
Level 3

Extended Project Qualification

7993 - EPQ

Report on the Examination

7993

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The entry for the November series was higher than that seen in previous series. Many entries came from centres who select November entry for all students, with delivery of the qualification spanning year 12 and the start of year 13. Entries also came from centres completing the qualification in year 12, often with large entries, where EPQ was embedded into the year 12 curriculum, and also from smaller 'fast track' entries from centres where students have been given the opportunity to complete their project early in year 13, ahead of the larger cohort who will be entered in May of year 13. Where over-generous marking was found it appeared to stem from a misunderstanding that the level of skill-demonstration should be assessed according to full 'A level' standard. However, it should be noted that a clear majority of centres assessed the submissions from their students in line with the AQA standard for this qualification.

Much excellent work was seen, and moderators continue to be impressed by the originality and creativity evidenced by students. However, some students were found to have fixed a title very early in the process, planned out an 'essay' and then found research to fit their pre-chosen 'paragraphs'. This resulted in research that was not open-minded, with reports that tended to lack argument, fluency and research-based conclusions.

Project submissions included both 5000-word reports and artefacts with accompanying reports, many completed to a very high standard. This report will share observations from the moderation team.

Dual accreditation

Whilst much detailed scrutiny of proposals was seen by centre coordinators, there were some centres where the responsibility to check out potential dual accreditation was not taken as seriously as it should be with only brief or vague comments appearing in Proposal parts B and C. Some cases of significant overlap with subjects being studied at level 3 were found. Sometimes this occurred because a significant change in the focus of a project occurred after proposal, but supervisors were not fully considering this and no confirmation was made regarding the degree of overlap or how the new focus extended or developed the main course of study of the student.

Taught skills Programmes

Many excellent Taught Skills programmes were seen and most students had clearly benefitted from developing skills whilst undertaking their projects. This was observed particularly where EPQ was apparently compulsory within year 12 at some centres. For some of these students their assessed final mark was modest; they lacked the maturity to fully develop the high-level skills that this qualification seeks to develop, especially the skills of analysis and evaluation. Nevertheless, they were clearly developing valuable skills related to project management and independent working.

Unfortunately, some instances of direct 'cut and paste' from websites were identified by moderators. Centres should include an understanding of plagiarism within the Taught Skills programme so that students understand how plagiarism can be avoided.

Resource evaluation

In many cases students demonstrated an excellent understanding of the need to evaluate resources before using them. However, in other cases students were found to use resources within their product and then undertake some form of 'evaluation', after the product had been completed.

Frequently this 'evaluation' focused on usefulness of the resources rather than on reliability. Students should be encouraged to scrutinise resources before using them and ask themselves questions such as: "Should I use this resource as part of my research?", "How do I know that this resource is relevant and reliable?". Use of centre-devised source evaluation tables was frequently seen. Whilst this encourages scrutiny of sources it reduces the opportunity for students to demonstrate autonomy in their project development.

Production Logs

In some centres, students were encouraged to improve their Logs retrospectively. Some students noted that they were told by their supervisors to go back and improve their earlier review sections. For example a student wrote in their 'Project product review', "My supervisor asked me to review my log and add in pieces that I have left out or not done adequately." Another wrote in their 'Project product review' that they were advised to move material between the sections and to complete others. This demonstrates a misunderstanding of the AQA Production Log that has each review page dated. Once a page has been written and dated it should not be edited. However much excellent use of Logs was seen with concise entries providing evidence of planning, monitoring and decision-making.

Assessment Objectives

A few specific points were noted relating to the assessment objectives:

AO1

This assessment objective was sometimes over-marked where the Log and any accompanying documentation focused too heavily on time planning rather than qualitative project management. Some Logs focused too much on planning and re-planning personal deadlines.

AO2

Some excellent primary research was undertaken by students, but inappropriate primary research was still evident in some centres. Some supervisors were found to be incorrectly insisting that primary research must be undertaken as part of the EPQ. This is not the case.

AO3

Some centres were found to be limiting artefact reports to 1000 words – in one case for a project this resulted in a candidate editing her report substantially and this had a detrimental impact on her project. 1000 words should be seen as a minimum for artefact reports.

A number of 5000-word reports were found to be written 'along the way' rather than at the end of a research process, this approach was generally not successful.

AO4

Some extremely detailed and well-balanced (between process and product) 'Summary and reflection' pages were seen in Logs. Others were lacking in focus, using generic statements that might refer to any project. Many were entirely lacking in paragraphing.

Presentation

There were some very good and detailed written records of questions asked and answers given, in 'Presentation part B', that enhanced the evidence base. This served candidates extremely well and provided a real insight into their understanding and delivery of the topic. However, this was not always the case. Some supervisors missed the opportunity provided by the question and answer session.

The use of 'marketplace presentations' where staff, students, family and friends were invited to witness presentations was noted by moderators. This allowed for a diverse non-specialist audience and some excellent feedback was provided by supervisors.

Record of marks

Much helpful annotation against assessment objective coverage was found with detailed supervisor comments in the majority of cases.

Internal moderation

Excellent practice was found in many centres, with rigorous internal moderation, supported, in the main, by a detailed rationale. However, in some cases the final mark was not always displayed clearly. Centres are reminded that they should indicate clearly on page 5 of the Log, 'Record of marks', the final marks by striking through the original marks and adding the finally agreed mark for each AO together with a finally agreed total mark. It can be very confusing for moderators trying to work out what the final mark is when different marks are shown related to the internal moderation process – on occasions several different marks were found where projects had been marked by a number of people but no finally agreed total was indicated.

Submitted evidence

Whilst the majority of project submissions were well-compiled some candidates submitted loose unnumbered pages in plastic envelope wallets. Others submitted masses of photocopied research notes and/or pages from sources, working diaries, questionnaires (completed and collated) etc. In some cases, there was more additional material than required material.

Centres are reminded that any electronic submission of an artefact needs to be checked so that it can be opened on whatever platform the moderator is using.

Administration

Moderators reported a substantial number of incorrect additions in the 'Record of marks' and/or a mismatch between the 'Record of marks' total mark and the mark submitted to AQA.

This report might read like a catalogue of criticism, so it must be emphasised that much truly excellent centre practice was found by moderators with centres preparing and supervising students very well for this demanding qualification. Students had been encouraged to develop as individuals in pursuit of autonomous learning.

Where centre marks have been adjusted centres are reminded that free face-to-face teacher standardisation events are held twice a year. Every centre has an AQA-appointed project adviser with whom they can discuss the practicalities of centre delivery of the qualification.

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](#)