

Extended Project

OCR Level 3 H856

OCR Report to Centres

January 2013

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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Overview

General Comments

It was good to see such a variety of excellent projects this session. The awareness of what the L3EPQ is all about is growing and evidence of centres directing candidates away from a conventional dissertation closely linked to their A Level work and much more towards candidates 'doing their' own thing' in a variety of different formats was great to note. On the downside there were several centres where only academic essays, clearly linked to A Level subjects and coursework/controlled assessment were submitted. Often drafts of the essays were included, which had been marked by supervisors using subject specific criteria and including recommendations for improvement which would actually harm the candidate's chances of doing well in the EPQ. The following seems to be the recipe for success in the EPQ from centres who consistently attain highly.

- Really encourage candidates to move outside their 'comfort zone' of A level and use the most appropriate format.
- Invest a lot of time (we suggest 16 hours) in training students in Project Management-in-how to do well in the EPQ – **before** they start.
- Invest time in training supervisors and above all use non-specialist supervisors. Some of the major disasters mentioned above all had subject specialist supervisors. Centres which have consistent success have the non-specialist supervisor as policy, and also ensure that members of a group have different supervisors as well.
- Gave candidates enough time to do it in. Several centres only gave their candidates the autumn term.

The other thing that needs emphasis is that the L3 EPQ is 'worth' half an A Level (not an AS) and that it is assessed at L3 – in other words we have the expectation that candidates will perform at the level of those who have taken A2's at the end of a two year course. What we see has to have evidence of a substantial amount of work at a high level, and essays written over a couple of weeks are unlikely to get there. There was also amongst the 'essay' writers a great deal of concern about choice of title. It is worth stressing that moderators don't get concerned about titles and what is critical is that a topic which lends itself to the requirements of the EPQ is chosen.

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AO1 The best provided ample evidence of the following.

- That they had come up with the topic themselves and the reasons and thinking behind the choice were well evidenced.
- There was detailed planning of every stage of their project and there was ample evidence that they had reflected throughout on the quality of their planning and what they would/would not do another time. Often we just got a poorly photocopied Gantt chart which was identical for all projects submitted or just an essay plan. There was one case where the Moderator's suspicions that a lot of directing had taken place were confirmed in a log which simply said that on the start date 'we were given our essay titles and the reading lists'.
- They had been careful trained in Project Management and were fully aware of the requirements of the EPQ

AO2 The best provided evidence of the following.

- Genuinely independent research-that showed that obstacles had been overcome in finding things out.
- Real breadth and depth of research-remember this is assessed at A2 level.
- That the research had been carefully evaluated. That their reading, listening, interviewing and observing had been really thought about.
- That they had really done a lot more than just looked at the first sites that had come up via Google.
- They had relied on a lot more than just their A/S textbooks. In several cases this was the only secondary material quoted, and not evaluated either. We are expecting to see the sort of research that a second year student at University might do for a termly dissertation.

AO3 The best provided evidence of the following.

- Awareness that this was about skills and not content. This is where doing something closely related to an A Level being studied can be challenging, as often the URS could be brief and only comment on 'essay writing' skills. In many cases the URS comments used subject specific comments like 'excellent understanding of Napoleon's military ability' where the candidate was obviously doing History A Level.
- A range of new skills had been developed (that is something that we really like to see) or if a candidate is doing a project on something closely related to A level work, that it shows **extensive progress** in the required skills. This can be done, but it requires careful training of the candidate, even more careful supervising, good evidence of the skills progress by the candidate and very good signposting by the assessors.

AO4 The best provided evidence of the following.

- A good presentation which was designed to demonstrate their 'skills' progress and was not just a list of facts. It really helped to have some comments about candidate's ability to communicate to a 'lay' audience. Often centre provided presentation feedback was invaluable.
- Awareness of how their project may impact on their HE/career needs
- Real reflection on both the process and outcome. The 'process' is often seriously neglected and we get little more than half a side of A4 on outcome. A really detailed log-from Day 1 onwards where the candidate notes progress and reflects on their planning (AO1) and their research (AO2) makes all the difference.

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- Reflects on what they have learned to do or what never to do again. It is that high level of reflection on their learning and how they learned throughout that is the hallmark of the outstanding candidate.

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