Assessor's guide to interpreting the criteria

RQF general description for Level 6 qualifications

- Achievement at Level 6 requires a learner to command highly specialised skills, including scholastic, across the entire area of business studies, and be able to critically review, consolidate and extend a systematic and coherent body of knowledge.
- Learners at this level are expected to be able to critically evaluate new information, concepts and evidence from a range of sources.
- Learners should be able to utilise, transfer and apply research, diagnostic and creative skills in a wide range of situations. They will exercise appropriate judgement in complex planning, design, technical and management functions related to products and services, operations, and processes, including resourcing.
- The level of accountability at Level 6 expects the learner to accept full responsibility for determining and achieving outcomes. In an observed behaviours plan, he/she should be attempting to lead, for a first time, complex and heterogenous groups.

EQF general description for Level 6 qualifications (RQF Level 6 is mapped to EQF Level 6)

- Achievement at EQF Level 6 reflects the ability to build, select and use advanced, factual and theoretical knowledge within the field of business. The learner must also demonstrate critical understanding of relevant theories and principles.
- This level commands an advanced range of cognitive and practical skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in the specialised field of business.
- A learner at this level is expected to manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts, and to take responsibility for managing professional development of other individuals and groups.

General requirements

- Conformance of individual student's performance to unit criteria and standards must be confirmed by a trained assessor.
- Centres, in collaboration with the assessors, must ensure that there is system in place allowing collection and storage of routine evidence of students' work (e-portfolios). E-portfolios should be in a format allowing online access, on request, by a TLM account manager.
- When the assessor is satisfied with a candidate matching all the criteria to the specification subject to the guidance below, the Centre can request a review of the e-portoflio by an account manager.
- If the account manager confirms the assessor's judgements, the student will get 30 marks towards his/her final mark, and be allowed to sit a final examination.
- When the student passes the final examination (see below Method of assessment), the student is considered to have completed all the requirements for the qualification.

Expansion of the assessment criteria

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1 The learner will understand the nature and benefits of strategic approaches to the management and development of people.

1.1 The learner can define HR strategy and distinguish between what is and is not strategic.

Candidates must define HR strategy in a concise manner, while demonstrating that they can clearly distinguishing between strategic, tactical and operational levels of activities within the HR function.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

1.2 The learner can describe the content and context of HR strategy.

Candidates must describe the application field, content and context of HR strategy.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
Learners should demonstrate that they master the terminology that is specific to HR. This criterion requires comprehension and understanding of the nature of business and the HR function, and the HR strategy in particular.

1.3 The learner can relate HR strategy to a range of organisational and business scenarios.

Candidates must explain the relevance and role of HR strategy in a variety of organisational and environmental scenarios.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
Learners should demonstrate their ability in relating theory to practice and discuss how HR strategy plays in scenarios which are shaped, to a large extent, by the international environment in which the company operates. The exact choice of scenarios on which the answer is to be built would depend on the curriculum and on case study limitations. However, abstraction skills should be welcomed and the answer may be extended to discussion of hypothetical developments which are forked from the current situation.

1.4 The learner can critically evaluate the value added by an organisation's HR strategy.

Candidates must identify and critically evaluate the benefits and value added to the organisation that are attributable to the HR strategy.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

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Additional information and guidance:
Learners are expected to identify both existing and potential benefits, i.e. demonstrate what are the current mechanisms of adding value to the business, and what may or needs to be changed in order to increase this value and optimise the effects from the successful application of the HR strategy. Critical evaluation requires that negative impact or unrealised potential are also to be covered.

1.5 The learner can explain the role of authority, influence and power for the human resource strategist.

Candidates must clearly define the terms authority, influence, and power, as understood in the HR domain, and explain their role and potential use for the HR strategist.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
Definitions and explanations must be concise, with clear differentiation/delimitation between terms. Examples should be welcomed. Definitions should be linked to theories and models, as dictated by the curriculum, e.g. French and Bell, Raven, Cole, Weber, etc. This criterion is closely related to 1.6 below.

1.6 The learner can justify sources of authority, influence and power in human resource strategies.

Candidates must explain the source -- or base -- of different types of authority, influence and power, within the framework of HR strategy.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
While properly identifying the sources of authority, influence and power is a key element for the assessment of this criterion, learners must also put their knowledge in the relevant context of the international business case study and demonstrate skills in transferring knowledge and extending it to the field of practical application in a range of scenarios. This means that theory should be adequately exemplified and referenced (e.g. French and Bell, Raven, Cole, Weber, Greiner and Schein, etc.), and adequacy must be assessed against the curriculum. The criterion is closely related to 1.5 above.

1.7 The learner can critically evaluate key models for strategic human resource management.

Candidates must identify and critically evaluate key models for strategic human resource management.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:

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This criterion allows learners a certain degree of freedom as to the choice of models to be subjected to evaluation. The limitation to this choice will be dictated by the curriculum of the academy/centre, and some non-binding suggestions on what may be included in learners' answers are: Fombrun/Devanna's model, Harvard model, Guest's model, Warwick model (Hendry and Pettigrew), Schuler's model, Beer's model, Best Practice model, Patterson's model. Best Fit/Contingency Model, Resource-based model, etc. In all cases, candidates must acknowledge the many models, theoretical approaches, and research in the strategic HRM
area, including ongoing research and debates (e.g. is the Anglo-Saxon paradigm a universal model or are HR practices country-specific - HRM convergence vs. divergence). Evaluation must be objective, unbiased, and comprehensive. Models should be compared and put in the perspective of the specific international business case study, rather than be discussed as models per se.

2 The learner will understand the relationship between an organisation's HR strategy in terms of its lower level human resource activities and the wider corporate goals of the organisation.

2.1 The learner can evaluate the nature, benefits and conflicts of vertical integration (best fit and coherence) on an organisation's corporate and human resource strategies.

Candidates should explain and evaluate the nature and possible benefits and conflicts arising from vertical integration.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
Learners must discuss the links between the HRM policies, systems and practices, the overall business strategy and the analysis of the external environment. Vertically integrated organisations would normally require more effort and systems in place to support and ensure coordination, coherence, and consistency, but this should pay back in increased efficiency. On the other hand, organisational and communication conflicts, as well as criticism related to the expected feasibility and beneficial nature of integration, must also be discussed. This criterion is complemented and extended by 2.2 below.

2.2 The learner can compare and contrast the significance of vertical and horizontal integration as strategic options.

Candidates must critically compare and explain the significance of vertical and horizontal integration as strategic options in an HR context.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
Learners must properly differentiate between horizontal (compatibility and coherence of HRM elements) and vertical (alignment of HRM policies and practices, business strategy and external context) integration issues, commonly referred to as 'internal fit' and 'external fit'. This criterion is linked to 2.1 above.

2.3 The learner can recognise the relationship between changes in an organisation's operational, marketing and financial strategies, and their potential impact on the

organisation's HR strategies.

Candidates must describe the relationship between HR strategies and other functional strategies, and between HR strategies and operational strategies, and explain how changes in functional and lower level operational strategies inform and influence the organisation's HR strategy.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

3 The learner will understand the design, monitoring and evaluation of HR strategy.

3.1 The learner can explain how to conduct an environmental analysis focused on the development and/or refinement of an organisation's HR strategy.

Candidates must explain the environmental analysis models and methods that are used when developing and refining an organisation's HR strategy.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
Learners should focus on analytical models (or parts thereof) and methods which are specifically targeting issues and factors relevant to the HR strategy (e.g. parts of PESTLE - demographic or related to workforce - supply (education), compensation, etc.).

3.2 The learner can construct an outline HR strategy customised to the needs and aspirations of the organisation to which it applies.

Candidates must be able to construct and outline HR strategy which is tailored and conformant to the needs and aspirations of the organisation.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
As an extension to 3.1, learners must construct a strategic frame which is conformant to the results and findings of an Internal Capital Assessment in its human capital part.

3.3 The learner can examine and evaluate methods for gaining stakeholder commitment to HR strategy.

Candidates must identify and critically evaluate methods for gaining stakeholder commitment to HR strategy.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:

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Assessors should focus on proper identification of stakeholders and stakeholder groups, and on the relevant and appropriate methods for gaining, increasing, and maintaining their commitment. Answers should be comprehensive and demonstrate that learners have extensive theoretical knowledge in the subject area and are able to illustrate theory by adequate examples, and take it yet further by recommending working methods and techniques.

3.4 The learner can incorporate appropriate ethical principles and values in a proposed HR strategy.

Candidates must demonstrate that they can incorporate ethical principles and values in a proposed HR strategy for a particular organisation.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
Answers must clearly show understanding that ethical issues have an important place and role in many HR areas, be it remuneration and benefits, labour relations, health and safety at work, training and development, promotion, etc.

3.5 The learner can compare methods for monitoring human resource management.

Candidates must critically compare methods for monitoring HRM within an organisation.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
As a guidance, and recognising that the exact content of this criterion will be determined by the curriculum, learners may consider the three approaches to HRM monitoring identified by Morgan (1992). They should be encouraged to elaborate on the subject matter which boasts a variety of methods and approaches - e.g. human resource accounting methods, key performance indicators, EFQM performance criteria, etc.

3.6 The learner can identify and assess the ways in which the effectiveness of a HR strategy may be measured.

Candidates must identify and critically assess the options available to the specified business in relation to measuring HR strategy effectiveness.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
Learners should be allowed freedom in selecting metrics which they consider appropriate, but they should justify their choices and demonstrate that their use would contribute to the monitoring, control and analysis of HR strategy implementation in the particular context of the international business case study.

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4 The learner will understand the strategies for managing people as a resource.

4.1 The learner can explain strategic approaches to organisational design.

Candidates must explain organisational design from a strategic perspective and explain methods to bring organisational structure in coherence with strategic objectives, systems, processes, and people.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
Note that learners should be able to identify -- and recognise, if met in a particular business organisation -- the symptoms of ineffective organisation.

4.2 The learner can apply strategic principles to recruitment and selection processes and practices.

Candidates should outline and explain recruitment and selection processes which are guided by the strategic orientation and the strategic plan of an organisation.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
Learners should avoid trivial answers and attempt the criterion with creativity insofar as the process design is concerned.

4.3 The learner can explain strategic approaches to the deployment, attendance and retention of staff.

Candidates should outline and explain systems, processes, and methods related to deployment, attendance, and retention of staff, that are guided by the strategic orientation and the strategic plan of an organisation.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
Learners should avoid trivial answers and attempt the criterion with creativity. They should present solutions which are relevant and appropriate for the particular company and its strategic orientation, and must be able to justify their answers by demonstrating that these are working solutions backed by solid theoretical principles. Discussion on suggested metrics is an important element of this criterion, as these are used both for informing the decisions as to which approaches are to be used, and for monitoring and controlling the processes.

4.4 The learner can provide a strategic approach to succession planning, for key organisational roles and explain how the approach might be implemented.

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Candidates must outline and explain a practically-oriented succession planning roadmap for key organisational roles.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
Learners should be able to discuss real-world examples of succession planning strategies. Key issues which must be discussed are mentoring, internal promotions vs. bringing new people in, organisational culture, diversity, screening for high-potential successors, etc. Assessment of whether the answer is comprehensive should be coherent with the curriculum of the academy or centre. Attempts to design and apply innovative solutions or enter current debates in the subject areas should be encouraged.

4.5 The learner can relate technology support systems to HR management at a local and global level.

Candidates must explain the nature and features of a human resource information system (HRIS) and discuss how such systems can be used to assist HR management at domestic and global level.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
Learners should be acquainted with at least a few brands of HRIS, incl. open-source alternatives. The criterions is not about detailed knowledge of a particular product, but rather investigates the availability and relevance of different ICT support systems.

5 The learner will understand the strategies for learning and development within organisations.

5.1 The learner can identify learning needs in an organisation.

Candidates must be able to construct and explain an outline of a training and learning needs analysis (TLNA) for a particular organisation.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

5.2 The learner can explain strategies to maximise the effectiveness of budgets targeted on learning.

Candidates must be able to explain and discuss approaches to maximising learning budget effectiveness in a particular organisation.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

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Additional information and guidance:
Learners would typically adopt the approach that effectiveness of training and learning activities (and of their money value) is dependent on good planning, coordination and control. In particular, when learning needs have been identified (see criterion 5.1 above), their impact must be assessed and they should have a cost property attached to each activity. Prioritising of learning activities should result from coordination and alignment of objectives both horizontally and vertically (see criteria 2.1 - 2.3).

5.3 The learner can evaluate an organisation's learning programmes in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

Candidates must critically evaluate a specific organisation's learning programmes in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
This criterion is a natural extension of 5.2 above. In contrast to 5.2, the focus here should not be how to spend the budget in an effective manner, but how to approach the selection and design of training programmes and activities with effectiveness (impact) and efficiency (efficiency must not not be understood simply and necessarily in money terms) in mind.

6 The learner will understand the strategies for sustaining good employee relations for the benefit of the organisation.

6.1 The learner can explain key legislation related to employment rights and responsibilities.

Candidates should demonstrate that they are aware and understand the legislation which regulates employment.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
Learners must be able to outline the main principles of the employment law (Employment Rights Act 1996), the legal base of protection of rights of employees at work, and anti-discrimination policies.

6.2 The learner can describe strategies to motivate engagement and commitment of employees to the organisation.

Candidates must describe strategic approaches to increase and sustain engagement and commitment among employees.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:

The strategies must be consistent with, and tailored to, the particular organisation on which the case study is focused.

6.3 The learner can explain how strategies to foster positive relationships can be evaluated.

Candidates must outline the methods of evaluation of strategies aiming at fostering and sustaining positive relationships at work.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:
Learners should discuss this criterion in the context of the wider performance assessment (PA) process. Assessors may want to consider a common task and assessment for 6.3 and 6.4.

6.4 The learner can compare the advantages and disadvantages of performance management and rewards systems on employee motivation.

Candidates must compare the advantages and disadvantages on employee motivation induced by performance management and reward systems.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

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