

# CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL PROJECT QUALIFICATION

---

Paper 9980/01  
Project

## Key messages

Candidates for the Cambridge IPQ in this series explored a very broad range of research topics and demonstrated real enthusiasm in the production of their reports. The Cambridge IPQ provides a valuable opportunity for candidates to explore a topic they have selected in depth and develop independent research and writing skills which are useful for progression into higher education or the world of work.

## General comments

The most successful projects are the product of good planning and preparation. The Cambridge website provides a range of support materials; centres and candidates can benefit from paying careful attention to these in delivering and producing successful projects. The Assessment Objectives are set out in the syllabus and the mark scheme; they show clearly what candidates need to do to meet the full range of the assessment criteria and not doing so, or following alternative ways to construct a project, inevitably makes it hard for the candidate to access the higher marks. Particular areas to focus on are the question the candidate chooses as this frames the project, the log and its contents, the evaluation of sources used and the candidate's reflection at the end of their project journey; these features are explored in detail below.

An important feature of the Cambridge IPQ is that it is a candidate led qualification so the role of the centre coordinator, a teacher of skills and the Supervisor is that of support. Helpful material which explains and illustrates this relationship can be found in the syllabus, the Teacher Guide and the Learner Guide. Also available are Example Candidate Responses and time spent becoming familiar with these materials and using them as support will give candidates the best chance of success.

The first step is the candidate's choice of project title. This sets the direction for the project so linking to the assessment criteria focus on analysis and evaluation is important as it helps a candidate explore their chosen topic from a perspective which will allow them to access the full range of the criteria and so maximise their chances of reaching the higher levels. The log is also important as it is the means by which the candidate demonstrates their learning journey through their project from an initial idea to the final report.

Most centres manage the practical issues around submission well but all that is needed is the log, the report and the bibliography. Projects should be submitted in Microsoft Word (.docx) format as the final version and must not contain teacher comments. The report has a limit of 5 000 words; text beyond this limit will not be credited. An acknowledgements section is not required and neither is a section with suggestions for further research by others. Both the bibliography and the log should be submitted as separate Word files. The log is important as it supports the research process; the most successful are a clear but succinct record of the candidate's thoughts and actions alongside references to their design and planning, evidencing the way their research has supported the development of their project. It cannot be used to include material for which there is no space in the report or to evaluate sources.

## Comments on specific assessment objectives

### **AO1 Research**

The vast majority of reports begin with a title page; this should always be the case and include a word count. A table of contents helps the reader understand the flow of a report. The best projects begin with a research question – either as the title of the report or stated in the introduction to the report. This helps to provide an

analytical and evaluative focus, especially when the question leads to more than a purely affirmative or negative answer.

The question can then be used to guide the material included in the report; linked to this is the candidate's choice of research methods and a justification for their choice. This might be linked to available research, the candidate's skills or practical issues such as limitations linked to resources and facilities. An explanation of why particular research methods were chosen is an important element in accessing the higher assessment levels.

Projects should also demonstrate good planning and design; a table of contents, relevant subheadings, details about experiments conducted or how a questionnaire was set up are all helpful evidence. A key element is the project log; this should chart a timeline for the project and evidence its development by explaining how a candidate has used particular sources in its evolution. The submitted log should focus only on what happens once the Project Proposal Form has been accepted. A simple list of dates and the activity undertaken will struggle to reach the higher levels of the assessment criteria and schools-based monitoring and assessment guides do not need to be included. It is not enough to make the log a simple list of sources – there needs to be a connection to the development of the project to gain credit. The log should not contain evaluation of sources other than a simple comment about usefulness or otherwise, strengths and weaknesses of the project or reflections of the candidate; these elements must be in the report.

### **AO1 Analysis**

Successful projects demonstrate excellent analysis of the secondary sources used and findings from primary research if this is undertaken. A candidate can best do this by explaining in their own words the key findings of a source or sources and making connections to other sources or explaining differences between them. Analysis should be clear, and linking back to the research question regularly can help a candidate avoid a drift into narrative content. Paragraphs and subheadings are also useful as a way for the candidate to consolidate their evidence into clear, supported and cogent conclusions based on research evidence; this can be done throughout the report or in a conclusions section. A systematic approach helps a candidate reach an overall answer to their research question which is, clear, logical and reflective of their evidence. Projects which include source information without any real attempt at analysis or the building of an argument struggle to move up the assessment levels.

It is important to be clear in the report which words are from sources and which are those of the candidate; source material can be acknowledged by the use of quotation marks or by citation and reference. To gain credit it must be evident to the reader when the candidate's own analysis and conclusions are being expressed; in less successful reports this distinction was often not seen.

It is acceptable to provide an answer to the question posed at several different points in the report; it may be in the introduction and then the candidate sets out to demonstrate how they can justify this, it may appear at different points in the report or there may be a final summation section. It is the reaching of an answer reflective of the candidate's research which is more important than the point at which it appears.

### **AO1 Evaluation**

Evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods used is an important element of a successful report and can be done by exploring gaps in data or pointing out advantages or shortcomings of the research method(s) used. A good number of reports contain extensive generic comments on selected research methods but to attract credit these need to be focused on the particular strengths and limitations the candidate can link to their project and the methods they have chosen.

Equally important is the evaluation of the sources used. This can be done by comparing and contrasting different views, commenting on the legitimacy of the source or its author, or discussing strengths and limitations of arguments seen in the sources. A good number of reports this series contained no evaluation of the sources used whilst some made very basic comments, such as the writer being an expert or a set of statistics being published by a government body which limits the candidate's opportunity to move up the assessment levels.

### **AO2 Reflection**

A successful report might include a section headed 'Reflection', but points of reflection can also occur throughout. One aspect is the candidate's reflection on the strengths and limitations of their project and this

might be linked to the quality of their evidence, what has gone well or not in their research and data collection as well as specific issues relating to accessing research or conducting interviews and experiments.

Of equal importance is the candidate's reflection on how their views about their topic have been reinforced, modified or changed completely due to their project journey. Comments on what a candidate has learnt about research skills and building a project do not attract credit, nor does detail about what future researchers might focus on as a result of the candidate's findings. A good number of candidates in this series omitted any reflection which could gain credit; some produced basic comments indicating that their views had changed whilst the most successful explained their views at the start and the end of their project, showing clearly how their research evidence had influenced any reinforcement or evolution of their views.

### **AO3 Communication**

The use of a logical structure is helpful; it makes a report clear and easy to follow for the reader, even for complex and technical subject matter, as well as shaping the candidate's report in a constructive way.

Most candidates use subject-specific terminology accurately, and this is especially helpful when reading a technical report.

Many reports use appropriate methods to clearly demonstrate results drawn from the research material, experiments or surveys such as tables, graphs and charts. However, candidates should think carefully as to how sources and data are produced as they only attract credit if they add to understanding and help to develop their argument.

The separate Word document bibliography should use a consistent and appropriate format – including the author, title and date, a working link for internet sources and the date the material was accessed. Many reports in this series were inconsistent in referencing and citation; it was also not uncommon to see authors referred to in the report whose work was not cited and referenced in the bibliography, rendering it incomplete. Some bibliographies are very brief, some are mixed in the level of citation given or provide links that do not work and some have little information to help the reader find the source. In an academic report, sources of a popular nature might provide context but they are insufficient on their own to allow a candidate to build an argument likely to reach the higher assessment levels. The bibliography is an important element of a successful project and is deserving of the same level of attention as the report and the log; in a good number of instances in this series it was brief and not of the same quality as the report.