

Examiners' Report

January 2010

Projects

Projects Level 1 and 2 Controlled Assessments

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Foundation Projects Qualification

Level 1 Introduction

Projects follow the same processes as traditional GCSEs and GCEs. As with any GCSE or GCE, each unit is awarded to ensure that the standard is established and will be maintained. It is necessary to ensure consistency of standard in each examination window and as a consequence of this, grade boundaries may be subject to change.

Level 1 Unit 1 Foundation

Suitability of work submitted

Foundation projects submitted for moderation in this series were either carried out as part of a Foundation Diploma within one of the current 5 lines of learning or were submitted as a stand-alone qualification.

The foundation project qualification requires that learners submit evidence for 4 assessment objectives. Learners need to select, plan and carry out a project that uses relevant skills and methods to reach their project objectives. During the development of their project they need to obtain, select and use relevant information sources. For level 1 learners it is quite appropriate that the tutor / assessor gives reasonable support to learners so that they can gather relevant information. The learners are given the best opportunity to produce relevant evidence for the qualification if they are supported in choosing a research question to address.

For AO1 learners need to supply a completed project proposal form and activity log that is focussed on the requirements to plan and manage the project.

For AO2 learners need to demonstrate that they have gathered and used resources appropriate to the project title and these resources should be clearly identified in a bibliography.

For AO3 the learners need to develop and realise their project. This can be done in the form of a written report, an artefact or a performance. Ideas need to be developed that show some understanding of the topic and some evidence of alternative points of view should be seen.

AO4 requires learners to review both the process and the outcome of their project showing what skills and knowledge was developed and ideas for follow up work.

The most successful project titles were those that stated a clear research question for the learner to investigate and ones that also lent themselves to having a counter argument. The least successful titles at this level are those that give a statement to investigate such as ' the world of work'. Such titles do not allow learners to focus their research skills on the development of an argument or opinion.

In some centres' work, moderated in this series, the project titles given did prohibit the learners in fully addressing the assessment objectives, particularly with regard to AO3.

Many learners that are submitting their project work alongside Diploma studies tend to be rather restrictive in their project title choices, particularly with respect to SHD learners where research into obesity, teenage pregnancy and binge drinking is a recurrent theme. In future it would be pleasing to see the learners focussing their project titles on work that extends their knowledge out of the principal unit focus.

Where learners carried out their project as part of group work, although some projects did demonstrate individual development, the majority did not have sufficient individual responsibilities in the process to provide evidence that allowed them to access the highest marks in mark band 2.

In cases where a group of learners stated their project title as 'the world of work' the evidence presented gave an account of job roles and work experience, as opposed to an actual research project.

Learner Performance

It was not uncommon to see sections 3 and 4 of the proposal form left blank or completed generically when, in fact, they should have detailed information about the activities that need to be carried out to manage the project and their time scales, and the resources that are needed to research the project title.

In some learners work seen, although it was clear that research must have been undertaken from a variety of sources, this was implicit and not referenced.

In most learners work seen the evidence for assessment objective 4 was seen to sit in mark band 1. Centres need to ensure that all learners are supported in providing a review of their project work that addresses all the requirements for AO4 and does not just focus on the actual project outcome. This evidence should review the project process, including a review of the learner's own learning and performance, state which objectives were or were not met and why, give a description of skills and knowledge developed and learnt during the project and also give ideas for follow up work. Full reviews were seldom seen.

Regarding the artefact, where this was a successful choice of project the learner was fully supported in ensuring that all plans and designs that were developed were relevant to the initial title and project proposal. Where this approach was not so successful in addressing the assessment objectives the learner proposed a project title but produced evidence which bore little relation to it.

Regarding the written report format, this was seen to be most successful when learners choose a project title in the form of a question and then set out to gather relevant sources of data to address the chosen question.

Assessment

Generally centres are seen to be using the full range of marks available to them when assessing their learner's work.

However, some centres are seen to be awarding marks rather generously, particularly with respect to assessment objectives 2 and 4 and, in some circumstances, across all the assessment objectives. Some centres awarded marks for AO1 in mark band 2 when the project proposal forms were, at best, brief.

Regarding AO2, several projects were submitted without bibliographies making it impossible to clearly retrieve the sources used. Also, very few centres supported their learners in focussing on whether the sources used were fit for purpose.

Regarding AO3, all learners' work seen did attempt to develop and realise their project. However, in some work sampled, the evidence given for AO3 was not always relevant to the project title or project objectives given in the project proposal form therefore making it difficult to agree marks awarded in mark band 2.

Centre Performance

Staff delivering the project should understand that it is a qualification that attracts 60 GLH and that, therefore, learners need to be given a sufficient amount of time to develop their skills and knowledge relevant to their area of study. At level 1 it is appropriate that learners have direction regarding sources of information as long as they finally decide on the sources to be used.

Some centres are still not directing the learners to provide clear bibliographies of all sources used.

Only a minority of centres are internally standardising marks awarded by centre assessors. Occasionally, where internal standardisation had occurred, the internal verifier stated that marks awarded were too high -this point was supported by the external moderation process - but the learners' marks had not been changed.

There are still issues surrounding group work. Where learners research the same project title centres must ensure that all learners have their own individual roles and responsibilities so that they can provide individual evidence for their project process and outcome.

At level 1, assessors can award an extra mark for each assessment objective if the learner has worked fairly independently. The best centres will justify the award of this mark; other centres will just annotate +1 in the marks column.

Statistics

Level 1 Unit 1 Foundation

	Max. Mark	A*	A	B
Raw boundary mark	40	33	24	16
Points Score	8	6	4	2

Notes

Maximum Mark (raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme or mark grids.

Raw boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a learner to qualify for a given grade.

Higher Projects Qualification

Level 2 Introduction

Projects follow the same processes as traditional GCSEs and GCEs. As with any GCSE or GCE, each unit is awarded to ensure that the standard is established and will be maintained. It is necessary to ensure consistency of standard in each examination window and as a consequence of this, grade boundaries may be subject to change.

Level 2 Unit 1 Higher

Suitability of work submitted

The higher project qualification requires that learners submit evidence for 4 assessment objectives. Learners need to select, plan and carry out a project that uses relevant skills and methods to reach their project objectives. During the development of their project they need to obtain, select and use relevant information sources.

The learners are given the best opportunity to produce relevant evidence for the qualification if they are supported in choosing a research question to address.

For AO1 learners need to supply a completed project proposal form and activity log that is focussed on the requirements to plan and manage the project. To access marks in mark band 2 the learners need to describe any problems encountered and how they were overcome.

For AO2 learners need to demonstrate that they have gathered and used resources appropriate to the project title and these resources should be clearly identified in a bibliography. Resources should be relevant to the project objectives.

For AO3 the learners need to develop and realise their project. This can be done in the form of a written report, an artefact or a performance. Ideas need to be developed that show some understanding of the topic and some evidence of alternative points of view should be seen.

AO4 requires learners to review both the process and the outcome of their project showing what skills and knowledge was developed and ideas for follow up work. They should assess how well they managed and performed and these comments should incorporate feedback from others.

The most successful project titles were those that stated a clear research question for the learner to investigate and ones that also gave scope for argument and counter-argument. The least successful titles at this level were those that give a statement to investigate, such as 'the open day for college'. Such titles did not allow learners to focus their research skills on the development of an argument or opinion.

In some centres' work, the project titles given prohibited the learners from fully addressing the assessment objectives, particularly with regard to AO3.

Many learners that are submitting their project work alongside Diploma studies tended to be rather restrictive in their project title choices, staying safely within the scope of subject matter directly relevant to their principal learning units. In future it would be pleasing to see the learners focussing their project titles on work that extends their knowledge beyond that of the principal unit focus.

Where learners carried out their project as part of group work, although some projects did demonstrate individual development, the majority did not have sufficient individual responsibilities in the process to provide evidence that allowed them to access the highest marks in mark band 2.

Some design project work contained evidence which gave an account of the design process but did not address the actual research project.

Learner Performance

The most successful artefact projects were those in which the plans and design were clearly relevant to the initial question and objectives on the project proposal form. Less successful design projects contained information about the design process but did not show how this was relevant to the question posed at the outset.

As at all levels with the Project qualifications, regarding the written report format, this was seen to be most successful when learners chose a project title in the form of a question and then set out to gather relevant sources of data to address their chosen question.

Assessment

Some centres were seen to be awarding marks rather generously particularly with respect to assessment objectives 2 and 4.

As with the Level 1 projects, some centres are awarding marks for AO1 in mark band 2 when the project proposal forms were very brief. Also, more detail needed to have been given in sections 3 and 4 of the project proposal form if the marks for AO1 were to be supported.

The project proposal form is an important part of the assessment evidence and should not be completed hastily. It is recommended, where possible, that it is typed on computer, allowing the proposal form to evolve with the project.

Regarding AO2, several projects were submitted without clear bibliographies making it impossible to retrieve the sources used. Centres did not tend to help candidates to work towards ensuring that the information presented was relevant and applicable to their research question.

Regarding AO3, all learners' work seen did attempt to develop and realise their project. However, in some work sampled, the evidence given for AO3 was not always relevant to the project title or project objectives given in the project proposal form therefore making it difficult to agree marks awarded in mark band 2.

In most learners work seen the evidence for assessment objective 4 was seen to sit in mark band 1. Centres need to ensure that all learners are supported in providing a review of their project work that addresses all the requirements for AO4 and does not just focus on the actual project outcome. This evidence should review the project process including a review of the learners own learning and performance, state which objectives were or were not met and why, give a description of skills and knowledge developed and learnt during the project and also give ideas for follow up work. Full reviews were seldom seen.

Centre Performance

The Level 2 Project is a qualification that attracts 60 GLH and learners need to be given a sufficient amount of time (around 20GLH) to develop their skills and knowledge relevant to their area of study. Some centres are still not directing the learners to provide clear bibliographies of all sources used. Only the minority of centres were seen to be internally standardising marks awarded by centre assessors.

There are still issues surrounding group work. Where learners research the same project title centres must ensure that all learners have their own individual roles and responsibilities so that they can provide individual evidence for their project process and outcome.

Evidence for assessment objective 4 is still seen to be weak in most cases. Although many level 2 centres do support their learners in carrying out an oral presentation (e.g. to their peer group to tell them about their project), only a minority of centres support their learners in using peer evaluation for some evidence towards AO4 - this is a lost opportunity.

At level 2 assessors can award an extra mark for each assessment objective if the learner has worked fairly independently. The best centres will justify the award of this mark; other centres will just annotate +1 in the marks column.

Statistics

Level 2 Unit 1 Higher

	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C
Raw boundary mark	40	33	27	21	16
Points Score	10	8	6	4	2

Notes

Maximum Mark (raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme or mark grids.

Raw boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a learner to qualify for a given grade.

Please note: *Principal Learning qualifications are new qualifications, and grade boundaries for Controlled Assessment units should not be considered as stable. These grade boundaries may differ from series to series.*

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