



**National Qualifications 2013
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 Unit

Titles/levels of National Units verified:

Biology Investigation — Advanced Higher

General comments

The purpose of the external verification visit is to ensure that centres are assessing candidates in line with national standards.

The visit should be seen as supportive and involves an examination of the candidate daybooks and discussions with presenting staff, candidates and usually the centre's SQA Co-ordinator. The visit provides a platform to gather information while giving advice and guidance in this area of assessment.

In most centres the teaching of the coursework was the responsibility of an individual staff member; however many centres utilise a number of staff and, in some cases, outside agency expertise.

Many centres allocated laboratory space specifically for the Advanced Higher investigation work.

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

All centres visited were using the latest published SQA guidelines and were aware of internal assessment requirements. In many centres the workload is shared; this provides opportunity for the recommended practice of internal verification.

Most candidates were issued with the latest SQA guidelines to be used as a reference.

Evidence Requirements

All centres visited used A4 jotters/folders for use as a daybook and these were generally being kept in a diary format with the required meetings and minute of discussions duly noted and signed by the monitoring staff.

While most candidates acknowledged any external agencies or personnel, the recording of all forms of referencing was poorly kept, if noted at all, in the daybooks.

Administration of assessments

The recommended *Advanced Higher Candidate Guidance* issued by SQA had been issued to all candidates.

Despite centres showing awareness of the benefits of internal verification, few centres were undertaking this good practice on an on-going basis to maintain the daybooks and monitor the investigation work of candidates.

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.

Many centres kept a well-stocked library of books, journals, scientific paper and previous investigation reports as reference materials.

Centre staff attended the regional and national forums where there were opportunities to discuss the presentation and management of Advanced Higher Investigations.

Specific areas for improvement

In the final draft of the report, referencing of collected background information, practical methods and data is generally poor. Centres are encouraged to make use of the published guidance.

For Outcome 1, Performance Criterion (e), candidates should be advised to note in the daybook how the appropriate controls and replicate treatments or survey samples are or will be performed/recorded.

Evaluation as an on-going 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.