
LEVEL 3 EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION

7993

Report on the Examination

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As another series of Extended Project moderation comes to an end it is very pleasing to report that in a substantial majority of centres the AQA standard is well understood. Moderators have seen evidence of both excellent practice in terms of delivery but also in terms of assessment. The quality of the best projects continues to be exceptional; many of these young people continue to amaze moderators at the levels of sophistication shown in their work, from their inventiveness in their choice of topics to their skill in developing these choices into fascinating outcomes.

Most of the top grade work presented long reports as products. The number of artefacts seen was not as high as the number of 5000-word reports and some artefacts failed to achieve the highest marks because, in some centres, there continues to be a misunderstanding of what the short report that accompanies an artefact should do.

There was a minority of centres who appear to consider EPQ to be an essay-writing exercise. Some of these centres reported a more than adequate taught skills programme but candidates were apparently not encouraged to apply the skills thus learned to their individual project. The message that EPQ is a process-based qualification is now widely understood, but there are still some centres that have not assimilated it.

There was an observed correlation between the effectiveness of completion of the production logs and the quality of outcomes. It appears to be the case that centres who teach students the value of the log and how to complete it are those that understand the nature of EPQ and, in particular, how to apply and document the process. There are, unfortunately, still too many centres whose students add only minimal and descriptive detail to their logs.

Moderators saw more work at the lower end of the mark scale and there is clear evidence that students at all levels of achievement benefit from the experience that undertaking an EPQ has afforded them.

There were some excellent presentations documented, which summarised the outcomes, justified conclusions drawn and evaluated the process used. Supervisor questioning was variable and only the best gave the student opportunities to clarify or enhance evidence presented. The new log was used by more supervisors to document the Q&A session, but there is still work to do to make this a standard feature of projects.

In a few cases over-supervision of candidates was evidenced. Centres are reminded that over-directive supervision reduces the opportunities for candidates to demonstrate autonomy.

Most out-of-tolerance centres awarded marks that were too high for the evidence supplied. Over-marking was seen in all assessment objectives, in some cases supervisors provided insufficient detail or annotation to justify the marks awarded. In other cases, it appeared to be the case that internal moderation procedures were insufficiently robust; some supervisors were marking to the standard but others were not.

The following summarises outcomes for each assessment objective:

AO1

There was some exemplary planning/project management seen. The best production logs included initial plans, evaluative monitoring, consequent changes and were evaluative throughout; they contained almost all the evidence of application of the process and higher skills needed.

There were, however, many candidates whose logs contained lack of detail and were solely descriptive.

Common features were –

- Planning time-based only
- Little or no recorded monitoring
- Planning of the report being considered before research had been completed or, in some cases, even started
- Starting to write the report too early and then undertaking additional research to enable candidate to reach 5000 words

The principal source of over-marking was placing work in the top band for AO1 on evidence that was lacking in one or most respects; the reasoning seemed to be that the product was completed so planning must have taken place.

AO2

As for AO1, there was some exemplary use of resources seen; very detailed and reasoned research appropriate to the task, detailed bibliographies in accepted formats, clear and documented evaluation of sources, detailed citation, detailed and critical analyses of sources leading to clarity in which each source had been used. However, most projects fell short of this ideal.

Common features were –

- Over-reliance on Internet sources, particularly sources that had not been subjected to careful scrutiny; this appeared to be more widespread than seen in the previous few series
- No bibliography
- Bibliography incomplete and poorly formatted
- No recorded evaluation of sources; many candidates mentioned evaluation in their logs but did not present any evidence of how it had been undertaken or on which sources
- 'Evaluation' interpreted as 'what did you use the source for?' or 'was this source useful?'
- Lack of critical analysis; many candidates were placed in the top band without evidence that material from sources had been analysed
- Referencing erratic or non-existent
- Little compelling evidence that sources had actually been used
- Inclusion of research that was ethically questionable, including the use of self or family members as case-studies

Inclusion of primary data where neither the data collection nor the analysis thereof was undertaken at level 3

AO3

The quality of evidence for AO3 was understandably more variable than the other AOs. The best evidence showed clear and reasoned decision-making, was fit for the purpose of the project, had a clear outcome and included evidence of each of the higher-level skills used consistently throughout the work. Where the product was an artefact, it was fit for purpose and based clearly on research documented in the short report.

Whilst some projects contained all of the above attributes throughout the work; many more were still properly placed in the top band by meeting the above, but intermittently. There were a number of features commonly found in less strong projects. These included:

- Aim not fully met
- Plan not fully implemented
- Little evidence of decision-making, usually when the log was purely descriptive or the supervisor was over-directive
- Little or no evidence of changes made
- Artefacts not fit for purpose
- Lack of cohesion, especially when a report was sectionalised; this also tended to lead to a lack of synthesis

Assessment of AO3 was less of a problem than for the other AOs; most marks were placed in the correct band, except for a small minority of centres that failed to understand the EPQ assessment criteria and standard. For these centres frequently AO3 was marked only on the 'essay'.

AO4

Full marks were less common for this objective than for the other three. The best reflections evaluated the experience fully and showed clearly what benefits the student had drawn from the work and what value they would be in the future. Conclusions were carefully and clearly drawn, based on sound judgement that was applied to the research undertaken.

Issues seen included –

- Reflections being commentaries rather than evaluations
- Failure to identify the range of skills developed; time-keeping, organisation and presentational skills were commonly mentioned, research, referencing and report writing less commonly, but the higher-skills of critical analysis, synthesis and evaluation were very rarely considered.
- Conclusions not evidence-based

A mistake made by some centres was to mark AO4 based on the presentation only. In other centres the quality, or lack thereof, of conclusions was not being recognised by supervisors.

It was pleasing to see that the new AQA production log is being well used by many students but centres are reminded that the front cover sheet of the log must be signed and dated by both candidate and supervisor using pen and ink.

It would be greatly appreciated by all moderators if centres could encourage candidates to submit their project documents using treasury tags. Plastic poly-pockets filled with loose unnumbered sheets is not an acceptable way in which to submit extended project documentation.

It continues to be a privilege to see this qualification provide opportunities for skill development and for candidates to grasp these opportunities and produce such a wide range of individual and independent projects. We look forward to a fresh set of projects to moderate in November.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

[UMS conversion calculator](#)