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Level 3

# Extended Project Qualification

7993 EPQ

Report on the Examination

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7993

November 2017

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Version: 1.0

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Another increase in entries for the November series kept our team of moderators very busy. It is very pleasing to note that a substantial majority of centres were found to have understood the AQA standard for this qualification. Evidence was carefully considered against the assessment criteria, detailed comments based on submitted evidence were written and fair marks were awarded for each assessment objective. However, this was not always the case and this report will highlight various misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the specification that were found by moderators.

Some centres were dealing with high staff turnover and some candidates were found to have been supervised by as many as three supervisors and two centre co-ordinators. This must make the experience of the qualification very challenging for all concerned. It is helpful when centres inform moderators of these changes but projects must only be marked on the strength of the final submission.

One slightly concerning trend is an observed increase in dual accreditation, largely coming from some centres new to the qualification. Supervisors failed to explain how a proposed project would extend beyond a candidate's A level studies in Project Proposal B. One example was seen where over half of a candidate's references came from her Psychology A level textbook and only three paragraphs of her report went beyond the specification content for Psychology A level. It must be noted that where a candidate takes EPQ in year 12, it will still be dual accreditation if the subject focus of their EPQ is taught in year 13. No credit can be awarded to a candidate for material or techniques that form part of a subject studied by the candidate at level 3.

It was observed that some supervisors were offering too much direction to candidates so that demonstration of autonomous decision-making by the candidate was not well-evidenced. Some over-directive supervision was seen, for example, by suggesting sources that might be used by the candidate and by making suggestions with respect to title wording. Where drafts had been marked by supervisors, in contravention of JCQ regulations, this was considered to be malpractice.

Whilst in many centres plenty of time is being allocated to the initial planning stage of projects there were some projects submitted for which little initial research had been undertaken before proposal stage. Acceptance of research proposals by Centre Coordinators without candidates having demonstrated that they had completed adequate/any preliminary research to sustain the proposal was seen rather frequently. Where students propose to contact doctors, medical workers or academics they should be advised to check before proposal stage whether any useful information will be forthcoming. Approval was sometimes being given even though there was no indication in the proposal of a reliable research base and very little to no detail in the 'my intended project' section of the proposal. In some cases, candidates had completed the Planning Review and were researching and planning, in one case even getting as far as a first draft of part of the report, before approval was actually given.

Clearly in a November entry candidates have not yet reached the end of Year 13. However, the standard for this qualification is set at A level. Some of the marking seen was over-generous, possibly giving credit for hard work and effort rather than for the evidence of developing the higher skills that this qualification seeks to encourage. There are still some centres who appear to believe that EPQ is set at AS level standard. This is not the case.

There was a tendency towards leniency within AO1. Whilst many candidates are now using production logs well there were still many logs seen that were descriptive and lacked detail. Logs without much evidence, or providing merely a list of tasks to be done were often rewarded by supervisors with top band AO1 marks with very little AO1 evidence found elsewhere in the

submission. Some candidates completed very good, well-researched reports but failed to provide evidence that would support achievement of the AO1 mark they had been awarded.

With respect to AO2, in many submissions there was a lack of a critical evaluation of sources and in some cases supervisors appeared to be giving credit for sources listed but apparently not used, without any clear reasoning or explanation in evidence. Many candidates included some sort of evaluation appendix. However, in some of these candidates made assertions about bias within a source, having quoted the source liberally and uncritically throughout the report. Other candidates claim to be wary of Wikipedia, but use it nevertheless. For some candidates, any articles/books published in an academic journal or by a reputable publisher are, automatically, reliable. Several centres were found to be encouraging candidates to write their written reports using the sources individually (and in some cases as a heading), so the approach is source by source analysis rather than integrating the sources into a comprehensive written report. Many 'literature reviews' were seen that demonstrated a fundamental misunderstanding of what a literature review is intended to be. There were a substantial number of 'literary reviews' submitted.

Some centres incorrectly insist that there must be some form of primary research within every EPQ submission and moderators saw many surveys/questionnaires; some of these did not provide relevant or reliable data. It must be noted that when candidates choose to use a questionnaire to gather information: (a) they need to be precise in what they hope to achieve (b) be able to put their information into a workable format (c) be prepared to discard it if the replies fail to enhance the project. Consider the questionnaire seen that was related to the EPQ title 'Political corruption in Brazil and how we solve it for a better future'. Most respondents displayed a lack of knowledge of Brazil and the author conceded that the data gathered was of no real value to them or to their report.

Very mixed practice was seen with respect to referencing. Whilst some candidates had learned to use recognised systems correctly, many had not. In particular much inappropriate referencing of online materials was seen. Candidates should not be pasting in the full URL each time they make reference to it. The URL itself should only appear in the bibliography, for example:  
Body, A. (Year, Month Date Published). *Article title*. Retrieved from URL

For AO3 some centres over-rewarded candidates who produced a descriptive, rather than an analytical, response. Indeed, some supervisors were crediting detailed descriptions or detailed but opinion based arguments with very high AO3 marks.

Many excellent artefacts were submitted, including some forms of creative writing. However, candidates did not always annotate relevant sections of their stories/novellas to show how research had informed the form and meaning of their artefact. Candidates producing artefacts should be mindful that EPQ is a research qualification.

Records of marks were unevenly completed within and between centres. Supervisors should refer to the assessment criteria when completing the record of marks. There is nothing wrong with saying 'excellent' but it does need exemplifying. Handwritten records of marks were sometimes too brief to explain the marks awarded and sometimes the handwriting was illegible.

In some centres, it was noted that there were many supervisors but with only one candidate each. In such cases the need for robust internal moderation is very great, but this was not always found to have been successful. Despite evidence of internal moderation, it was not uncommon for a centre to assess some or most of its projects really well and then others very poorly, pushing the centre out of moderation tolerance. Excellent practice was seen in some centres regarding internal moderation except that sometimes the only thing recorded was an adjustment to the total marks

with no clear indication of what the new individual AO marks should be. In other centres, there was a lack of clarity over which was the final agreed mark.

As usual, presentations varied from the mundane, re-presenting the report in verbal form with many PowerPoint slides, to the excellent, covering the EPQ journey and the sense of personal growth. On occasion this variety was seen within one centre. The response of supervisors to detailing the Q&A sessions remains very uneven. A minority of supervisors failed to record any Q&A evidence in Presentation Part B. At the other end of the scale, some supervisors provided copious notes and useful evidence.

Most centres have understood the importance of selection and encourage candidates to keep additional evidence to a minimum but there were still instances of full hardback files, filled with notes, leaflets etc. One centre parcelled up 15 projects with the parcel weighing in at 11Kgs, packaged in a reinforced photocopier-paper box!

To end this report on a positive note, there were as ever, some superb projects submitted. Moderators thoroughly enjoy the moderation of these projects. It is clear that in many centres excellent programmes of Taught Skills, careful and supportive supervision and strong leadership from confident Centre Coordinators, is providing students with a truly excellent experience of the Extended Project 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](#)