GUIDANCE ON THE RESEARCH PROJECT (8660)

Introduction

The Cambridge curriculum aims to encourage the skills of independent research and investigation, the use of initiative and creativity, and the application of skills and knowledge.

The introduction of separately certificated Research Projects from 2003 onwards provides candidates with the opportunity to pursue topics in some depth in subject areas related to their studies, and enables them to demonstrate the skills which form the basis of successful future study and employment.

Candidates are required to submit two research projects for certification. However, it is possible for candidates to submit a single research project for examiner review and detailed comment. A single research project cannot be used to contribute towards the AICE Diploma or to the AS. Research projects in the same subject are allowed but should be based on two independent pieces of research.

Research Projects are provided by Cambridge International Examinations at AS Level and are primarily intended to replace coursework where that option is no longer available but candidates may wish to pursue personal investigations. Where Centres and candidates would like to make proposals concerning Research Project topics in such subjects, they should complete the attached pro-forma. If candidates wish to submit a Research Project in a subject that has previously not had a coursework option, or in a subject for which the candidate is not entered, then the Centre should contact CIE before starting teaching, with a detailed outline proposal and rationale, to discuss the feasibility and practical details. Research Projects will not be allowed in any subject where there is a coursework option available or where the subject nature makes assessment by Research Project unsuitable. In subjects where the 3000 word length is unsuitable, the Project should demonstrate evidence of an equivalent amount of work.

Each Project will contribute a maximum of 30 points to the AICE Diploma score.

Requirements

Each Research Project should be around 3000 words in length and high-scoring candidates will have shown evidence of study *in depth*. CIE reserves the right not to mark beyond the 3500 word limit.

Candidates submitting a Research Project for assessment should normally be entered for examination in an AS or A Level syllabus in the same subject area. Different areas will be considered if the Centre can show evidence that teaching support is available and permission is sought from Cambridge prior to the candidate starting.

For candidates sitting an AS in the corresponding subject, topics contained within the A Level syllabus, which go beyond the AS syllabus, provide useful prompts for the selection of an appropriate topic choice.

CIE reserves the right not to accept Research Projects that do not comply with the entry rules or academic requirements.

The Assessment of Research Projects

The Research Project will be marked externally and will be assessed using the profile of assessment objectives contained within the structure of the syllabus associated with the content area of the study. Specific assessment criteria are detailed in some representative subjects to give Centres an idea of what is required. Criteria will inevitably differ slightly from subject to subject but will be based upon:
- Knowledge and Understanding (40%),
- Research Skills (30%),
- Evaluation (30%).

General Guidelines

- The Research Project should be based on a specific issue or area of study. The basis of the study should be related, where possible, to the candidates' own independent research of primary sources or data, although information from secondary sources can also be used.

- General accounts of a descriptive nature should be discouraged as they will almost certainly fail to score significant marks for several of the assessment criteria.

- Care must be taken in choosing the scale of the study not to suggest topics that are too large in area or scope.

- While it is not essential that a hypothesis is set up, experience shows that this can be a useful technique in assisting candidates to focus and structure their enquiries. Similarly candidates who pose a particular question as the basis for their enquiry give themselves a focus or aim that helps to ensure relevance and direction in the completed study. It should be noted that the use of hypotheses or guiding questions is not compulsory and that there are other approaches that may be appropriate for certain enquiries.

- Studies by two or more candidates working together can be accepted only if each candidate undertakes an entirely different part of the project, and is inappropriate in most subjects. Similarly, if two or more candidates wish to work on the same topic it is vital that they use different techniques, study slightly different aspects or focus on different sub-themes. It is acceptable for candidates to have help in data collection, for example in exercises that require simultaneous counts at a number of locations. However, in such situations it is necessary for the preparation and organisation of the data collection to be undertaken by the candidate submitting the study and any such assistance should be clearly detailed.

The Teachers' Role

The Research Project should be carried out by the individual candidate. However, the role of the teacher is vital in

(a) advance preparation:

especially in giving guidance to candidates in the framing of the title. To direct a question precisely does not mean telling candidates what to think, but rather shows them unambiguously what is required for them to do, so that their own thoughts on a well-defined subject can be best developed.

in introducing candidates in general to techniques in data collection, presentation and analysis or giving guidance on the use of secondary source materials and how to document sources and layout of a bibliography;

(b) discussing initial plans to ensure that the individual candidate has:

identified an issue, relationship, problem or question which is suitable and realisable;

considered the implications of any data collection in terms of time, equipment, access, and likely responses;

made certain that the data which it is planned to collect is suitable for presentation and analysis will provide the basis for conclusions to be drawn, and meets the aims of the enquiry;

chosen an appropriate scale for the study neither too large nor too small;

shown an awareness of the assessment criteria.

After this, the individual candidate should carry out all the work for and writing up of the Research Project. Discussion of the work and how it is proceeding are a natural part of the relationship between teacher and candidate, as in preparation for any other examination.

While is acceptable for teachers to offer guidance about how best to approach the research and presentation involved, this guidance must stop short of undue influence. The project must be the candidate's own work and the giving of information directly relevant to the work, and the redrafting of work already marked by the teacher, are forbidden.

Both the teacher and the candidate will be required to submit a signed statement that the work in the project is the candidate's own work and CIE reserves the right to refuse to accept work where there are doubts as to its originality.

Submission Deadlines

Research Project proposal forms should be submitted prior to the submission of the candidate's work and at the latest by 21 February for the June examination and by 16 August for the November examination.

Research Projects should be despatched to Cambridge for marking by 30 April for the June examination and by 31 October for the November examination. Research Projects will only be accepted if there are valid entries for the corresponding AS or A Level subjects or by prior agreement with CIE.

Research Project – Presentation

The use of computers for the production of the Research Project is encouraged, both for word-processed text and for computer-generated graphs, maps and diagrams. Candidates will gain credit for selecting appropriate methods of presentation of information or data, where appropriate. Candidates should not restrict the range of techniques used to those suitable on their software package. They should bear in mind that a few well-labelled tables or sketches may be more useful in the requirements of the project than extensive graphs and diagrams generated by computer.

Certain basic procedures must be observed in the presentation of the Research Project. All copied material must be acknowledged, and quotations clearly marked. If appropriate, a bibliography and list of sources, data collection and processing should be included in an appendix. Where possible research projects should be typed or word-processed.

The Research Project should be submitted in soft folders **not** ring binders.

All Research Projects must be clearly labelled with the candidate's name, number and Centre number and a cover sheet (included at the end of this booklet) must be copied and submitted with the work so that it can be identified clearly.

Assessment Criteria

The following criteria are from three representative subjects; a data-based one, a context-based one and a literature-based one. If you wish to enter a Project in a subject not listed here please contact CIE for advice. First Language literature projects will be of the general form suggested for English, but again, please contact the Languages Group at CIE for specific guidance.

GUIDANCE ON A DATA-BASED RESEARCH PROJECT E.G. GEOGRAPHY

Topic Choice

Candidates submitting a Geography Research Project for assessment would normally select from the units in the A Level syllabus: candidates may choose to do a topic from the Advanced Physical and Human Options even if they are only taking the AS in Geography. Topics chosen for study in the Research Project may cut across syllabus unit boundaries. In addition, where the syllabus states that, for example, regional or national scales should be studied, local scale examples may be investigated for the Research Project. A list of the syllabus units is shown below.

Physical Core
• Hydrology and fluvial geomorphology
• Atmosphere and weather
• Rocks and weathering

Human Core
• Population change
• Settlement dynamics

Advanced Physical Options
• Tropical environments
• Coastal environments
• Hazardous environments
• Arid and semi-arid environments

Advanced Human Options
• Production, location and change
• Environmental management
• Global interdependence
• Economic transition

Some examples of possible titles are given below. These are written as questions, but could be rephrased as hypotheses. It is not a definitive list of titles, but rather is intended to demonstrate the types of enquiries that might be carried out and their extent or scope. The majority of the example titles are based on primary data collection, i.e. fieldwork. Certain topics, such as Population and Hazardous Environments, do not lend themselves to this approach and so the use of published data will often be necessary.

• How and why does the channel vary along a 1km stretch of the River ……..?
• How have human activities affected the microclimate of ……….?
• How and why do slopes vary in profile in ……….?
• What effects have internal migrations had on ……….?
• How does the sphere of influence of ………. vary according to the indicators used?
• How and why do soil profiles/types vary in/along ……….? (Can be related to aspect, slope, vegetation, etc.)
• To what extent has the ……….coastal protection scheme been successful?
• Are sand dune orientations related to prevailing winds?
• To what extent is industrial location/agricultural land-use in/of ………. a result of ……….?
• What are the causes of land/air/water degradation in ……….. and how may they be managed/reduced?
• Is tourism a benefit or a curse in ………?
• Are there social /economic inequalities between/in ……….?

General Guidelines
• The Research Report should be based on a specific issue or question. The basis of the study should be related, where possible, to the candidates' collection of primary data, whether from measurement, observation or questioning, although data from secondary sources can also be used.
• It is important that the broader geographical implications of the study are clearly addressed so that the study is set within the context of general principles or wider issues. Where a study is based on a small area, it will be necessary to consider such issues on a larger scale in other areas or environments, so that it does not become a singular, isolated study, but relates to the application of geographical enquiry to the wider world.

- Care must be taken in choosing the scale of the study not to suggest topics that are too large in area or scope. For most topics, a country or large city is too big an area to consider unless the study is restricted to some very specific aspect such as the examination of the distribution of a particular type of industry or service. Studies of a single or group of settlements should similarly restrict themselves to certain themes. In studies investigating changes over time it is important that candidates choose the appropriate time-scale in the light of the availability of data. Studies of this type are best limited to a few, recent decades at most, such that map, census and other data is available and directly comparable with current observations and surveys.

The Research Project – Geography Assessment Criteria

A Geography research project will be assessed on the basis of the following generic assessment criteria:

Level	Knowledge and Understanding (including analysis) Max 20 marks	Skills and Enquiry Max 15 marks	Evaluation and Decision Making (including conclusions) Max 15 marks
1	**0-6 marks** There is some knowledge and understanding of the topic; little analysis and much description and narrative. Research sources used uncritically. There is limited reference to the wider context or issues.	**1-5 marks** Little evidence of research; Data collection or background research is limited but generally appropriate, with some attempt to present the data using a limited range of techniques.	**1-5 marks** Conclusions are limited and make little reference to original aims or to different interpretations and opinions about the topic or data collected. Projects will not contain valid questions and will usually fail to answer the question posed.
2	**7-13 marks** There is a good knowledge and understanding of the topic with some development of trends, explanations and causes related to the data. Candidates will have made a more determined attempt to provide analytical answers to their questions. However, the qualities of analysis and conceptual understanding will be limited. The study refers to the wider context or issues.	**6-10 marks** Data collection is thorough and appropriate to the aims of the enquiry. Data is presented using a number of correctly applied techniques. Sources are used selectively and relevantly	**6-10 marks** Thorough conclusions related to original aims and making use of data and analysis. There will be occasional evaluative comments, for example by identifying gaps or weaknesses in arguments.
3	**14-20 marks** Detailed knowledge of the topic and related processes being researched is shown. Thorough understanding is shown, with excellent interpretation and explanation of the data. Trends and inter-relationships are identified and explained. Analysis is purposeful and relevant to the aims of the study. The highest marks will be awarded for work which is thorough, relevant and analytical throughout and in which candidates show confidence in selecting relevant evidence. The study is clearly set within the context of general principles and/or wider issues.	**11-15 marks** Data collection is precise and directed to the aims of the enquiry. Evidence of revisions to data collection in view of pilot studies, difficulties, etc. may well be found. Data is presented accurately using a range of correctly applied techniques.	**11-15 marks** Detailed conclusions, including overall conclusion, linked to original aim and to the wider context/ issues. There is thorough evaluation with suggestions for possible further investigation. Explanations and judgements will be convincingly argued and well substantiated and will show originality.

GUIDANCE ON CONTEXT-BASED RESEARCH PROJECTS E.G. HISTORY

General

The purpose of a History project is to give candidates the opportunity to select a problem, issue or event of contemporary significance, and to explore its historical roots. Depending on the nature of the problem selected, the historical background may be traced back as far as the candidates wish, but the nature of the exercise will be to explain a current problem in the context of past events.

Topic Choice

It may be helpful to choose the topic as early in the course as possible so they can conduct research over a period of time, and consider the significance of current events as they occur. Teachers may wish to encourage candidates to collect material on their chosen topics from magazines, newpapers etc..

The framing of a history project title is vital. Poor project titles can encourage the mere repetition of historical facts and dates. There is also the danger of writing a title so loose as to prompt no coherent argument or thesis at all.

Unproductive titles are topics which do not encourage AS or A Level History skills; vague, general, over-ambitious surveys, over-complex questions with varying demands and unclear requirements, over-ambitious questions requiring scholarship far beyond that required for A Level; bland and unduly 'open' titles with little or no focus and direction.

Productive titles direct and specify without narrowing. Experience shows that it helps candidates to focus, analyse, and construct an argument if titles are formulated in the form of a question (e.g. 'What are the prospects for permanent peace in the Balkans? Explain your answer in relation to the historical causes of conflict between the peoples of the region').

The Research Project – History Assessment Criteria

A Research Project in History will be assessed on the basis of the following generic assessment criteria:

Level	Knowledge and Understanding	Skills	Evaluation
1	**0-5 marks** Material is disorganised and incoherent. Much irrelevant material is included. Coverage of the topic is demonstrably incomplete in major respects. The approach adopted will be descriptive rather than analytical.	**0-3 marks** A very small number of sources is used. Sources used are used uncritically, as mere information gathering. Little thought is given to the nature of historical evidence, with the same weight given to all pieces of information regardless or their origins No awareness is shown of different interpretations and opinions on the topic.	**0-3 marks** Judgements will be trite and largely copied from the few sources used. Valid explanations of events will be few and far between, and overall the project will fail to provide an answer to the question being explored.
2	**6-10 marks** Taken as a whole, the project represents a recognisable effort to answer the question set. However, the structure of the project will be clearly flawed, with significant irrelevance and omissions. The approach adopted will be heavily descriptive, with analysis confined to occasional, isolated sections.	**4-7 marks** These projects are obviously limited by the number and variety of sources used. The writer can select relevant material from the sources, but it is rare for this material to be used as evidence, as opposed to merely information. There is no systematic coverage of differing opinions or interpretations, though these may be mentioned in passing.	**4-7 marks** Judgements and explanations will be simple and straightforward, with no awareness of the wider context or of the inter-connectedness of events, and with a tendency towards assertion, rather than reasoned argument.
3	**11-15 marks** These projects are clear and coherent, but some obviously relevant material will be given insufficient consideration. Though there will be significant amounts of analysis within the project, some sections will be unnecessarily narrative in emphasis	**8-11 marks** These projects are based on a significant amount of research. The writer is aware of the need to use sources critically, and usually, though not invariably does this. Consideration of differing views and interpretations on the topic will be given.	**8-11 marks** Judgements are generally sound, and the writer shows awareness of the need to support these with evidence. Explanations and arguments will be logical, though with little sign of independence and originality.
4	**16-20 marks** These projects are thorough and coherent in coverage, relevant and focused on the question being explored, and analytical in approach.	**12-15 marks** The project has been thoroughly researched and prepared, using a wide range of sources. The evaluation of the sources will be of central concern to the writer, with an obvious reluctance to accept them uncritically. Different interpretations and opinions on the topic will be considered and evaluated.	**12-15 marks** Judgements are authoritative and supported by convincing evidence. Explanations and judgements on events will be thoroughly argued, well substantiated, and show evidence of independent and original thought on the writer's part.

GUIDANCE ON LITERARY-BASED RESEARCH PROJECTS E.G. ENGLISH

General

Candidates submitting an English Research Project should also be entered for examination in one or more of the following syllabuses: AS English Language (8693); AS Language & Literature in English (8695).

Candidates who will be taking 9695 are not eligible to submit an English research project

Candidates may not collaborate on English Research Projects.

An English research project must be based on the study of two or more literary texts written originally in English and which can be linked by author and/or theme and/or genre. ('Text' should be considered as equivalent in scope to any of the set texts; if short stories or poems are to be studied, a text should be a group of poems/stories by a single writer, or an anthology (or sections thereof).) These must not be texts that appear in the set texts lists for syllabuses 8695 or 9695, but some candidates may wish to use their research project as an opportunity for wider reading in the work of a writer they are studying on a set texts paper.

Title formulation

The framing of the English project title is vital. Poor project titles on the novel and drama can encourage summary and mere plot rehearsal; poor titles on poets can invite unconnected poem-by-poem analyses. There is a danger in writing to titles so loose as to prompt no reactive impulse at all.

Some types of unproductive/inappropriate titles: topics which are more biographical or sociological than literary; titles requiring mere plot summary/description/character sketch, rather than AS English skills; questions treating the text as 'real life' rather than as a work of art; vague, general, over-ambitious surveys; over-complex questions with varying demands and unclear requirements; titles based around a false opposition or pointless comparison; over-ambitious questions requiring scholarship far beyond that required for A Level; bland and unduly 'open' titles with little or no focus and direction.

Productive titles direct and specify without narrowing. Experience shows that formulating titles in the form of a question (e.g. 'In what ways and with what success in your view do authors A and B explore the contrasts between the themes of C and D in novels E and F ….?') assists candidates in focusing, analysing, and constructing an argument, as well as inviting informed personal response.

Use of secondary sources

A research project enables candidates to read more widely both original and critical (secondary) works. As this is a *research* project option, it is expected that candidates will have some opportunity to consider some secondary materials; it is natural that they should absorb ideas from critical works on the texts about which they are writing – just as they often incorporate ideas suggested by the teacher or emerging from class discussion in their answers on the set book papers. But it is vital that candidates realise that they are being assessed on their own work – not the unacknowledged writing of others. The gulf between using the work of others to develop and modify one's own judgements and simply submitting the work of others as though not only the concepts but the actual wording are one's own may seem narrow, but it is deep and clearly defined and it is the responsibility of the teacher(s) in the Centre to ensure that pupils remain on the right side of that gulf. (The acknowledged use of quotation, either as the starting point of discussion or as the conclusion to which a candidate's own discussion has led is, of course, a different and perfectly acceptable practice.)

All quotations must be given in quotation marks and their sources made clear with full page references. This may be done by using footnotes, or by keying the quotation to an item in the bibliography. A bibliography of sources used (including any internet-derived material) must be provided at the end of this research project, giving details of the author's name, full title, date of publication etc. The bibliography is *not* included in the project word-length.

The Research Project – English Assessment Criteria

The English research project will be assessed on the basis of the following generic assessment criteria:
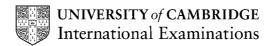
level	knowledge & understanding (max. 20 marks)	research skills (max. 15 marks)	Evaluation (max. 15 marks)
1	**0-5 marks** Limited knowledge and understanding of the topic. Little engagement with the terms of the question/title. Coverage of the topic is incomplete in major respects. Inclusion of much irrelevant material. Reliance on description and narrative at the expense of analysis and personal response. A lack of coherence, and problems with style and in making statements clear.	**0-3 marks** No awareness of differing interpretations or opinions. Little or no evidence of wider reading or research. (Alternatively, a wholly undiscriminating reliance on secondary material.) Little or no success in formal presentation; sources are not appropriately documented.	**0-3 marks** A basic attempt to state a response to works studied, probably based on borrowed opinions, but little or no sense of argument or judgement. Evaluation may rely solely on secondary material. Little or no consideration of any wider context or issues that may arise from the topic. Little or no personal response in evidence.
2	**6-10 marks** Basic knowledge and understanding of the topic. A line of enquiry germane to the question/title is followed. Material is generally relevant, but there may be significant omissions in coverage of the topic. A tendency to fall back on description and narrative at times; analysis is restricted to occasional sections of the project. Communicates in a simple style, effective for the task in hand, and showing understanding of at least some of any literary critical terminology employed.	**4-7 marks** Some awareness of differing opinions or interpretations. Some use made of secondary sources, but not sufficiently selectively or critically to place in Level 3. (Alternatively, some over-reliance on quoting secondary materials, with limited attempt to absorb into the argument or flow of the writing.) Observes some conventions of formal presentation. Sources may not be fully documented.	**4-7 marks** Attempts a conclusion or some evaluative commentary, but without a sustained or thorough engagement with the terms of the question. Brief and simple mention of wider contexts and issues where appropriate. Some personal response to the task in evidence.
3	**11-15 marks** Thorough knowledge and understanding of the topic. Material is mostly or wholly relevant to the task, though some may receive insufficient consideration. Analysis is developed and generally sustained. Communicates in a clear, technically sound style making sensible use of any literary critical terminology used.	**8-11 marks** Evidence of engagement with notion of differing opinions or interpretations. Constructive use of any secondary material; it is made appropriate and relevant to the task. There is no reliance on secondary material as a mere prop. Well presented. Sources are appropriately documented.	**8-11 marks** Evidence of a solid, though perhaps inflexible argument. A clear and informed personal response in evidence. Conclusions and evaluative commentary are relevant to the task. Some consideration of wider contexts and issues where appropriate.
4	**16-20 marks** Proficient and detailed knowledge and understanding of the topic. Material is focused and wholly relevant to the task. Analysis is purposeful, coherent, relevant and sustained. A mature, technically sound style, deploying a relatively mature literary critical vocabulary.	**12-15 marks** Confident and discriminating consideration of differing views and opinions. Deployment of any secondary materials is directed to the task and absorbed effectively into the argument. Well presented. Sources are appropriately documented.	**12-15 marks** Thorough and relevant evaluation, with judgements convincingly argued and substantiated. Full consideration of wider contexts and issues, where appropriate. A strongly and freshly personal (yet soundly based) response.

Session: June/November 200__

Candidate Name			
Candidate Number		**Centre Number**	

Note : this is **not** an entry form and an accompanying entry must be made through the usual channels for syllabus 8660.

Research Project 1	Associated Syllabus:
Short Title:	

Full Title or Short Description:

For CIE Use Only	
Approved:	Not Approved
Examiner ID:#	Reason:
Received from Centre:	
Sent to Examiner:	
Received from Examiner:	

Research Project 2	Associated Syllabus:
Short Title:	

Full Title or Short Description:

For CIE use only	
Approved:	Not Approved
Examiner ID:#	Reason:
Received from Centre:	
Sent to Examiner:	
Received from Examiner:	

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Notes:

Each research project should be associated with a CIE syllabus counting towards the AICE Diploma for which the candidate must be also entered, candidates who wish to enter other subjects should check with CIE that this is appropriate before starting. CIE will not accept Research Projects without an entry under syllabus code 8660 Research Projects.

Candidates must enter for **two** research projects.

In the event that the candidate fails to achieve the minimum standard to be awarded the AICE Diploma then the Research Project will be certificated separately.

If candidates wish to enter a single Research Project solely for the purpose of comments by the Board, please use this form but fill in only the part for Research Project 1, no accompanying entry need be made. The Centre will be billed separately.

If the Research Project title is not approved by CIE, the Candidate is free to withdraw entry or resubmit a new form having taken into account the reasons given. Withdrawal, or non-submission, of research projects after the deadlines for submission will entail forfeit of any entry fees paid.
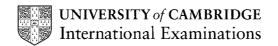
This form should be received by CIE by 21 February for submission in the following June session, and by 16 August for submission in the following November session. The Projects themselves will need to be submitted by 30 April for the June session and by 31 October for the November session.

Research Projects should normally be submitted only if associated with the syllabuses outlined in The Guide to Research Projects. If candidates wish to submit a Research Project in another area permission must be sought from CIE.

This completed form should be returned to:

**CIE Operations
1 Hills Road, Cambridge
CB1 2EU**.

CIE will inform Centres only if their submitted proposals are **not** acceptable.

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International Examinations

Candidate Name			
Candidate Number		**Centre Number**	

Note : this should be completed by the teacher and signed by the candidate to confirm that the work enclosed is the candidate's own work, and must be affixed firmly to the cover of each Research Project. The Research Project should be sent to:

Cambridge International Examinations
New Street
CAMBRIDGE
CB1 2UU

Research Project	1		2		*Tick one box only.*	Associated Syllabus:

Title:

I certify that this project is my own work and any source materials have been duly acknowledged.

Candidate's signature: Date

Teacher's signature: Date

For CIE Use Only	
Knowledge	
Skill	
Evaluation	
Total Mark	

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