National Qualifications 2018
Qualification Verification Summary Report
Scottish Baccalaureate in Science

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

National Qualifications (NQ) Units

During the 2017–18 session the following NQ Unit was verified:

Scottish Baccalaureate in Science: Interdisciplinary Project

General comments

This year 34 centres were selected for external verification out of a total of 40 presenting centres. Projects from 93 candidates were verified.

Assessment decisions made by 28 centres were verified as being in line with the national standard (82%). These centres were commended for the accuracy of their judgements.

The grading decisions made by six centres were not in line with national standards. Assessment decisions for four candidates from three centres were deemed to have been lenient, and lower grades were recommended. Decisions for three candidates from three centres were deemed to have been severe, and a higher grade was recommended for these candidates.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Unit specifications and instruments of assessment are understood well by assessors. Many centres have now presented for a number of years and there is a high level of experience in supporting candidates through their projects.

All centres represented at quality forum meetings indicated that they referred candidates to the exemplification material, in addition to assessors using them to assist in the assessment process. Centres should be aware, however, that the format of the exemplification materials differs from the updated templates that candidates are now required to use.

Evidence requirements

Generally, assessors have a clear understanding of the evidence required for the interdisciplinary project unit. However, there continues to be an issue with some centres submitting progress logs and interim reviews. Use of the checklist provided by SQA along with submission paperwork should prevent this being an issue in the future.

Submissions from some centres did not include all the necessary evidence required for verification. These centres had to be contacted and missing evidence requested before external verification could take place. The evidence presented for external verification should be the same as that presented for internal verification; therefore, any omissions should be identified prior to submission in April.

Administration of assessments

There is evidence from quality forum meetings that experience and expertise in supporting candidates is broadening. Seven centres presented candidates in at least one other subject area as well as in Science, and many of these centres have developed cross-curricular mechanisms to support candidates. This approach is also strengthening the assessment decisions within centres, as internal verification is carried out collegially.

Almost all centres used the updated templates provided on the SQA website. Candidates are now required to expand on their broad contexts, which should allow them to consider the usefulness and value of their project. Centres that have not used the updated template format have been advised of this in their verification report.

Areas of good practice

The following examples of good practice were reported during session 2017–18:

♦ Encouraging skills development from the start by having candidates present their proposal to a panel of peers/assessors within the centre.
♦ Candidates making good use of social media and survey tools to conduct questionnaires and/or to receive feedback from attendees at presentations.
♦ Candidates making use of the italicised prompts on the templates to help them. Many also use the prompts as headings to help keep them on track to provide the necessary input in each section.
♦ Some verifiers have commented on the quality of candidates' initial skills evaluation, which provides an excellent base comparison when completing the self-evaluation section.

Specific areas for improvement

The following areas for development were identified during session 2017–18:

♦ Several verifiers have expressed concern that there seems to be an over reliance on e-mail communication and internal research, and less face-to-face interaction than in previous years. Communication of a more personal nature shows its value in the evaluation and self-evaluation sections, where it provides the candidates with experiences on which to reflect.
♦ Assessors should encourage candidates to ensure there is sufficient scope in a project to allow it to be truly interdisciplinary. There is always a danger, especially in Science interdisciplinary projects, that they become too similar to an advanced higher project, meaning several grading criteria cannot be met.