



LEVEL 3

EXTENDED PROJECT

7993

Report on the Examination

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The November series saw a slight increase in entry size and moderators were pleased to report that a clear majority of centres applied the assessment criteria accurately so that centre marking was found to be within moderation tolerance. It was clear that many students had embraced the opportunity provided by the Extended Project Qualification during 'lockdown' and some truly exceptional projects were seen. This report will highlight key parts of the delivery of the qualification within centres.

Project Approval

It was clear that most Supervisors and Centre Coordinators had scrutinised proposals carefully and Proposal parts B and C were completed thoughtfully and in detail, but there were some proposals seen that had not been adequately challenged by supervisors and/or centre coordinators; some very 'thin' statements were seen at Proposal parts B and C. These were not very helpful to students, and the potential pitfalls about descriptive titles, ethical pitfalls, the need for caution over emotive or biased sources, etc. were not indicated. A few centres were found to be using 'copy & paste' to place an identical long, generic and essentially meaningless 'statement' on the Proposal Part C of every student in the centre. Some students reached the mid to late stages of their project before realising there were insufficient resources available demonstrating the lack of rigour at approval/proposal stages.

Most centres were very careful in checking out any potential Dual Accreditation, but in some cases, there was lack of clarity. Sometimes there was a lack of explanation regarding the extension of proposed titles beyond the confines of an A level specification, e.g. 'This topic closely relates to History A level'.

Research

It was heartening to see that many students produced excellent work under really difficult circumstances, including having to radically re-think their research methodologies. However, with limited access to libraries due to Covid-19, the majority of sources used by students this series were online and there was some evidence that this narrowed the perspective of some students. Moderators saw a lot of 'solid' examples of information gathering, presented and referenced well but lacking scope in terms of argument or flair and engagement. Reading was not always critical, and the higher skill of critical analysis was not well developed by some students. Many resource evaluation tables seen, with CRAAP and RAVEN frequently employed. Where well-used these tables showed thought and clear evaluation showing **how** resources were valuable rather than just stating **that** they were. Some centres seemed to be insisting that all students use primary resources even when these were surveys or questionnaires that added very little of value. Indeed, some students thought that they must have primary research as part of their data collection - and then the lack of being able to achieve this was blamed on Covid-19, whilst from the start they actually needed more and better secondary sources.

Ethical considerations should be at the forefront for any student considering the use of questionnaires, carrying out artefacts that involve other people or supplying pictures by way of support that have images of people, especially if they are children. In some cases, these considerations were undertaken very well, but this was not always the case.

Production Log

Much excellent use of the Log was seen; review pages contained valuable evidence of skill development as the project process unfolded. Students were good at showing how, for example, they were monitoring progress with recording of research done, its usefulness considered, and the subsequent progress achieved. However, some students appeared to see the Log as a device to record only the 'mechanics' of management (target dates & number of words etc.), rather than using the opportunity to also reflect upon the evolution of their continuing investigation (and discoveries) of the content of their projects.

Some students referred to essay plans instead of project plans, and some even produced draft essay plans **before** substantial research had been undertaken. These students did not appear to understand that it is research that should shape the direction and scope of the final title.

Many students had clearly coped admirably with the problems raised by the extended lockdown period and several students commented in their Log that the EPQ had kept them going, with the emphasis on autonomy and personal research. Some excellent reflection on the impact of lockdown was seen. Thus, for some students, lockdown had been beneficial to them as it allowed them to study in peace, however for others it had clearly not been good for their mental health. A number of student comments reflected on lack of motivation which ultimately resulted in procrastination and time management issues.

There were some submissions with over-long and repetitive Logs. In some cases, great slabs of text were submitted with no line spacing and no paragraphing. Sometimes this was apparently caused by the use of a 'centre format' or 'centre template' that was followed by all students in a centre. This reduced student autonomy as to what to include, how to include it and at what stage.

Supervision

Much excellent remote supervision was seen with use of Teams or Zoom at the forefront. However, this was not always the case and some students appeared to suffer from the lack of contact with their supervisor.

For some students, titles could have done with being revised and/or there could have been more focus on the wording of the question, but little supervisor challenge or advice was provided after approval. Whilst many excellent focussed final titles were seen this was not always the case:

- A number of final titles were seen with two (or more) parts to them that only made sense if the first part was already decided upon

- The ‘To what extent’ framing of titles cause problems for some students. Many failed to actually address the ‘extent’ part of the title.
- Many speculative titles were seen, e.g. about the future of cars and how they will be powered. It is very hard for evidence-based conclusions to be drawn in such cases.

Some students and their supervisors did not appear to have read specification 2.5 where it is written “A project product which consists solely of a research report should be approximately 5000 words....” Submitting over-long reports inevitably affects marks awarded in AO1 and may also affect the assessment of AO3. Some supervisors awarded high marks to over-long projects (7000+ words) with no reflection of this in either the marking of AO1 or AO3. Some supervisors seemed to think that students’ decisions to increase the word count to, e.g. 8000 words, was an effective and appropriate modification to their project plans.

In some cases, supervisors were found to be over-directive, sometimes commenting too specifically on multiple drafts of reports (that were emailed back and forth). Attention is drawn here to JCQ regulations 2.2 and 2.4.

Many presentations were conducted remotely very successfully. There were some very good written records of the questions and answers recorded in Presentation Part B by supervisors.

Assessment

Unfortunately, there was a significant number of centres where students’ work was over-credited. This was sometimes characterised by brief comments in the Record of Marks, telling how the student had attended every meeting, stayed in touch with supervisors during lockdown and worked really hard, with little reference made to the assessment criteria statements. It was not uncommon, for example, to find that a student was awarded high marks in AO1 with a supporting comment to the effect that they had completed a high standard report that therefore proved they had planned well. The requirement for explicit evidence of planning and monitoring progress against agreed objectives was ignored.

Moderators have reported that projects earning high marks this series most often:

- Used the AQA log to maximum advantage, to provide a detailed yet succinct record of the student’s EPQ ‘journey’.
- Had planning documentation that indicated how they had adapted to changing circumstances, i.e. ‘managed’ their project. (This is quite different from providing a diary that merely recorded their actions.)
- Had given consideration as to the evaluation of their sources – both in choosing them and using them.
- Provided relevant and clearly labelled additional documentation to evidence particular aspects of their project.
- Had given due consideration to the means of referencing and bibliography
- Produced a high-quality product of Level 3 standard

- Had a detailed record of Q&As after the presentation, designed to allow the student to give evidence not available elsewhere in the project. ('Template' questions were not so effective in this regard.)
- Reflected in full on the final page of their Log – not only on 'generic' matters of timing and organisation but also on their personal learning and the strengths and weaknesses of their unique project.

Admin

Moderators were grateful to all those who submitted projects in good order, but some centres forgot to send in the required Centre Declaration Sheet.

Font size was a problem this series caused in part from using word to annotate documents electronically, which in one respect is excellent practice. However, it makes reading a problem for moderators when the font size is not adjusted before printing. This also had an impact on images, tables, diagrams & graphs. Likewise, scanned documents embedded in the Production Log were often challenging or impossible to read.

The use of computer software was sometimes seen to provide a complete transcript of the students' presentations and the Q&A. This takes moderators a long time to wade through and due to the nature of the software it does not always provide an accurate record and frequently does not make sense. Where centres opt to use this software please can a 'sense check' be made by the supervisor before submission.

Some supervisors handwrite their comments on the Record of Marks and in Presentation part B. Frequently this resulted in insufficient detail to justify the marks awarded and often the handwriting was very hard to read.

In summary

Moderators were impressed by much excellent centre practice; they were impressed by the smooth and effective transition that most centres had made between face-to-face supervision and remote supervision and they were impressed by the self-discipline and determination demonstrated by most students in very challenging circumstances. Moderators felt privileged to moderate many high quality and highly original extended projects.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.