



**National Qualifications 2014  
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: Interdisciplinary Project

## General comments

This is the fifth year of delivery of the Science Interdisciplinary Project Unit. External verification was carried out on a sampling basis, with three-quarters of presenting centres verified.

At central verification, evidence from 101 candidates from 37 centres was verified out of a total of 157 entries. External Verifiers agreed with the grading decisions for 84% of this sample. Issues were identified with assessment decisions in 14 centres. The assessment decisions on six candidates in six centres were deemed to have been severe and a higher grade was recommended. The assessment decisions on 10 candidates in eight centres were deemed to have been lenient and a lower grade was recommended.

## Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Generally the instruments of assessment were completed fully and correctly. Full, insightful and informative assessor comments were provided by most centres on the Assessor Report. The specific nature of these comments was most useful during central verification, and External Verifiers gave feedback commending centres on the helpfulness of these comments in understanding how grading decisions had been reached.

Exemplar material on SQA's website was widely used by centres. Centres found these exemplars and commentaries extremely helpful in the assessment process and centre representatives commented on this at Quality Forum events.

Most centres used the templates provided on SQA's website. Where candidates choose not to use a template it is not always to their advantage, and can make it extremely difficult for assessors and verifiers to find evidence of criteria being met. Any shortcomings of self-generated templates were included in the External Verifier report.

Some submitted evidence had the prompts for candidates removed and it is not clear if this was done after completion of the piece of evidence. The prompts give candidates excellent direction as to what is required within each section and they should be available to ensure candidates are given every opportunity to access each grading criteria. There is no issue with later removing them but centres should ensure that candidates are aware of them and of their usefulness.

## **Evidence Requirements**

While all mandatory evidence was provided by most centres, some pieces were incomplete. Candidates from some centres used spreadsheets to show timescales and dependencies but did not include them with their evidence. In some cases these were referred to by the candidate in other pieces of evidence or by the assessor in their comments, allowing candidates to meet the timescale criterion. In other cases however, centres had to be contacted to supply this evidence. External Verifiers' reports to centres highlighted where this had occurred and directed that any chart or spreadsheet used for timescales should be submitted as part of the Plan so that candidates are meeting this C grade criterion.

Some centres continue to provide Interim Reviews and other additional evidence. These are not required and are not taken into consideration during central verification. Centres have been advised of this in their External Verifier report.

## **Administration of assessments**

Within many local authorities centres have forged strong links with further education establishments and industries, with some forming strong partnerships. These links allow candidates to access facilities and expertise, and have provided them with opportunities to meet the 'less familiar learning environments' criterion. Some centres also involve college, university and external agency staff as joint assessors. In this capacity they contribute comments to pieces of evidence, attend presentations and are part of the internal verification process, so strengthening the robustness of the process.

In general, centres have a good understanding of the need for internal verification and in many cases this is very robust. Many centres have developed a collegiate approach to internal verification and there were some excellent examples of co-operative working between departments, or between centres within the same local authority. This approach has provided excellent support to staff within centres in understanding and applying national standards. However, some centres are confusing cross-marking, or joint-assessing, with internal verification. An Internal Verifier should be confirming the grading and should have no prior knowledge of the candidate's work.

## **Areas of good practice**

External Verifiers have commented on the excellent management of the Interdisciplinary Project by some centres. The knowledge and experience that has been gained through previous presentations is being passed on to other staff resulting in a well-managed team approach to support candidates.

There is a wide diversity of projects being supported by centres and this year saw an increase in engineering themed projects. It is encouraging to see centres moving outwith the confines of the traditional science subjects. This year saw an increase in engineering-themed projects with a focus on current developments such as fracking and the new Forth crossing. There was also an increase in

projects incorporating computing themes where the final product was the development or design of an app.

Some centres are encouraging candidates to justify the broad context of their project. While this is not mandatory, it is good practice and helps candidates with the rationale for their project.

### **Specific areas for improvement**

Centres should ensure that a fully completed Assessor Report is submitted along with the candidate evidence. The assessor comments in this section are directed towards the verification process and help to give an insight into the grading decision and are therefore vital to the verification process — both internal and external, especially in the justification of awarding of A grade criteria.

As the Proposal and Plan sections can be redrafted, centres should ensure that, at these stages, candidates have a viable project which will allow them to proceed with their project, develop their generic skills and allow access to all criteria. Originals and redrafts should be submitted as evidence to show progression and development of the project.

Some candidates are carrying out projects which have a heavy reliance on internet information. Part of the ethos of the Interdisciplinary Project is that candidates move out of familiar learning environments in some way. This is not possible when only using the internet for research and candidates will have difficulty to achieve all grading criteria.

Some centres have been advised to develop their internal verification process as at present they are cross/joint marking. The External Verifier report has highlighted where this is the case.