



**National Qualifications 2013
Internal Assessment Report
Science Bacculaureate**

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:

Science Baccalaureate: Interdisciplinary Project

General comments

This was the fourth year of delivery of the Interdisciplinary Project Unit. This year external verification was carried out on a sampling basis.

At central verification, evidence from 100 candidates was verified out of a total of 155 entries. There was 78% accuracy in assessment decisions with External Verifiers (EVs) agreeing with centres grading decisions. Issues were identified with assessment decisions in some centres. The assessment decisions on 10 candidates were deemed to have been severe and these candidates were upgraded. The assessment decisions on 12 candidates were deemed to have been lenient and these candidates were downgraded.

The Unit results for the verified sample were: 35 Grade A passes, 33 Grade B passes, 29 Grade C passes, and three No Awards.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Over the past three years many centres have built up a sound knowledge of the specifications of the Unit. Through participation in development visits and events, teachers supporting candidates with their Interdisciplinary Project are familiar with the instruments of assessment and the exemplification materials.

There is strong evidence from Quality Forums that experience and expertise in supporting candidates through the Interdisciplinary Project is being passed on to other staff within centres. Many centres have now developed cross-curricular support for Baccalaureate candidates and this is strengthening the support and assessment decisions within centres.

Centres continue to support the Quality Forum events and express their appreciation of the benefits they gain from them. Their participation is a vital part of the external verification process, providing insight into the conduct and assessment of Interdisciplinary Projects across the country.

The exemplar material on SQA's website continues to be updated with new samples and supporting commentaries written by an EV. These provide samples of A, B and C grades with the commentaries explaining the grading of each exemplar. Many centres comment on the support these samples provide for both candidates and assessors.

Evidence Requirements

Most centres have a good understanding of the evidence required for the Unit though there continues to be issues with some centres not submitting all mandatory pieces of evidence. The occurrence of this is decreasing, however some centres do not seem to fully appreciate that evidence is required of timelines — a grade C criterion — as several charts detailing timescales had to be requested from centres. The EV report has commented where this has occurred.

In completing the templates, centres need to ensure that candidates remain focused on the process and not the product. Where a candidate's evidence contains more detail about presentations and the way the project was conducted, rather than the skills developed through completing the project, it is harder for the candidate to show that they are meeting the grading criteria.

Interim reviews, progress logs and in some cases discs containing presentations and reports are still frequently submitted along with the mandatory evidence. These are not required and are not taken into consideration during central verification. Centres have been advised of this in their EV report where it was relevant.

Administration of assessments

All centres used SQA templates, though a few centres submitted evidence on a mix of Science and Social Science templates. Templates across all four Baccalaureate Interdisciplinary Projects are identical apart from titles and reference to subject, and candidates are not disadvantaged by using the wrong template. However, with many centres developing a cross-curricular support mechanism, care should be taken that the correct templates are used.

Many centres have a better understanding of how to complete the Assessor Report. External Verifiers have commented on the richness and quality of assessor comments in the Assessor Reports. These are vital in giving insight into grading decisions and informing the EV process.

Most centres now have a well-developed internal verification system in place. Though these are varied in their format, the internal verification process in most centres is sound, evidenced by the number of assessment decisions upheld by EVs. Quality Forums allow discussion of the internal verification process between the EV and centre representative, and where this process can be improved, the EV has commented in their report.

The internal verification mechanism within some centres, particularly new presenting centres, is more of a cross-marking nature rather than internal verification. While cross-marking helps to provide support for the assessor and assessment decisions, having someone unfamiliar with the project to internally verify will help provide robustness to the grading decision.

Areas of good practice

Centres are supporting candidates in a wide variety of interesting projects. It is clear from the justifications within the Proposal that candidates are being encouraged to develop projects in which they have a personal interest and consequently are being successful in completing them.

More centres now have a team of staff from different departments involved in supporting Interdisciplinary Projects. This allows frequent collaboration and cross-marking between assessors, so strengthening assessment decisions. Care should be taken however to ensure that there is also a robust internal verification system in place. Having a team involved also spreads expertise and prevents presentation levels suffering due to staffing changes.

Many centres are encouraging candidates to expand on the broad contexts. By thinking about how their projects meet their chosen broad contexts, candidates can often see more relevance in what they are trying to achieve and stay on track easier.

The quality of candidate self-evaluation is improving. EVs frequently comment on the honesty and insightfulness displayed by candidates in this piece of evidence. Centres are to be commended in guiding and supporting their candidates to produce such evaluations.

Specific areas for improvement

Assessors need to ensure that they grade each project on its own merits. It can be difficult where a centre has one very strong A-grade candidate not to mark others by comparison. EVs commented on a few centres where candidates were upgraded where this was the case. Relevant centres have been made aware of this in their EV reports.

Some projects have been submitted which are more research projects. These often do not allow candidates to access all C-grade criteria, and therefore they could potentially fail the Unit. Exemplar material and the Candidate Guide should be used to help candidates ensure that their project has sufficient breadth and depth to allow them to meet as many criteria as possible.

Centres should ensure that the correct subject templates are used by each candidate and that dates of signatures correspond to the completion of the piece of evidence and not the date of printing for submission.

Assessors should encourage candidates who change the focus, or follow additional strands to their plan, to add these to the original plan. They should also include timescales, dependencies and contingencies relevant to these additions.