



Projects

Extended Project

OCR Level 3 H856

OCR Report to Centres for June 2016

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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General Comments:

This year's submission for the Level 3 Extended Project was generally of a very high standard, with a wide variety of topics and outcomes explored by candidates. The majority of centres seem to have a good grasp of the premise behind the qualification and it is always heartening to see repeat centres that have clearly taken on board moderator advice from previous years and have adjusted their delivery accordingly. This inevitably resulted in better evidenced projects overall. The new Project Progression Record is being used most effectively in many cases and centres should take note that this version will be required for subsequent entries.

Efficient administration always serves to get the moderation process off to a smooth start and it should be noted that samples are far easier to moderate when the projects are clearly labelled with candidate numbers and names. Lever arch files do not travel well and should be avoided where possible.

The dedication of the mentors with respect to delivering the qualification was plain to see in most cases. The best centres had clearly provided good training for their students, appreciating that there is a fine balance to be had with the qualification in terms of mentor guidance. The poorer projects were seen at both ends of the spectrum; some centres appeared to have delivered little in the way of training with respect to the skills that the student would need to realise their outcome and, whilst the project is designed to develop the independence of the student, there does need to be a recognition from the centre that this independence isn't necessarily there in the first place! On the other end of the scale some centres were far too prescriptive in their delivery and stifled the project management process for the students – giving students a choice of titles to pick, issuing generic time-plans and logs, setting all the interim deadlines for students – these were all seen in this series and are practices that should be avoided if the students are to achieve the highest outcomes.

The best centres also recognise how important the comments on the Unit Recording Sheet can be in supporting the evidence submitted by the candidate. Centres where the mentor had personalised the comments to the student and had been detailed in their assessment of the development for the individual did far more to reassure the moderator of the marks awarded. A regurgitated version of the mark descriptor does little to help the candidate here.

Assessment Objective 1

This appeared to be a very strong objective for many. Diaries/logs of the process are being used highly effectively by the best candidates and the difference in bands is often very evident with the quality of the comments in here. Weaker candidates tend to use their diary as a basic account and offer less in the way of insight – 'I did some research' in week one, followed by an entry of 'I did some more research' in week two would be an example of a poorer entry overall. Forward planning was completed well by some, and not by others. For the top band marks it would be expected that attention had been paid to this area.

There were a small handful of centres where it appeared that little thought had gone in to the topic choice, which led to an outcome that did not feel in depth enough for a qualification at Level 3. Whilst the project should offer candidates complete freedom of choice (and indeed the evidence overall for this was very good) there may need to be some training provided by the centres as to how that choice can be realised with enough sophistication.

Assessment Objective 2

This objective appeared to be a little more ragged in places. General impressions this series were that less thought was being given to the selection and evaluation of sources for many.

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Training needs to be given with respect to the appropriateness of different methods of research for the project being completed. Primary research is not always relevant and if that is the case then it should not be used. Whilst Wikipedia can be a good starting point it should never be the end! It should also be noted that candidates do not need to print off and provide evidence of every source that they have visited – far better that a moderator sees evidence of research notes and thought given to analysis and cross referencing of sources. It was very evident that in nearly all cases candidates are learning how to reference and create bibliographies as a part of this process.

Assessment Objective 3

Some of the very best projects were stunning in their outcomes and it was not difficult to understand just how much the candidate must have developed through its completion. Candidates with higher marks demonstrated a significant degree of personal challenge and an intention to step beyond their comfort zone, hence benefiting in self-awareness and learning. Some centres gave a little too much credit to the acquisition of new knowledge, rather than the development of new skills.

Assessment Objective 4

This objective appears to have improved markedly. Many candidates are clearly being well trained with respect to how to evaluate the overall process and presentations for the most part had the correct balance of process and outcome. Many centres are now providing evidence of audience feedback and this is extremely good practice and to be encouraged. If candidates did less well with this objective it was mainly due to the lack of on-going reflection, evident as an ongoing process and it should be remembered that this objective is not designed to be solely addressed at the end.

One further area where the best centres stood out was with respect to their internal standardisation processes. Where effective standardisation was seen it generally involved all mentors and referenced standards appropriately. Some centres operated a ‘top down’ approach – where all projects were moderated by the same mentor. This can be effective, and is of course better than no internal standardisation at all, but it would be good practice to ensure that anybody given this responsibility has completed a standardisation process themselves. Centres that had not undertaken any form of internal standardisation inevitably ended up with inconsistencies in their marks.

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