 must be based on a new product or service proposed by the candidate or the re-launch of an existing one. Candidates must not just reiterate what their chosen business already does. Candidates should be encouraged to introduce their new product or service clearly prior to

writing up Assessment Objective 2 onwards. In order to achieve Assessment Objective 3 candidates should use both the Boston and Ansoff matrixes.

Unit 6: Practical sales skills

This unit is becoming increasingly popular with those candidates currently who work in the retail sector or who plan to do so. The most detailed evidence seen to-date for Assessment Objectives 2, 3 and 4 has made use of an extensive range of examples from a variety of different businesses in order to support theoretical coverage. The two sales presentations can be undertaken during employment, work experience or role play. All will need to be backed up by witness statements. If role play is used assessors must ensure that role plays are sufficiently complex to allow candidates to meet the evidence requirements of the knowledge, understanding and skills for Assessment Objective 6. Candidates must also be aware that the second part of Assessment Objective 6 is the evaluation of their own performance. Centres must also ensure that any witness testimony generated from work experience is appropriate and authenticated.

Unit 7: Law in the business world

Centres should be aware that Assessment Objectives 1 to 3 are important but should be an introduction to the business related Assessment Objectives 4 to 9.

Centres are reminded that in order to achieve Assessment Objectives 4 to 7 they are required to relate their evidence to three contrasting businesses. Assessment Objective 9 only relates to one of the three businesses selected above but candidates must link their evidence to how the stated legislation has influenced the businesses planning and operations.

Unit 9: Career planning for business

This unit has also proved to be popular as it helps candidates to focus on their future career development. Assessment Objective 1 has caused some problems and is the key to the remainder of the unit. In order to achieve this assessment objective, candidates must first of all select a business sector; for example, agriculture, forestry, fishing, manufacturing, construction, distribution hotels and restaurants, banking and finance, retail. Having selected a business sector they must then analyse the employment trends within the sector, making reference to the knowledge, understanding and skills.

In order to achieve Assessment Objective 2 candidates are required to research a range of career opportunities within their selected business sector, again making reference to knowledge, understanding and skills.

Centres have often found it helpful to complete Assessment Objective 4 prior to the completion of Assessment Objective 3. This enables candidates to research the different methods of preparing and presenting personal information for a job situation in different formats.

The remaining assessment objectives, 3, 5 and 6 focus on the candidate preparing for and taking part in an interview situation.

This unit could be cross referenced to Unit 17: Recruitment and selection.

Unit 10: Work experience in business

This unit works extremely well if linked to a good work placement which will allow the candidate to plan a project that they can carry out whilst on work experience. This will then allow the candidate to complete Assessment Objectives 6, 8 and 9. A successful way to evidence Assessment Objective 7 is to track the demonstration of skills through the use of a table. The candidate can record specific skills in the first column of the table and use the other columns to explain the activity that had been undertaken in order to achieve the skill and how they had been able to develop their skill. For example:

Skill	Task undertaken	How I developed the skill
Information Technology	I had to produce a spreadsheet to calculate the photocopying bill for all departments	I was shown how to use circular formulas.

Unit 12: Skills and the entrepreneur

This unit is becoming increasingly popular; many candidates realise as the course progresses that they are capable of becoming future entrepreneurs.

Centres are reminded that Assessment Objectives 2 to 6 are based on the planning and not the completion of an entrepreneurial activity by the candidate. In order to achieve the higher grades candidates should be encouraged to make use of examples throughout their assignment in order to demonstrate their understanding of each different concept.

Unit 15: Human resources management

This unit has proved popular with those centres that are following the Diploma or Extended Diploma. If candidates are going to base their investigation on their own school or college, they would be advised to focus on non-teaching staff as well as teaching staff. This would include the administration, finance, marketing and customer service staff.

Unit 17: Recruitment and selection

Recruitment and selection has proved one of the most popular choices of optional units. Candidates can achieve highly on this unit, as they like the practical aspects. Centres must remember that Assessment Objective 6 requires candidates to evaluate the recruitment methods used by a selected business organisation. One way to tackle the unit is to evidence Assessment Objective 6 directly after Assessment Objective 1. Candidates will then have a better understanding of how to design their own recruitment and selection package having evaluated one from a selected business. In order to achieve Assessment Objective 4 a witness statement and/or peer assessment of the interview taking place is required to support the documentation completed by the candidate.

Unit 20: Motivating and empowering people

Centres who have attempted this unit have found it very motivational for their candidates. Assessment Objective 1 to 4 are mainly theoretical, with candidates being asked to provide examples in order to support their evidence. However, Assessment Objective 5 must be related to a selected business.

Unit 21: Practical administration

This unit has been linked to work experience placements, where candidates have been able to enter into an administration background. Assessment Objective 6 requires a detailed witness statement to support the range of skills that the candidate has demonstrated. As with similar units, centres must ensure that all evidence actually generated in a work placement should be authenticated by the centre assessor. Centres must ensure that the activities allow candidates to work at Level 3 and they cover all the criteria as listed in the guidance section of the unit.

Centre-devised assignments

If centres are going to devise their own assignments they must ensure that they allow the candidates to meet all the assessment objectives fully and the requirements of the distinction grading descriptors.

OCR model assignments

OCR has produced model assignments to meet the needs of Units 1, 2, 3 and 4 at both Levels 2 and 3. These assignments cover all of the assessment objectives and allow candidates to achieve distinction grades.

Use of resources

All centres visited have access to a wide range of resources that support candidates fully. However, centres must ensure that candidates are able to gain access to 'real' businesses in order to meet the vocational aspects of the qualifications. This could include work placements, educational trips or guest speakers.

Quality assurance

The majority of centres have established systems for internal moderation, which is a requirement for these qualifications. Where thorough and comprehensive internal moderation has taken place the standard of assessment has usually been in line with that of the Visiting Moderator.

There is further support available within the Centre Handbook and through the OCR training events which are held throughout the country between September and March.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Delivery

- Centres should consider carefully the delivery methods. 'Short and fat' delivery allows candidates adequate time to rework units following feedback from tutors. 'Long and thin' delivery methods can allow for units to be combined.
- Candidates should be given advice and guidance on referencing, to avoid accusations of plagiarism.

- Candidates should acknowledge the input of others to avoid accusations of student collusion.
- Candidates must be advised that tutor's notes or downloaded material are not reliable sources of evidence. Notes with 'added value' or interpretations can be, but the internet should be seen as a major source of information that must then be interpreted, reorganised, reviewed and cross-checked for accuracy.
- Centres should recognise that there is no set requirement to deliver the units in any particular order, and should look for links between units.
- Centre managers should ensure all OCR updates are passed on to the relevant centre personnel. There is evidence that updates are not reaching those delivering the schemes in centres.

Assessment

- Assessors must ensure that unit assessment objectives drive the centre-devised assignments, with the same action verbs being used to direct candidates.
- Tutors must ensure that candidates independently research and produce evidence in order to substantiate anecdotal claims.
- Candidates' work should be organised in their portfolios. At the higher levels, candidates should be taking responsibility for this.
- All assessment decisions should be made using OCR grading grids.
- Assessors must ensure witness statements are thoroughly completed so that the Visiting Moderator has clear evidence as to how and why the grades have been awarded. Any witness statements generated outside the centre (eg on work experience) must be authenticated fully by centre assessors.
- It is advised that centers plan to complete at least one or two units early in the course so that the Visiting Moderator can visit to check assessment decisions and to provide advice. If this is not possible, centres should contact the Visiting Moderator to discuss the most suitable course of action.
- Records of all internal moderation and the feedback given to assessors must be retained for inspection by the Visiting Moderator.
- Assessors should become familiar with the information contained in the Centre Handbook and OCR supporting documentation, such as model assignments and grading grids.
- Every centre is entitled to two free visiting moderation visits a year (subject to centre activity each year). Whilst the visit can be used for advice and guidance there must, however, be assessed work available so that moderation can take place.
- If a centre is using the 'short and fat' method of delivery, a visit can be arranged as soon as the first two units have been completed and internally moderated. This will probably take place after the first term. If the centre is using the 'long and thin' method of delivery,

a visit can be arranged as long as there is evidence that some assessment objectives having been assessed and achieved by candidates.

Advice and guidance:

Centres should:

- Use the OCR website (www.ocr.org.uk) to access updated information, including specifications, FAQs and training information.
- Contact OCR if clarification is needed on any subject specific or administrative issues by telephoning the Customer Contact Centre on 02476 851 509 or by emailing vocational.qualifications@ocr.org.uk.