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June 2022

Pearson Edexcel Extended Projects Qualification
in Investigation/ Field Study (P302)
Paper 01

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June 2022

Publications Code P302_01_2206_ER

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Student Performance

A wider range of suitable topics was seen this Series, with the overall number of projects increased, especially from overseas centres. The average level of attainment continued to be high and there were very few really weak projects. Where questionnaires were carried out, larger data sample sizes are being used and are often tested through pilots and well planned. It is still clear that the original choice of topic, and in particular a narrow hypothesis to test, is key to the success of the subsequent significance and correlation analysis. A clear hypothesis (or more than one) should be formally stated (a hypothesis is not a question) and then tested and then 'answered' and the level of confidence given. This is still a rarity; it is vital that the limitations of any conclusion are appreciated, without this AO3 marks are limited.

A small number of projects still lack significant primary data altogether; a Dissertation supported by a questionnaire or similar would be a better fit to the marking grid than a small sample questionnaire or a selection of interviews, which are basically just other sources. A project also has to be extended and involve a developing process. If there is a single test with variables, this is no more than an experiment. It is the analysis of large data sets or experimental results that allow the statistical analysis needed for Band 3. Where data was gathered, testing which stops at finding percentages or means, do not allow access to the highest marks. More statistical testing was seen this Series, some at a very advance level.

Individually motivated projects resulting from an area of interest, with a narrow focus, still tend to produce the best results and show the depth of background research expected. Group projects need very careful planning and are likely not to benefit both parties.

Suitability of Work Submitted

Where a narrow, testable hypothesis was proposed, projects had the focus required to meet the expectations of depth and analysis. This unit is differentiated from Unit 1 by the expectation of a more scientific and mathematical approach and thus the conclusion should involve the rejection or acceptance of the starting hypothesis at a declared level of significance. It is acceptable for students to receive guidance and supervision from a tutor or external expert, perhaps from a tertiary centre throughout, but it is expected that, to access the higher mark positions in AO1, the student will refine their hypothesis or research question independently and show an independent self-reflective journey and a clearly understood conclusion. It is abundantly clear that candidates who receive good guidance at the planning stages are able to score highly in all areas.

This Series, Proposal forms were generally much more detailed and the breakdown of tasks and assignment of milestones fuller. Activity logs were also full, though in a couple of cases still rather factual; the ability to record thoughts, decisions and problems faced with proposed solutions, enable high marks in both AO1 and AO4 to be accessed.

Projects need to be well-structured and show clear headings, labelling and illustrations. Projects are sometimes still hard to read and would profit from a more in-depth introduction as to what is being tackled. The more complex the subject, the clearer the communication should be; projects must not assume prior knowledge.

There was again an instance of questionable ethical suitability. A pupil (and Centre) should consider whether a project is suitable, not only if potentially harmful material is to be accessed,

but also if the data being collected is deeply personal.

Assessment Evidence

There was good evidence of consistent application of the marking grids (sometimes these were also submitted), moderation was largely in agreement and only slight leniency was seen at the top end. In some cases, a lack of detailed annotation (or any annotation at all) did not support the high marks awarded, particularly also the lack of comment and analysis in the Bibliography meant AO2 marks had been awarded leniently. The level of source evaluation and understanding of the requirements of a Bibliography and full referencing in the text is still a weak area. A list of URLs (sometimes minimal and limited in breadth) is not a bibliography and there is no attempt in many projects to show critical selection; AO2 marks tend still to be the most lenient. There must be a taught element to an Extended Project, as candidates cannot be expected to get it right on their own. Centres showed some evidence of a skills course in Activity Logs, though in the quality of work in some cases this was implicit. Marks given in AO1 and AO4 were generally supported if evidence was presented. Centres are required to give a breakdown and comments on the Oral Presentation Mark Form, bare marks are not sufficient and some ticks did not match marks awarded.

The self-reflective evaluation of the project process was handled with mixed success. Logs should be reflective but there should also be an Evaluation section at the end, quite distinct from the Conclusion; in several overseas centres Evaluation/self-reflection was completely lacking. Oral presentations were predominantly judged to be of high quality, however slides often showed them to be rather wordy and dull.

It was good to see some risk-assessments being carried out and also some pilot experiments undertaken, both of these activities are highly recommended and show evidence of good project planning and management.

Centre Performance

Most Centres submitted scripts to the online platform by the deadline. Samples were generally in accordance with expectations, however, several Centres did not submit their highest and lowest marked scripts. Centres must adhere to the sample submission guidelines and always the highest and lowest marked scripts in the cohort should be included, even if there are other substitutions. Now that the submission is on-line, it is vital that any project work is submitted in a form that can be easily accessed; acceptable formats are specified. Several overseas centres submitted unopenable work, which then had to be substituted. The easiest format was a single folder for each candidate, clearly labelled, containing all files. Centres entering multiple candidates marked by more than one tutor must show evidence of internal moderation, this can otherwise cause a Centre's marking to be inconsistent; this was a particular issue with a couple of overseas centres; the lack of internal moderation in a large centre with multiple markers can have serious consequences, if regression of marks has to be applied to the whole sample. Centres continue to show evidence of responding to external moderator feedback from previous submissions, which is pleasing. The level and frequency of annotation was less good in many cases this Series (perhaps due to continuing on-line submission); wording from the marking criteria should be used to highlight the award of marks; simply ticking or leaving a sheet blank means that it is not clear that the report has been carefully assessed throughout.

Proposal forms were correctly credited for good time management, though a full breakdown of timings at the proposal stage continues to be a mark of the stronger projects.

Presentation of data in bar graphs or pie charts alone is insufficient at this level for high marks; trends and correlations or statistical testing must be carried out. Bibliographies must contain evidence of critical selection of sources. There should also be evidence of the thinking behind any questionnaire design and evidence of understanding, rather than just use, of any mathematical methods if utilised.

All bar one project seen this Series matched level 3 criteria, and showed evidence of the basic format and depth expected from the prescribed number of guided learning hours at this level. However, a couple topics/titles chosen did not lend themselves to the iterative testing and analysis expected in Unit 2.

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