

CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL PROJECT QUALIFICATION

Paper 9980/01
Project

Key messages

Entries in this session saw a broad range of topics being enthusiastically explored by candidates.

General comments

Good planning and preparation underpin a successful project, with the process owned by the candidate and a supporting role played by the supervisor and the centre coordinator. This journey can be charted in the log; it should focus on the evolution of the candidate's project journey rather as well as a record of meetings.

Comments on specific assessment objectives

AO1 Research

Several projects used a statement rather than a question as their title and this often leads to a narrative focus in the report; a question which a candidate can interrogate and answer is more fruitful in accessing the full range of the assessment criteria. In the most successful projects, after the candidate had stated their question they justified it, often by linking it to their interest in the topic, and such an approach clarifies how the question has guided the research in their report and links to a clear rationale for the methods used. Some projects did use appropriate methods, but without any reasoning for their decision they could not access the higher mark levels. The most successful reports also demonstrated design and planning from the initial idea to the final report by, for example, including a helpful contents page and the use of subheadings to guide the reader through the elements of the report. Design and planning can also be demonstrated in the log through a timeline and explaining how the support given by research conducted or sources read links to the development of the project. The most successful logs give a clear picture of the candidate's journey; some were simply a list of dates and what was done, without any evidence of impact or development and were very brief. Some logs contained a lot on the development of the project title but little on what happened after that and a number simply detailed many meetings between the candidate and the supervisor or subject specialists whose input seemed to be the key for whatever the candidate did next.

AO1 Analysis

The best projects demonstrated excellent analysis of their sources and research findings; this might be through detailed explanation in the candidate's own words of what pieces of research showed and then eliciting similarities or differences between them. This approach helped to show a consistent focus on the research question, often by drawing conclusions linked to their analysis throughout the report, and consolidating this in the building of an argument in an incremental way. All this could then be drawn together in an answer to the question which was clear, logical and reflective of the evidence in the report. In some projects, and more often in those which had used a statement rather than a question, information was presented from different sources in a descriptive way, with little analysis or the building of an argument. In some projects it was not clear which words were taken from sources or were the candidate's known and it is important that this distinction is clearly drawn to move up the assessment levels.

AO1 Evaluation

The best projects contained detailed and insightful discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods used; a candidate might explain why the methods used were well suited to their project and some further insights this had provided, or they might refer to data gaps their research had revealed or difficulties they had experienced in using their chosen method research method. In many projects the discussion of the research methods often focused on one of the strengths or weaknesses, with comments which lacked detail and depth. To move up the assessment levels the best projects also evaluated their sources; this might be linked to the issue of credibility or by discussing the strengths and limitations of arguments made, in one source or as part of a group.

AO2 Reflection

Some reports used a 'Reflection' subheading and others included reflection at various points in their report – either approach is acceptable but the material included needs to meet the assessment criteria. One aspect is reflection on the overall strengths and limitations of the project, including detail and insight with regard to the range of evidence available and successes or challenges the candidate encountered. This was commonly seen to at least some extent in most reports although there was often a focus on only one of strengths and limitations. The other aspect is reflection on the impact the project had on the candidate, linked to the views they held at the start and conclusion of their journey. Some reports did not deal with this aspect at all and others focused solely on the acquisition of skills. A number of projects focused on what future research might explore, which is not an element of the assessment criteria.

AO3 Communication

The most successful reports communicated well throughout, using a clear structure which was helpful to the reader, especially in technically based projects. Many candidates also used subject-specific terminology accurately and effectively in their report, enhancing its overall quality. The most successful reports used an appropriate form of citation and referencing throughout to show the source of their ideas and information; they also made clear the difference between material taken from sources and their own analysis. A good number utilised appropriate methods to present data and then interpreted it in their own words, which helped them move up the assessment levels. The best reports were accompanied by a bibliography which included all the sources used in an appropriate and consistent format; for web-based resources this would include an accurate and working hyperlink as well as the date on which the source was accessed. In some instances, there was no clear link between sources in the bibliography and report, in other instances the bibliography was brief and inconsistent in the amount of information it contained.