Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

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Level 3 Extended Project
(P301, P302, P303 & P304)

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Level 3 Unit 1: Dissertation

Learner Performance
Some projects of impressive maturity were seen, characterized by depth of thought, dedicated research and meticulous presentation. At the lower end, whilst candidates may have shown commitment to their work, the level of research, development, analysis and review fell short of what would be expected in a Level 3 qualification. There were, however, fewer very weak projects seen in this series.

Centres which had more success in accessing the higher mark bands were those which encouraged candidates to select research questions that were appropriate in terms of the sophistication of the ideas being addressed (with a clear base of Level 3 material being used) and with scope for the development of argument and counter-argument.

A very small number of projects raised compliance issues due to unreferenced sections taken from websites.

The quality of work at the upper end continues to impress. The quality of writing, depth of research and the level of sustained argument and counter-argument led to work of impressive maturity. There was much highly original work, demonstrating the impressive potential the qualification has to enable able learners to escape from the confines of prescribed assignments, and pursue work which connects to their personal interests and aspirations in a way which demonstrates depth, creativity, academic rigour and a capacity to transcend individual subject boundaries.

Suitability of Work Submitted
Dissertations usually consist of a report containing an abstract, introduction, literature review, discussion, conclusion, evaluation and bibliography. Candidates are also required to submit their project proposal forms and activity logs and there should be evidence of the oral presentation, usually in the form of a summary of the candidates' power point slides. Candidates should choose their own research question, which can be on a topic of their own choosing, and which should normally complement their other areas of study, and involve significant extension, either via development of new skills, or through broadening perspectives, or through deepening understanding.

Some centres allowed learners to follow titles that forced them down the road of producing essentially factual reports, which, no matter how well researched, prevented the higher AO3 marks being obtained. This tended to happen in cases where the question invited a descriptive answer, rather than an analytical response which included elements of judgement, argument and counter-argument.

Assessment Evidence

Most learners completed the proposal forms but some teacher/assessors failed to sign them. The amount of detail on the project proposal forms seemed a little short and sections such as personal rationale were often lacking. Given the central importance of careful thought about the objectives, rationale, plan and resources for the dissertation, it remains surprising that candidates opt to produce hastily written project proposal forms. Instead of hand-written forms, candidates should be encouraged to type these up, and to treat them as 'work-in-progress' documents, which can be refined as the project proceeds.

Many logs were still little more than lists of activities, some disappointingly short, although there were signs of improvement in some cases where learners were able to describe modifications or justifications in their log. The best centres encouraged their learners to produce detailed and reflective logs, although a couple incorrectly included them as part of the PPF itself. Occasionally, a draft project proposal form and the final version were submitted. This provided helpful evidence of how the research question had been refined.

With regard to AO2, a number of centres interpreted the literature review literally, and learners simply reviewed the sources, rather than using sources to provide an underpinning narrative of the key developments linked to the research question.

Learners, in the main, used a good range of relevant resources and on the whole were able to make clear and relevant links in their work. Although a bibliography was given, this was sometimes incorrect, e.g. not in alphabetical order, or accessed dates not given when listing websites. Centres need to encourage learners to reference all quotes/information/ statistical evidence in their work. There was a small incidence of plagiarism. Also learners do need to ensure they label and source all illustrations and graphs used in the text.

Learners did not always provide a full critical evaluation of reliability and validity of sources. However, there has been an increase in the amount of good practice seen, with review of sources given in footnotes, within the bibliography or in a separate review section. This section was often over-marked, although more centres seem to have a handle on the types of evidence that need to be demonstrated in this section. Only occasionally was primary research included, and then it was normally as an extra piece of evidence rather than the main thrust of the research.

For AO3, work was presented well in a logical order. Candidates working in mark band 1 provided more descriptive answers; those working within mark band 2 gave some considered lines of discussion. The moderators were generally impressed with the mature writing demonstrated by learners working in mark band 3, in particular those working in top mark band 3. The quality of title is again the biggest limiting factor here. Centres who guide their learners into topics around ethics of science or questions of law/history tend to see well developed and justified arguments. The

candidates that focus more on the artistic, sporting or social care aspects of study tended to do less well, mainly because they had titles that demanded only comment or limited reflection, did not develop arguments considering alternative viewpoints and/or used a level of argument below the requirements of a Level 3 qualification. There were some absolutely exceptional pieces seen, and very few were being moderated at the very lowest end of the range, although a number were marked too high in mark band 3 for the content presented.

With reference to AO4, most work had clear feedback on the students' presentations. There was evidence of some reflective evaluation by learners. However for many, the review had either been included within the conclusion or as part of their power point presentation slides. Best practice was seen when this had been completed in a separate evaluation section. One centre had encouraged learners to make a mid way evaluation of their project; needless to say most learners were working within mark band 3. The most impressive evaluations were those in which candidates were able to identify, honestly and precisely, the weaknesses in their work, and make sensible, specific recommendations about how they could be addressed. Most centres are correctly using the presentation record form or a similar version giving the same information. This section was usually assessed well as in previous sessions.

Although centres showed some evidence of internal moderation (e.g. via changes of mark on the teacher- assessor mark record sheet) there were still centres which did not seem to have done this.

Centre Performance
It was pleasing to note that many of the centres included the correct documentation. However, there were a number of centres that still put scripts loose into plastic wallets or, even worse, secured with a single paper clip. Some projects were sent in with pages missing, either from the reports or the supporting documentation.

There were a substantial number of centres who did not meet the deadline. Most samples were well constructed. A number of centres did not have EDI's included. The general presentation of the samples was usually very good, with treasury tags or single sided wallets being sent.

The Extended Project Dissertation is a qualification in which the objective of developing a personal response to a personally chosen research question is absolutely central. Centres are strongly advised to consider how best to facilitate the development of skills in critical thinking and logical analysis of arguments. This is a key area in which training as part of a 'skills acquisition' programme prior to the commencement of project work pays considerable dividends, not simply in enabling students to access the higher mark bands for AO2 and AO3, but also in terms of helping learners develop their capacity for autonomous thought, which will be of benefit to them in other areas of study, not to mention its importance for their personal intellectual development.

Some centres seemed to have neglected to consider the recommendation that 40 guided learning hours should be assigned to the taught-course basis for the Extended Project. This provides an essential platform for successful project work. A taught-course basis significantly enhances the quality of the work which emerges at the end of the process, by ensuring that candidates understand academic conventions and research methods and know what counts as an appropriately academic form of expression and are equipped with an understanding of the techniques of argument and counter-argument which the dissertation is expected to contain. It can also go a long way towards ensuring that, when project proposals are written, they are suitable in terms of scope, focus and level of complexity.

Level 3 Unit 2: Investigation

Learner Performance
Though the volume of work this series was small, the quality and evidence of sustained investigative work improved. Several candidates achieved unusual projects following strong personal rationale and a well planned sequence of activities. The quantity of secondary research was however again underestimated and too many potentially high scoring projects were supported by a handful of websites only. There still appears to be confusion in regard to acceptable bibliographies, with often simply a list of references being given, many from the same source. In the best projects, however, it was clear that candidates had been taught how to reference and detailed links were found in footers throughout the text. The need to produce data of some sort again must be emphasised, though a couple of projects successfully completed tables resulting from behaviour monitoring. Interviews themselves can be useful secondary back-up but do not usually provide primary data. In AO3 synthesis of the work undertaken is expected and a couple of projects did little more than list relevant research areas. A cohesive argument and discussion of the rejection or acceptance of the original hypothesis is needed. Those projects with a wide remit and no clear aim are thus bound to fall down in this respect. The use of mathematical statistical testing is increasing but is still often used with little comment. The progressive nature of an investigation would suggest that continual assessment of results and consequent reworking of the plan and data gathering technique is needed.

Suitability of Work Submitted
The range of titles and quality of investigations was pleasing and some inspirational topics resulted from strong personal motivation. Only a couple of projects might have been more suitably entered as Dissertations (P301) given the lack of primary data. Weaker projects resulted from centre based ideas perhaps with each pupil choosing a different variable. Larger sample sizes were seen and thus results were more significant. Questionnaires continue to be popular and where trialled and thought through were useful, though still mathematical analysis beyond pie or bar chart display is needed. It is again clear that the best projects result from a focussed, posed and testable hypothesis.

Assessment Evidence
Project work was well formatted, and the necessary pieces of assessment evidence were typically present. Work was generally neatly presented, though the inclusion of plastic folders adds weight and does not ease the moderation process. Simply tagged A4 sheets are preferred. Centre annotations were generally much fuller and significantly aid the process of

moderation compared to ticks or little evidence as to where marks are supported. Most centres submitted Oral Presentation Record Sheets, though comments on these did not always match the marks awarded. It is most helpful to have copies of the Power Point slides themselves, this helps to give a flavour of the presentation. In some cases however very extensive presentations are being given and slides seen were in places over full, wordy and lacking in impact. Though the quality and depth of thoughtful evaluation in the Activity Logs was greatly improved, some projects still lacked a separate Evaluation section. It must be emphasised that when group work is submitted, the contribution from each individual must be clearly visible and separately assessed. One would expect significant sections or indeed whole reports to be produced by each candidate even if the project was completed as a team.

Centre Performance
Projects were in general received within a couple of days of the expected submission deadline. Centres should have the appropriate Edexcel mail 'sack' and it would be useful if the correct Level 3 forms were used throughout. Though the number of centres submitting this series was small, it is very pleasing that the majority of centres were applying the marking criteria accurately and very few adjustments were needed. Indeed, several centres had managed to assess projects correctly at various levels. Though there were few references to a taught course having being carried out, it was apparent that excellent guidance had been provided and candidates had been properly facilitated in following the demands of the Level 3 qualification. In a couple of cases a lack of annotation on scripts and minimal comments on the assessment grids did not support the high marks awarded. Only a handful of projects were not of Level 3 standard. A good spread of marks was seen with a pleasing number in the mid to high range. The awarding of marks at the top of the range was however sometimes not supported by the depth of research carried out. Where centres have more than one tutor/assessor it is important that there is some evidence of internal moderation and, where marks are amended, this should be made clear, for example with initials.

Review of Work
In the majority of cases a clear structure and aim for the projects was proposed and there was evidence both through the oral presentations, and activity logs, as well as written evaluation of the project process and iterative journey undertaken. Learners are expected to reflect honestly and with some depth on the strengths and weaknesses of their research methodology. Significant weaknesses (e.g. such as limited sample size, or the lack of a clear hypothesis) should be explored to support high marks in AO4. Changes to the Proposal forms should be referred to and therefore the need for the Proposal Form to be both full, detailed and completed before the project commences (and signed off by the tutor/assessor) highlighted.

Level 3 Unit 3: Performance

Learner Performance
Examples of work seen in this small entry series included mainly performing arts projects, rather than events. A popular choice was music bands performing their historical and modern song choices and compositions. Dance projects were also popular.
Centres are reminded to provide clear evidence of the development process to support marks and that a focal point for research is essential if learners are to access the full range of marks.

Suitability of Work Submitted
Centres selected events that were appropriate platforms for their learners' skills. Ideas and starting points were accessible to the full range of candidate ability. There was opportunity to generate effective planning, research, development and evaluation opportunities. However, it was felt that the important issue of the target audience was not fully considered or the intended effect the work should have. This would have benefitted the process overall and in particular given focus to the research and given clear objectives to inform the review.

Assessment Evidence
In some of the work seen, teacher/assessor comments were not supported by the evidence put forward for moderation. Assessment Objective 2: Use Resources, often lacked the consideration of alternatives required to support the higher marks.

Centre Performance
There was a mixture of consistent and lenient marking in the work seen. There were indications in some cases that the standard of performance is being used to place learners in high mark bands rather than the evidence presented for each assessment objective being looked at against the assessment objective requirements.

Clear evidence of the development process is vital to support the higher marks; it appears centres may be rewarding motivation, interest and talent without sufficient evidence.

Review of work
Written evaluations tended to be brief. Centres should ensure that learners provide comprehensive evaluations to enable access to the higher mark bands.

Level 3 Unit 4: Artefact

Learner Performance
Clear objectives and timescales set out at the start of a project resulted in work that was easier to monitor and measure in terms of success against the original intentions. Where Project Proposals did not define or set out an artefact at the start of the project, objectives were unclear and work became unfocused.

Many centres embarking on submissions for the first time did not set out the brief in the Project Proposal. As a result candidates focussed their responses on a question or theme rather than the process of development for an artefact. Although a research question allows the development of thought and a focus for content, it does not necessarily enable the production of an artefact. When an artefact was nominated through a design brief, the monitoring of process was more successfully maintained and responses analysed in relation to the project intention.

Suitability of Work Submitted
Centres should consider the use of a well-defined brief developed by the candidate that uses the question as a focus of content rather than an outcome. Objectives written into the proposal should also include the exploration of content and purpose and generate evidence of development including materials, techniques and processes.

The best work seen involved the creation of a physical artefact and evidence of the design/visualisation process, showing clear documentation of the methodology involved in making, the choice of materials, techniques and processes, together with clear progress through the refinement of these processes.

Assessment Evidence
There was a big move forward in this series in the documentation of the qualification and the majority of submissions had Candidate Record Sheets containing comments in relation to assessment decisions made by the teacher-assessor.

Candidates from large centres new to the Extended Project, worked on a tutor given theme or brief such as those found in general Art & Design or Media qualifications. This enabled a wealth of artwork to be generated, but none that explored the process of developing an identified artefact for production.

Marks tended to be polarised between high scores and low with few scoring in the middle range. There was also a tendency to give the highest mark available in the appropriate Mark band for each of the AOs, resulting in an accumulated leniency when marks were totalled.

The biggest area of concern was in AO3 where the quality of artwork or skills were measured and given credit for high achievement. This was at the expense of clear evidence showing the process of research, development process and the application of decisions culminating in the production of the chosen artefact.

Centres specialising in digital media should avoid sending digital portfolios with a variety of untitled files.   For example, if the content of the files is presented in a different PDF file for each page of the document, it is very difficult for the moderator to review the work. Each individual digital portfolio should be clearly labelled and collated. DVDs and digital formats also need to be checked before being sent for moderation to ensure that they function and open on standard systems.

Centre Performance
There are no size limits for the artefact but centres are advised that large and bulky work, or fragile and valuable work, should be submitted as photographs or video clips indicating the scale and dimensions of the piece. There were still centres in this series that sent work late and some arrived over two weeks after the submission deadline. This is a particular problem when the highest and lowest learner score is not included and has to be requested.

Activity logs in the best submissions were highly detailed documents, showing great insight and being used as an evaluation tool. In others they contained 'I did' statements which logged activities undertaken but not the adaption of plans, adjustments to timelines and making process or monitoring of progress.

Centres that have previously been moderated are now responding to reports and provide appropriate evidence that accurately targets the assessment objectives. In these centres teacher-assessors accurately assess, with a few exceptions, although they still tend to go for the highest mark in a mark band.

There were centres which submitted samples from large cohorts where many candidate submissions had gaps in evidence that indicated a lack of knowledge and understanding of the qualification requirements. In one of these centres internal moderation had not been carried out.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website
on this link:
http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx

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