



**National Qualifications 2013
Internal Assessment Report
Social Sciences Bacalaureate**

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

National Qualifications (NQ) Units

Titles/levels of NQ Units verified:

Social Sciences Baccalaureate: Interdisciplinary Project

General comments

This was the first year of delivery of the Interdisciplinary Project (IP) Unit in Social Sciences with 16 candidates undertaking the Interdisciplinary Project from nine centres.

All presenting centres were subject to external verification. At central verification, evidence from 14 candidates was judged to be in line with national standards. This represents an accuracy level of 87%. Issues were identified with assessment decisions in two centres. The assessment decisions on two candidates were deemed to have been lenient and these candidates were downgraded.

The results for the Unit were: 10 Grade A passes, two Grade B passes, four Grade C passes, and zero No Awards.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

A support event was held in November 2012 and was attended by most presenting centres. Delegates used exemplar material from Science and Languages Interdisciplinary Projects as a basis for discussion on the assessment criteria and national standards, and to help develop familiarity with the specifications for the Unit. External Verifiers (EVs) chaired discussions on national standards and the assessment process. Delegates were very appreciative of the event.

Although this was the first year of the Social Sciences Baccalaureate, many centres have already presented candidates in Science or Languages. This means that many centres already have a sound knowledge and experience of national standards through development visits and events and from their experience of presenting candidates in the Science or Languages Interdisciplinary Project Unit. Many centres already have a well-developed mechanism for assessing and internally verifying Interdisciplinary Projects and this has been extended to include this new curricular area.

At the Quality Forum events, centre representatives demonstrated their familiarity with the specifications for the Unit. They made valuable contributions to discussions and appreciated the opportunity to interact with EVs and assessors from other centres to further develop their knowledge. All centres had made good use of the exemplar material.

The Quality Forum events also provided centre representatives with the opportunity to see and discuss candidate evidence from other centres, helping develop and consolidate an understanding of the instruments of assessment and the application of national standards.

Some centres presented candidates for the Baccalaureate for the first time and are praised for the accuracy of their assessment decisions and the standard of evidence submitted. Within these centres, there is evidence of a team approach to assessing and mentoring candidates through their project. This is commended in EV reports where relevant.

The exemplar material on SQA's website will be updated with new examples and supporting EV commentaries. These provide samples of A, B and C grades with the commentaries by an External Verifier explaining the grading of each exemplar.

Evidence Requirements

All centres have a good understanding of the Evidence Requirements for the Unit. All mandatory pieces of evidence and an Assessor Report were submitted for each candidate. EVs commented on the quality of evidence produced by candidates who completed some creative and interesting projects.

One centre submitted evidence where the candidate had not completed all mandatory sections. Centres need to ensure that these sections of the templates are completed so that all criteria are accessible. Also, candidates need to be made aware that their project should have depth and breadth to allow them to meet as many criteria as possible.

All charts and additional information regarding timelines and dependencies were submitted.

Administration of assessments

All centres submitted evidence using SQA templates. With many centres supporting several candidates through projects in different curricular areas, mentors and assessors need to ensure that each candidate uses the correct templates appropriate to their subject. Where candidates use the wrong templates there are no implications for grading, but it is good practice to ensure the correct templates are used.

Centres have developed a wide variety of approaches to the internal verification process. In some centres there are some excellent examples of inter-departmental verification which, in some cases, is well established through presenting in Science and Language. Some candidates have forged strong links with universities and other outside agencies, often including them in the audience for presentations. Input from these external links helps provide a robustness to assessment of the presentation and their inclusion is welcome.

Most Assessor Reports contained high quality comments which were very helpful to the external verification process. However, centres should ensure that comments within the Assessor Report are directed at verifiers — both internal and external — and not to the candidate.

Areas of good practice

The feedback given to candidates by assessors was, in many cases, clear and comprehensive. Giving positive feedback in the initial stages of the project is vital to the candidate and helps their motivation.

Many centres provide excellent support for their candidates and the number of staff with experience of the Interdisciplinary Project continues to grow. Some centres have formed an IP team which crosses all curricular areas and involves staff at all levels. This is to be commended.

There is strong evidence of close collaboration between centres and universities and external agencies in mentoring and supporting candidates. These collegial links are instrumental in allowing candidates to access some of the grade criteria. EVs have commented on the impressive use of some of these links in their EV Report to relevant centres.

EVs commented on the very high standard of self-evaluation in some projects. It is apparent from these that many candidates gain a great deal in completing their project. Centres are to be commended in supporting their candidates through the process.

Assessor comments are often commended for their quality and insight. These are extremely useful in the verification process.

Specific areas for improvement

Projects need to be sufficiently broad to meet the interdisciplinary requirement for the Unit. Narrow topics can restrict the candidate's ability to meet all criteria. Candidates should also be encouraged to plan their research carefully and to produce as full a timeline as possible. This increased level of detail means that candidates should find it easier to show the dependencies within their project.

From the evidence submitted, there are some candidates over-relying on e-mail communication. This again can restrict access to some criteria. While it is appreciated that there may be practical difficulties with external visits, good contingency planning should be able to overcome problems.

Evaluations were mostly of a good quality, but candidates should be encouraged to use the prompts in the templates and support their comments with evidence from their project.