

Level 3 Extended Project Qualification

Series: November 2021

Principal Moderator Report

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1. Introduction

Size of entry and how it compares to previous entries

Submission size increased by more than 60% compared to the Summer 2021 series.

Choice of project titles - ingenuity and creativeness of candidates

The range and variety of the questions chosen by the candidates remain as broad as ever. There were projects related to the impact of COVID-19 and the pandemic on the economy, on education and house prices. Candidates completed practical investigations well as dissertations and business plans.

Congratulations to centre staff, benefits to candidate

We do, as always, appreciate the diligence and perseverance of colleagues in the centres with regards to the organisational implications of managing the EPQ process in the current climate. This is the third session of examinations under the restrictions of the pandemic, and colleagues have taken to the use of Zoom and/or Teams well as other media platforms to make the Presentation process accessible and inclusive.

2. Positives

- Appropriateness of supervision in challenging and encouraging candidates
- Quality of written records of presentations

3. Assessment Objectives

(4 sections) - Accuracy of marking, details of exemplary work seen and common features/issues.

AO1 - Manage

Here we are looking for our candidates to demonstrate the development of knowledge, understanding and skills involved in the design process. We look for evidence regarding how the planning and design phases are coordinated and managed. There was substantial evidence of independent planning and project management by candidates, reflected across

the mark bands. Centres are becoming more au fait with the use of Section 6 in managing the EPQ, with candidates displaying proficiency in logging and reflecting upon the process. Form 1 - Project proposal, Form 2 - Project proposal authorisation and Form 3 - Initial Project Review are increasingly effectively used to demonstrate how the extension of level 3 studies has been arrived at by the candidate.

It is clear that centres are reflecting feedback from Centre reports. Centres are providing effective teaching and learning for candidates with regards to methodologies, as we are beginning to see more suitable application by candidates. There is however, still some room for improvement with regards to skills in selecting appropriate and achievable titles or questions. It would be helpful to see an exploration of the development of focus in the approval forms.

AO2 - Use resources

AO2 is designed to provide candidates with the opportunity to develop knowledge, understanding and skills to plan and carry out undefended research, to select appropriate information and to analyse the data collected. Candidates demonstrated development and application of a range of skills. Research and referencing are clearly being taught. Further improvement could be accomplished though candidates being encouraged to evaluate the sources, parsing the nature of reliability of newspapers, journals as well as websites.

It is important to note that the use of primary sources was not always successful, and some candidates would have benefitted from stronger questioning as to why the candidate requires this data; as well as how use of the data gathered will support or undermine their planned objectives. We have referred to the use of primary research in previous reports; centres may need to incorporate more of the teaching and learning time to the underpinning ideas behind planning such data gathering.

AO3 - Develop and realise

In this Assessment Objective we look for knowledge development, understanding and skill acquired in developing the project, with an emphasis on problem solving, decision making, keeping records and working with others. Centres have proved able to assess this AO, with strong showings in the final outcome. Some quirks in language were evident, however this proved to demonstrate the individuality and independence of the candidates.

In many examples it was clear that candidates had collaborated with others from their SA, peers or other adults from colleges, university or the world of work.

Some use of **Form 4** requires clarification by centres (as part of the taught element) with regards to the use of the aims and objectives section of the project plan. Candidates at times completed the section with a lack of distinction between the terms 'aim 'and 'objective'. Candidates have used Form 6 - Project activity log to capture their rationale or decision.

AO4 - Review

In the review assessment objective we are looking at the candidate's depth of development in the knowledge, understanding and skills involved in reviewing, evaluating and drawing conclusions for their project. Additionally candidates must present to a non-specialist audience. Many candidates benefitted from detailed completion of Form 6 Project activity log to capture their analyses and evaluations of decisions made as the timeline progressed.

Form 7 - Final project review was less well done, and often quite brief and repetitive with a focus on advice which would be given to another candidate completing the EPQ, with a lack of focus on the candidate's own successes and failures.

We would look to discourage the practice of sending the whole presentation. Edited highlights or an indication in Form 10 as to the time frame of particular questions and answers referred to would be preferable.

In addition the questions asked in the presentations should be solid and tough; designed to challenge the candidate's thinking and understanding of their project in a manner that would provide the candidate with the opportunity to elucidate the depth and breadth of their learning within the project as well as about their personal advancement.

Questions from the SAs and audience members tended to focus on the process rather than the content. Superficial questions result in superficial answers denying the candidate the opportunity to acquire higher scores in this AO.

4. Taught element

The centres should be aware that the taught element comprises 120 guided learning hours and must make use of this time to ensure that candidates have not only a clear understanding of how to reference and create bibliographies, but also why these are significant critical skills to acquire.

5. Areas of concern expressed by moderators

Use of mandatory documents

Form 10 - Presentation record

- The audience should be non-specialist and impartial. It is clear with the increasing use of remote presentations that friends and family are invited. I would suggest that Centres should be able to arrange for wider groups to attend these remote sessions to encourage deeper questioning.
- The questions about content as well as process.
- The detail quality of the answers given (as well as who asked it).

Form 12 - Supervisor/assessor marks and supporting comments

- Highlight the relevant area where the evidence for the score has been found.
- If evidence is from a video, then the relevant timestamp(s) would be helpful for the moderation team.
- Where there has been internal moderation then it would be helpful to have some validation of the IM's changes especially where the difference is out of tolerance (greater than +/- 3).

Suitability of Proposed titles

There were a wide range of titles and subject areas as always. SAs should direct the candidates to look at:

- a) The purpose behind the primary research.
- b) The suitability of the questions on the surveys.
- c) How the data validates the key objective.

Application of marking bands

The Centres generally used the guidance around the marking bands, placing candidates in the correct band, although on occasion candidates were put in across mark bands. Where this occurred it was relatively straightforward to correct with the Centre still remaining within tolerance.

Validity of evidence

The external moderation team commented that it would be helpful to have concrete indications from SAs and IMs to substantiate where in section 6 or the artefact/dissertation evidence for each AO score. This can be in the form of annotations, highlighting, page numbers or timestamps.

Comments on artefact projects, evidence of candidates' process decisions, reports

It is preferable to see a number of artefacts and, once again, there were not very many in this cohort. An EPQ submission was a dissertation in the form of a speech which would have been better served as an artefact with an accompanying short dissertation.

6. Conclusion

Assessment judgements have improved with a convincing reduction in the number of rogue marks. The taught element should also communicate the underlying rationale of the EPQ. Administrative tasks regarding sending the EPQs electronically or as hard copies can always be improved.