



**National Qualifications 2012
Internal Assessment Report
Biology — Advanced Higher
Investigation**

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

National Courses

Titles/levels of National Courses verified:

Advanced Higher Biology — Investigation

General comments

All centres in this year's sample were visited during February and March. This is before the final submission date for Investigations as the purpose of these visits is to make both the presenting staff and candidates aware of the guidelines for assessment and the requirements needed to meet national standards.

The visit should be seen as supportive and involve an examination of the candidate daybooks and discussions with presenting staff, candidates and usually the centre's SQA Co-ordinator.

The visits provide a platform to gather information while giving advice and guidance in this area of assessment.

Most centres are aware of the internal assessment requirements and give the SQA guidelines to their candidates for reference.

Course Arrangements, Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Centres were using the latest published guidelines issued by SQA and had given each of the candidates the recommended paperwork allowing them to tackle the Investigation with appropriate guidance.

The guide to maintaining the daybook and its subsequent marking was held by the member of teaching staff responsible for co-ordinating the practical work and record keeping.

Candidates were aware of the need to keep a daybook, what was to be recorded and how it was linked with the externally assessed Investigation report. Most centres kept copies of past student daybooks and final reports for reference.

Evidence Requirements

In all cases the centre evidence was 'incomplete' but both staff and candidates were aware of national requirements. However, centre staff used the visits to ask questions and seek advice. Candidates were given the opportunity to enter into discussion with verifiers and obtain guidance on ways to improve their practical efforts, record keeping and presentation.

Administration of assessments

The guidelines issued by SQA were being followed by all centres and had issued candidates with the recommended 'Guidance to Candidates'.

While all of the centres were aware of the benefits of internal verification, there were only a few centres that were undertaking internal verification on an on-going basis to maintain the daybooks.

Areas of good practice

On-going internal verification is highly recommended. Also, regular meetings between mentoring staff and the candidates to discuss progress while the plan is being developed was seen as an important stage in the successful completion of this Unit.

As well as dated records of meetings giving a brief summary to indicate the planning stage, candidates should also give details of ideas that have been rejected and contributions made by others (outside agencies/experts/technicians etc).

In the planning stage (Outcome 1), dated and signed entries into the daybook of performance criteria success greatly assists the verification process.

While the collection and analysis of the information must be the individual work of each candidate, guidance in the means of record keeping and presentation can be discussed.

Specific areas for improvement

From the start of Investigation work, candidates should be encouraged to note the source of any reference material in the correct format.

In the final write-up of the report, marks are regularly lost for incorrect referencing or lack of referencing. This would be overcome if the correct format for book, journal and internet referencing was established during the writing of the daybook.

As performance criteria for Outcome 1, the need for appropriate controls and replicate treatments or survey samples must be considered.

Evaluation as an ongoing process should also be encouraged as the final write-up requires evaluation of both procedures and results. These should also be appropriate to Advanced Higher level.