
LEVEL 3 EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION

7993

Report on the Examination

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The entry in November continues to grow and the moderation team were kept very busy. The standard of most work scrutinised by moderators was very high and it is clear that many centres are using the November entry to enter small cohorts of talented students.

Much very good centre practice was observed. Candidate proposals were subjected to very thorough scrutiny before approval. Excellent supervisor advice was given, without veering into unacceptable over-direction, candidates were encouraged to use their log-books to provide both quantitative and qualitative evidence of their research journeys, presentations were well prepared with very good use being made of the Q&A session, so that candidate answers provided high quality assessment evidence. Supporting comments made by supervisors were detailed and referred to appropriate assessment evidence. It was a real pleasure to moderate such submissions.

A strong majority of centres demonstrated a very good understanding of the AQA standard for this qualification. There were a few centres with marks that were just slightly over-generous, and here moderators sometimes saw evidence that supervisors were apparently crediting effort rather than evidenced outcome. There were a surprisingly large number of instances where moderators were obliged to contact centres because the four AO marks had been incorrectly added by the centre, so that an incorrect centre mark was entered via the system of electronic mark submission. In other cases, moderators observed centres with rather inconsistent marking between different supervisors and ineffective internal moderation taking the centre marking outside of moderation tolerance.

Not all submissions resulted in success for the candidates. In some cases, submissions that did not contain evidence that might lead to success at level 3 had been over-generously marked by the centre.

Any centre that receives an adjustment to their marks is advised to attend AQA Teacher Standardisation and to then ensure that all supervisors understand the AQA standard before marking.

For some candidates the choice of title was insufficiently challenging and they produced work that was inevitably descriptive. To give some examples: "The history of topology", "The effects on health and appearance and the issues of ethics surrounding selective breeding in dogs", "Stigma of mental health issues: Depression, Attention Deficit & Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) & Schizophrenia within young people" however well-written, are unlikely to invite much analysis.

A large number of titles that started 'To what extent...' were seen this series. In some cases, the candidates understood the title they had formulated, set up clear criteria by which extent might be measured or judged and drew well-judged conclusions, clearly based on research evidence. However, this was not always the case and candidates should be warned that if a title refers to 'extent' then this should be a significant aspect of the report.

Moderators saw an increase in the number of candidates who unwisely decided to 'make' something and opt for a shorter report rather than attempt to produce a 5000-word report. It must be stressed that taking an artefact route for completion should never be seen as an easy option. If an artefact is selected as a preferred EPQ product it should have a purpose, an intended audience/user and the candidate should build into their planning a means by which the artefact can be tested. Is it indeed 'fit for purpose'?

It is not appropriate, for example, to undertake research into a particular social issue (e.g. slavery, transgender rights, cultural appropriation etc.) and then produce a creative response to the issue in the form of poetry or artwork, unless the candidate can show clearly how each and every decision relating to the created artefact has come from their research. The written report should be fully referenced, academic in style and should fully underpin the artefact. Such candidates should not forget that detailed research will be required not only into the social issue that they have selected, but also into the creative area they have chosen.

For some candidates, insufficient evidence was produced of source selection and evaluation. The skills of being able to choose a source, to scrutinise it and decide that it is valid, reliable, up-to-date and relevant for this piece of research are skills that this qualification seeks to develop. Source selection and evaluation should form a central part of each centre's taught skills programme.

Where candidates decide to create and use a questionnaire as part of their research supervisors should encourage the candidates to include research into questionnaire design, sample selection, data analysis etc. Alternatively, centres could include sessions on appropriate primary data collection and analysis within their taught skills programme.

The inappropriate use of 'literature review' was found in some of the moderated projects. There is no requirement that candidates should include a literature review in their research report. Whilst some candidates use a report structure that includes a literature review successfully, moderators have seen instances of the use of a report structure using literature review that has not been fully understood by the candidate. In many cases the use of such a report structure is not appropriate for the project being undertaken.

Some centres, perhaps new to the qualification, did not seem to be aware of the need to carefully scrutinise candidate proposals to ensure that no dual-accreditation was involved. Candidates can receive no credit for material that comes from a specification studied at level 3 and this includes areas that have not yet been covered. It is not acceptable, for example, to undertake an EPQ related to year 13 study whilst in year 12.

Other candidates paid scant attention to the expectation that the written report should be planned to be 5000-words. No penalty is applied where candidates exceed this report length per se but where a candidate pays no heed within their planning and goes on to write, say, 8000 words, it is primarily the AO1 mark that will be affected since they have not shown any clear understanding that they should be planning a 5000-word report.

A few instances were seen of supervisors, in some cases clearly subject specialists, giving over-directive advice to candidates. Centres are reminded that candidate decision-making is a key part of AO3. Where supervisors are seen to unduly influence planning decisions this can also affect AO1. Supervisors are there to advise but they should not direct student work, they should not be suggesting research sources nor should they undertake any interim marking of draft reports.

Centres are reminded that an EPQ submission should contain, as a minimum, a completed AQA Production Log and a Product, that must include a written research report. Any additional evidence is down to the candidate's choice. In some cases, candidates were found to be selecting a small amount of highly appropriate additional evidence that was clearly labelled that had clear relevance for their project. However, there have been several instances this series of the submission of inappropriate, poorly presented and excessive additional evidence.

To conclude it must be stressed that most centres were found to be delivering the qualification very well. Skills were being effectively taught to candidates. These skills were then applied independently to some very original and imaginative projects. Excellent supervision was undertaken as was fair and rigorous assessment of the project outcome.

The moderation team looks forward to the next round of projects that will be submitted in May 2017.

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](#)