



**National Qualifications 2011
Internal Assessment Report**

Languages Baccalaureate

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

National Qualifications (NQ) Units

(ie freestanding Units which contribute to NPAs or NCs etc.)

Titles/levels of NQ Units verified

F784 Languages: Interdisciplinary Project (SCQF level 7)

General comments

This is the second year of the Interdisciplinary Project Unit. The number of presenting centres increased to 18 centres submitting evidence for a total of 45 candidates, with nine candidates undertaking the Interdisciplinary Project as a stand-alone Unit. During central verification, the assessment decisions of 12 centres for 37 candidates were judged to be in line with national standards. This represents 82% of candidates, which is a clear indicator that centres have a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards. Issues were identified in six centres where assessment decisions were deemed to be severe or lenient. This resulted in five candidates being downgraded and three being upgraded. Final results for the Unit were 28 A Grade passes, 13 B grade passes, 3 C Grade passes and one No Award.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Support events were held in September and February and were attended by both new and returning centres. Information was given to centres on different models of quality assurance and External Verifiers (EVs) led workshops facilitating discussions on assessment criteria and national standards using exemplar material. These events were joint Languages and Science, and attendees commented on how this helped them to focus on the process and criteria rather than on the subject. The support events have been instrumental in developing a good understanding of Unit requirements and national standards in most centres.

The quality forum events, which were a key part of External Verification, provided centre representatives with the opportunity to see and discuss candidate evidence from other centres, thereby strengthening their understanding of national standards.

Exemplar material on the SQA website was widely used by centres. The quantity of material available was greatly increased at the start of session 2010–11 using project evidence from 2009–10 presentations. These provided centres with exemplars for grades A–C with supporting EV commentaries explaining the grading. Centres found these enhanced exemplars extremely helpful in the assessment process and this was commented on at support events.

Almost all centres used the templates provided on the SQA website, though some chose to devise their own or alter the SQA templates. This was not always to the advantage of the candidates and in some cases made it difficult for External Verifiers to verify the centre's assessment decisions as it was not clear that there was evidence of criteria being met. Any shortcomings of self-generated templates were included in the central verification report to the individual centre.

Generally, the instruments of assessment were completed fully and correctly. A few centres misunderstood how the assessment checklist should be completed, but this became apparent at the quality forum meeting.

Evidence Requirements

All mandatory evidence was provided by all centres though some pieces were incomplete, the most common being insufficient reference to timescales or skills development. In the majority of cases, this was evidenced elsewhere and the holistic nature of the Interdisciplinary Project allowed for this. Feedback to centres highlighted where this had occurred.

Full, insightful and informative assessor comments helped greatly in the central verification process and were provided by most centres. External Verifiers gave feedback commending centres on the helpfulness of these comments in understanding how grading decisions had been reached.

Some centres continue to provide interim reviews along with candidate evidence. These are not required and are not taken into consideration during central verification. Centres have been advised of this in their central verification report.

Administration of assessments

Many centres have developed good links with colleges and universities. These links have allowed candidates to access facilities and expertise, and have provided them with opportunities to access less familiar learning environments. Some centres have also involved college and university staff in their internal verification process.

In general, centres have a good understanding of the need for internal verification and in most cases this has been much more robust than last year. Many centres have developed a collegiate approach to internal verification and there were some excellent examples of co-operative working between departments (Languages and Science), and between centres within the same local authority. This approach has provided excellent support to staff within centres in understanding and applying national standards.

Areas of good practice/areas for improvement

Many centres showed an excellent approach to the management of the Interdisciplinary Project. Candidates undertook a broad range of challenging, innovative and interesting projects and it was apparent that centre staff had been fully committed in their mentoring and support of their pupils, though at the same time allowing them to flourish and develop their skills.

Assessor comments on the checklist were often matched against each of the criteria and were extremely useful and informative. They gave a clear picture of the candidate's progress and performance throughout his/her project and greatly assisted in the central verification process.

Some centres have developed links with further and higher education institutions and other external agencies. Having this access allows candidates to fulfil the criterion of accessing less familiar learning environments.

Many excellent models of internal quality assurance were in evidence. Enhancing the interdisciplinary nature, several Language departments worked closely with Science departments, particularly where there were presentations in both subjects. Other centres involve senior management or staff from external links in the verification process. Chosen models were fully explained by centre representatives at quality forum, and provided insight into the robustness of their process.

Centres have supported candidates in the creative and adept use of ICT and technology to make contacts and carry out research, particularly where centres are in a rural location and local links are more difficult.

Specific areas for improvement

Centres should consider using the assessor comments at the plan and proposal stages of the project more as a tool to assist and support the candidate. Comments to support the assessment judgements reached by the centre should be added to the assessment checklist.

Centres should ensure that candidates have recognised all the sub-headings and prompts on the templates and have completed them fully — in particular the skills being developed and timescales and milestones.

It is recommended that if centres wish to adapt SQA proformas or devise their own, they must make sure that all sub-headings and prompts are included in the revised structure. Care should be taken that all relevant sections are included to allow candidates to potentially meet all criteria.

Final assessor comments should relate to the candidate in question. Care should be taken to ensure that the correct and relevant documentation is submitted for each candidate.

References to folio should be avoided.

Only the five pieces of mandatory evidence should be submitted along with the Assessor Checklist. Interim reviews, reports and presentations are not required. Where a candidate has resubmitted a proposal or plan, all versions can be submitted, but the final version must be submitted.

The additional dimension involved in participation in a collaborative group project can provide further challenges for candidates. It is advisable for centres to take this into account when considering their candidates' proposals and to provide appropriate advice and feedback. SQA is developing additional guidance for centres on group projects, which will be added to the website early in the session.

Centres should provide the opportunity for the resubmission of proposal and/or plan to allow candidates to potentially meet additional criteria.

Centres should ensure that evaluations are reflective and clearly demonstrate how a candidate has developed his/her skills through carrying out the project.