

National Qualifications 2007

Senior Verifier's Report

Subject: Biology Standard Grade - Practical Abilities

Assessment Panel: Biology / Human Biology

STANDARD GRADE

ELEMENT / COURSEWORK VERIFIED

PRACTICAL ABILITIES - TECHNIQUES AND INVESTIGATIONS

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

General comments:

The evidence submitted by centres was generally complete and as requested with the sample containing the broad spectrum of grades as per the sampling format given in the Guidelines.

However, as has been noted in the past, both techniques and investigations appear to be carried out on specified dates set by the centre with the result that a small number of candidates lose marks by failing to complete the techniques and/or investigation booklet.

Occasionally, it appears that centres are not using the Generative phase of the investigation to give the candidates the opportunity to think about the practical work they are setting out to cover.

Techniques

There continues to be a number of centres that have candidates that fail to successfully master techniques such as

- Using a biological key
- Choice chamber

This often results in the candidate being penalized a grade

Investigations

Evidence would suggest that many centres only cover two investigations (all the investigations from the centre cover two topics) and they are all done as tests at the same time. With the result that many candidates do not complete two investigations.

In a number of submissions all the candidates presented investigations that both measured a discontinuous variable – the guidelines suggest that at least one of the investigations measure a continuous one.

The marks lost by many of the candidates in the generative phase means that they go on to lose further marks in the rest of the investigation. Where assistance from staff is required to allow the candidate to progress this should be noted in the 'Comment' and the candidate permitted to complete the practical.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

Increased evidence of internal verification – this should continue to be encouraged with the proviso that changes in marks and final decisions are obvious to the central verification team.

Centres should ensure that they are using the latest set of guidelines for assessment

Candidates should be given the opportunity to attempt all techniques as part of ongoing course work and several investigations in their two years of Standard Grade work and these should measure both continuous and discontinuous variables.

Staff should be encouraged to use the Generative phase as directed in the Guidelines.

The senior Verifier's report should be made available to the appropriate members of staff. This is particularly important where the member of staff responsible for forwarding the Verification report is a teacher of another science discipline.