

Scottish Baccalaureate support event

A Scottish Baccalaureate support event took place on Wednesday 29 September 2010 at the Barcelo Carlton Hotel in Edinburgh. Aimed at colleagues who are delivering the Scottish Baccalaureates in Science and Languages for the first time in 2010–11, the event was attended by 85 delegates from 62 centres, along with representatives from local authorities, higher education, and Learning and Teaching Scotland.

The event was introduced by Alastair MacGregor, SQA's Head of Science and Technology. Alastair welcomed delegates and gave an overview of the first year of the award. He gave details of the encouraging number of early adopters, the excellent results achieved, the positive feedback from pupils and teachers, and the support provided by the higher education sector. He hoped that this would help to dispel some of the myths that had appeared in the press in the previous months and would encourage new centres to deliver the awards. Alastair also highlighted the announcement from Edinburgh University to offer second year entry to Baccalaureate candidates for science courses.

Lorna Grant, SQA's Baccalaureate Development Manager, gave a short presentation on the support that is available for centres and highlighted key dates for the submission of approval applications, the entry of candidates, and submission of grades. Lorna described the support materials available via SQA's website and highlighted other sources of information. She launched the new Baccalaureate video case studies by showing an introductory film clip which gave delegates an opportunity to hear the views of some of last year's candidates and teachers/lecturers. Lorna also referred to an information sheet that was included in the delegate packs.

Linn Van der Zanden, one of SQA's Learning Technologists, gave a presentation on the Deskspace e-portfolio which is available free of charge for Baccalaureate candidates. It is anticipated that candidates would find this a very convenient way to store their work and record assessment evidence. The e-portfolio can be accessed anywhere so can be used in school, at home, in the library, etc.

Delegates then attended two workshops in rotation. Workshop 1 covered Project Management and Lessons Learned and was delivered by Lynn Borthwick and Patrick Lawlor from Forth Valley College. Workshop 2 was on Collaborative Working and Quality Assurance and was presented by Margo Lindsay from Menzieshill Academy and Alison Smart from St Modan's High School.

Lynn and Patrick described the way they had managed the delivery of the Interdisciplinary Project last session and gave valuable information on their experience and the lessons they had learned.

Margo and Alison described different ways of working collaboratively by describing partnership working as in the Dundee schools/Abertay University model — where schools work together to share ideas, and colleagues within a school support Baccalaureate candidates. They also gave examples of different

models of internal quality assurance from their experience as External Verifiers (EVs).

In the afternoon, delegates were divided into ten groups each led by an External Verifier. They discussed national standards through an activity focused on four examples of proposals and plans (two in Science, two in Languages). This task stimulated lively discussion and provided an opportunity to share ideas and ask questions. There then followed a plenary session which allowed the groups to feedback interesting points that had been raised and to seek further clarification from SQA officers.

Feedback from the event was extremely positive. Of the 48 delegates who completed the evaluation forms, all were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' and the majority felt that the content was relevant and that their expectations had been met.

During the day there was time for delegates to network and share experiences and ideas. A number of delegates welcomed this opportunity and commented that the day was interesting and informative. Many also appreciated the contact with EVs and hearing about the experience of practitioners who had delivered last session.