LEVEL 1 & 2 FOUNDATION & HIGHER PROJECTS

7991/7992 Levels 1 & 2 Projects
Report on the Examination

7991 and 7992
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General Comments

It was pleasing to note that the increase in entries, seen in Summer 2022 for both the Foundation and Higher Projects, was sustained this year and, in the case of the Higher Project, the entry slightly exceeded that of last year. As usual moderators saw a wide variety of project titles being selected with themes such as Artificial Intelligence, climate change and gender related issues remaining popular themes whilst autism, COVID and its effects, the possible return of cultural artefacts to their countries of origin and the impact of Disney products were also examined by quite a number of students. What was striking however, the topics listed here notwithstanding, was the extremely wide range of titles chosen by students supporting the fact that the Project enabled students to explore an issue about which they were genuinely interested.

In completing their work members of the moderation team offered several observations and these are explored below.

Assessment objectives

Whilst the submissions for most students offered evidence for all four assessment objectives, in some cases, and this did seem to be a 'centre-specific issue', evidence to support AO1 (Manage) and AO2 (Use Resources) was deficient.

For AO1 (Manage) some students neglected to provide a clear, time-referenced plan of action for their project at the Planning Review stage with subsequent entries in the production log merely recording 'what they had done' at subsequent review meetings. This did not generate evidence to support how progress had been monitored against a clear plan. Sometimes it was seen that centres had created their own 'parallel' document, usually described as a 'Project diary,' with students being encouraged to record what they had done on a 'week by week' basis. Whilst this may have enabled supervisors to 'monitor' the progress of students it failed to generate the necessary evidence to show how students monitored their own progress against a clear plan, and, it seemed, 'downgraded' the importance of the production log in the eyes of students. It was certainly the case that where students used centre-created Project diaries, entries in the Production Log itself tended to be brief and restricted.

For AO2 (Use Resources) centres are reminded about the clear guidance regarding the use of information from published sources (including the Internet) set out in the JCQ publication 'Information for students - Non Examined Assessments'. A few student submissions were seen where there was no evidence of referencing even though the bibliography appended to the student's report suggested that resources had been used. At the Higher Project level some students found it hard to evidence how they might have evaluated the sources that they had used, sometimes just referring to 'how useful' they were, without undertaking a more rigorous evaluation such as that provided using CRAAP testing, or similar.

Choice of titles

Centres play a key role in supporting students in making an appropriate choice of title for their projects and it was clear in most cases that they were successful in doing this. However, there were instances where centres approved titles which inevitably lead the student to produce broadly descriptive or narrative based reports thus restricting the ability of the student to fully meet the assessment objectives. In other instances, students saw their projects as an opportunity to 'get a message across' but polemical exercises of this type were invariably unsuccessful.

Artefact projects

Whilst most students did not submit artefact projects, of those that did many had failed to understand what was required for such a submission. In most cases this appeared to be a centre-based issue and this disadvantaged those students choosing this type of project. Centres did not appear to recognise that artefacts need to be research based and allowed students to go ahead and make, write or produce their artefact without any evidence of underpinning research. Frequently the artefacts produced did not have a specified audience and failed to establish how the success of the outcome might be judged. Amongst artefact-based entries for the Foundation Project some students had just produced a 'poster' or a 'scrapbook' and moderators wondered whether in these cases these were seen as an 'easy option' for those students 'who didn't like writing a report'.

Worryingly a few centres had failed to take into account changes to the word count introduced in the revised Specification (for teaching from September 2020) where the length of the research-based report accompanying an artefact Is now a **minimum** of 250 words (for the Foundation Project) and a **minimum** of 500 words (for the Higher Project).

Supervision

Moderators noted that whereas a majority of centres were diligent in confirming the absence of any potential dual accreditation issues when approving student titles this was not always the case. Supervisors when working with students preparatory to their submitting a project proposal must be absolutely clear that the chosen title represents a genuine extension beyond something that student already knows, is studying or can do already, and a clear confirmation to this effect should be made in Project proposal Part B.

Assessments

It is a requirement that centres provide evidence as to how they have made assessments for each student. Much good practice was with centres providing detailed supporting comments on the Record of Marks sheets and clear and helpful annotation in the body of the submissions. In a few cases, however, this was not the case with markers 'lifting' short phrases from the assessment objectives and using these as 'evidence' for why a particular mark was awarded. Additionally, some centres seemed inclined to award 'inflated' marks that bore insufficient relation to the comparative paucity of evidence presented by students.

It was of concern to moderators that there were more instances this series where large adjustments to centre marks were necessary. In many cases it was clear that this arose through the inadequacy of a centre's internal moderation arrangements and, in a few cases, the absence of these arrangements being in place. Where there is more than one supervisor, the centre coordinator must put in place internal standardisation procedures and should moderate the marking of the supervisors involved. Whilst there is no set way, this should be achieved; the centre coordinator must be confident that centre marking generates a reliable rank order of marks.

Taught Skills Programme

Moderators noted many excellent taught skills programmes and these clearly provided full and appropriate support for students.

In a few cases it was of concern that whilst the 'overview' of the centre's taught skills programme stated that a particular skill had been taught this was not evidenced in student submissions. Mention has been made elsewhere in this report regarding AO2 (Use resources) and the referencing of material and, in some cases, it was found that centres confirmed that this was a skill taught to students but their submissions did not contain evidence of its use.

Centres are reminded that they should ensure that students are aware of the variety of sources that might be available to them and the types of research they can carry out. Whilst this should include primary research, attention should be paid to the limitations of this research especially with regard to the restricted size and representativeness of population samples available to students and the commensurate difficulties in making appropriate generalisations from these. Some students, and usually those entered for the Foundation Project, were happy to carry out small scale questionnaire-based research amongst a small group of their peers, but without evidencing any awareness of whether their 'findings' might be representative of a wider population.

Centres should be aware that students should select the research methods which are most appropriate for their projects. It is not a requirement of either of the Specifications that students must carry out both primary and secondary research and where, in a few instances, this was the centre's expectation, it restricted the ability of many students to carry out effective and realistic research.

With the advent of ChatGPT there is a concern regarding a potential new source of plagiarism. Centres are reminded that Project supervisors will always remain the 'first line of defence' against plagiarism as they are the person who works most closely with the student throughout the project journey. Where there is any doubt as to the authenticity of material presented by the student, the supervisor should challenge the student as to the source of material presented.

Administration

Moderators were grateful to the majority of centres where student marks were submitted to AQA to meet, or in some cases in advance of, the AQA deadline. Very few centres needed to be reminded to submit a completed Centre Declaration Sheet and where administrative errors were found centres responded promptly to requests for these to be corrected.

Centre coordinators are reminded that treasury tags should be used to attach the material submitted for each student. There were too many instances of student submissions containing unattached separate pages contained in plastic wallets or similar.

Conclusion

Overall moderators were impressed with the quality of Projects submitted and these bore testament to the hard work and enthusiasm of students and to sound centre practice supporting the work of these students.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.