National Qualifications 2017
Internal Assessment Report

Scottish Baccalaureate in Science

National Qualifications Units

Scottish Baccalaureate in Science: Interdisciplinary Project

General comments

This year 29 centres were selected for external verification. These centres presented 81 candidates for the Interdisciplinary Project in Science.

Assessment decisions for 69 candidates were verified as being in line with the national standard (85%) and the presenting centres were commended for the accuracy of their judgements.

Verifiers identified issues with the grading decisions made by 12 centres. The assessment decisions for seven candidates were deemed to have been severe and a higher grade was recommended for these candidates. Decisions for five candidates were deemed to have been lenient and lower grades were recommended.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

New assessors of the Interdisciplinary Project should read all available material about the unit specification, assessment and exemplification. Although many centres presenting in 2016–17 had previously supported candidates through the project, staff movement means that there are always assessors new to the process who need to develop their knowledge.

Some attendees at the quality forum events reported that their centres used a collegiate approach across all curricular areas for the Interdisciplinary Project. This approach provides support to both candidates and assessors, and improves the accuracy of assessment decisions.

Evidence requirements

Most centres submitted the five mandatory pieces of evidence with the assessor report. Some centres omitted timelines which were outwith the templates, though all were submitted on request.

Assessors should have a clear understanding of what constitutes an Interdisciplinary Project. Candidates must access less familiar learning environments, have opportunities for collaborative working, and carry out their project within at least one of the broad contexts to access all grading criteria. While an Interdisciplinary Project may contain a practical element, this should not overtake the aims of the project.

Administration of assessments

All centres used Science templates from SQA's website. Assessors should be aware that an updated template is available for session 2017–18. The 2016 template is acceptable in 2017–18, however, after this session only the new template will be accepted.

At quality forum events, centre representatives gave full accounts of their internal verification procedures. Mostly these were sound and robust, but some centres need to make a distinction between cross/joint assessing and internal verification. An internal verifier should be independent of the project and the assessment process, and should confirm the grading decision using only the presented evidence.

Areas of good practice

Some centres have now developed an extremely robust approach to promoting and managing the Interdisciplinary Project, and have a strong internal verification process.

Working with local higher and further education providers opens up access to unfamiliar learning environments and contributes greatly to the skills candidates can develop.

Excellent assessor comments, pertinent to each grading criteria, made the verification process very straightforward.

Some centres carry out skills sessions with candidates before they start their project. This helps candidates to identify their current skills and contributes later to their self-evaluation.

There is evidence of mentors/assessors being copied in to e-mails between candidates and external agencies. This keeps mentors/assessors up to date with progress and can assist in supporting grading decisions.

Specific areas for improvement

Some centres continue to submit progress logs and interim reviews. These are not considered during the verification process and do not contribute to grading.

Candidates can use information from their progress logs and interim reviews when completing their evaluations. Assessors can include information from the interim review in their comments to justify grading decisions, eg where the candidate has taken feedback from the review on board and included this in their evaluation.

Any adapted templates must contain all aspects of the SQA templates to allow candidates to achieve all grading criteria as appropriate.