



**National Qualifications 2015
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 Baccalaureate: Interdisciplinary Project.

General comments

With external verification carried out on a sampling basis, evidence from 33 centres was submitted for verification of accuracy of assessment decisions. This represented just over three-quarters of presenting centres.

Of the 77 projects verified, External Verifiers agreed with 85% of the grading decisions, assessment decisions of 25 centres were accurate for all of their candidates. Issues were identified with assessment decisions in eight centres. The assessment decisions on four candidates in four centres were deemed to have been severe and a higher grade was recommended. The assessment decisions on seven candidates in four centres were deemed to have been lenient and a lower grade recommended.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Mostly assessors are familiar with the Unit specifications, the assessment process and the exemplification materials. With staffing changes in some centres, new staff are taking on the role of assessor and are doing commendably well in supporting candidates. All centres, especially centres and staff delivering for the first time are making very good use of the exemplar materials in developing their knowledge of the assessment of the Interdisciplinary Project. The exemplar material on SQA's website and supporting commentaries are being accessed by both candidates and assessors. Assessors have commented on the quality and usefulness of this material.

New assessors have also commented on the Quality Forum events which give them a greater understanding of the assessment and verification processes required. There is evidence from Quality Forum events that experience and expertise in supporting candidates is broadening, and with several centres now presenting candidates in more than one subject area, centres have developed cross-curricular support for candidates. This is strengthening the assessment decisions within centres.

Centres continue to support the Quality Forum events and express their appreciation of the benefits they gain from them. Their participation is a vital part of the external verification process, providing insight into the conduct and assessment of Interdisciplinary Projects across the country.

Evidence Requirements

Generally assessors have clear understanding of the evidence required for the Interdisciplinary Project Unit. Some centres are still submitting non-assessed documentation, eg Progress Logs and Interim Reviews, which are not taken into consideration at central verification. Centres have been advised of this in their EV report where relevant.

External Verifiers have commented on the novel, interesting and diverse project selection, especially from centres with multiple candidates. Assessors have been commended on their encouragement of candidates to make use of varied research methods and of the local environment.

It is evident from Quality Forum events and from dating of evidence that some assessors feel particularly pressured during the holistic assessment and grading process in order to meet the grade submission date. Centres are advised to ensure that they set deadlines for candidates which allow assessors time for comprehensive detailed assessment and internal verification of completed projects. This should take place before results are sent to SQA at the end of March.

Administration of assessments

All centres used SQA templates with some candidates choosing to alter them slightly. This is perfectly acceptable as long as all key information is included and candidates are able to access all the grading criteria.

Some candidates are choosing to remove the italicised prompts from each section. These prompts are included to help candidates populate the templates, but it is evident that some candidates are removing them prior to completing sections and are therefore not benefitting from the advice contained in them.

Most centres have a sound understanding of how to complete the Assessor Report, though some assessors have not added comments, giving insight to their grading decision, or checked that all relevant criteria have been ticked for the appropriate grade given. These omissions should be picked up at internal verification. External Verifiers have commented on this and also on the richness and quality of comments in the Assessor Reports where applicable.

Most centres now have a well-developed internal verification system in place. Though these are varied in their format, the internal verification process in most centres is sound, evidenced by the number of assessment decisions upheld by External Verifiers. A few centres have more of a cross-marking system rather than internal verification, which can be equally effective but must be robust. Centres have been advised where they need to strengthen their IV policy.

Areas of good practice

Many centres are making an early start to Interdisciplinary Projects, allowing candidates time to complete adequate research and present their findings well within the timeframes of the Unit.

Many centres were commended by External Verifiers on the excellent encouragement and feedback given to candidates; the range of external contacts and other professionals which are being used by candidates; encouraging strong interdisciplinary links; their robust internal verification process.

It is encouraging to see that some candidates are using reflective diaries to aid the evaluation parts of the Interdisciplinary Project. In some cases candidates are also using their diaries to make an additional presentation on their journey and experiences which contributes to their Self-evaluation.

Good, innovative use of social media and ICT to increase target audiences for surveys and gathering of information.

Specific areas for improvement

Assessors should ensure that they input feedback to the candidate on the Proposal and Plan to assist the candidate in accessing criteria and maintaining motivation. Assessors should also provide comments on the Assessor Report to inform the verification processes. Comments on the Assessor Report should be directed at verifiers, both internal and external, and not at candidates.

Some centres need to encourage candidates to be more creative in the presentation of their findings. Some candidates are only presenting to peers who are also undertaking the Interdisciplinary Project which does not really present sufficient challenge at SCQF level 7 and may restrict access to some grading criteria in the Presentation section.

Centres should discuss the viability of their project with candidates. Where problems are identified at an early stage, candidates should be encouraged to resubmit their Proposal and Plan. This will allow them to explore other creative routes for their project, rather than continue with a flawed idea of a project that might have little scope and meet few Grade A criteria.

Some centres need to strengthen their internal verification process. This could be achieved by centres working together to carry out verification or by working with other departments in the same centre which are also presenting Baccalaureate candidates. External Verifiers have highlighted in their reports where centres need a more robust verification process.

Centres should ensure that internal verification is carried out prior to grades being submitted to the SQA.