

## Extended Project

OCR Level 3 H856

# OCR Report to Centres

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**June 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.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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### Level 3 Extended (H856)

#### OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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## Overview

Moderating the Projects this year was a very positive experience. Not only was there a substantial increase in numbers at Level 3 but there was also much greater awareness of the potential of the Projects as a way in which skills, which are valued by both Higher Education and the workplace, can be acquired and developed. The sheer diversity of projects that landed on the desks of the moderators continues to delight and the evidence provided of the ability and enterprise of today's students impressed us all. Successful centres were invariably those who were aware that it is project management skills that we are looking for, not just content, and that investment in initial training was vital if students were to succeed. It was also interesting to note how some centres were successfully using Level 2 as an adjunct to GCSE, particularly for the able, and also as a preparation for Level 3. We also noted with some concern the lack of success where there was an attempt to combine A Level coursework or another qualification with the Project. So often the assessment criteria are very different and it rarely works.

## H856 01 and 02 Level 3 Extended Project

As always, moderating the Projects proved to be both a fascinating and challenging task. The sheer variety of projects that was sampled continued to delight and inspire a great deal of optimism about what our students are capable of. Centres that delivered real success seemed to have six characteristics in common:

- 1 They invested considerable time in initial training in Project Management and the other key skills that the EPQ is looking for. Students were well aware that it was not about content and it was about process.
- 2 They gave the students ample time in which to complete. The vast majority of successful candidates had a summer holiday in which to do their initial research and investigation. Trying to do it in one term rarely worked.
- 3 They had supervisors who were well-trained and were not subject specialists in the areas they were supervising. As a result, supervisors kept their focus on skills and not on inappropriate assessment criteria.
- 4 Students were really encouraged to move away from their comfort zone of A Level and take on a project which really allowed development in new skills. There were too many projects that bore a marked resemblance to coursework and clearly were assessed by coursework criteria. Students were also encouraged to use the full range of possible formats and not stay within the ones which were within the supervisors' comfort zones.
- 5 Students kept a very detailed log from start to finish where they really reflected on the whole process as they went along and had been trained to keep their focus on the key assessment objectives.
- 6 Both supervisors and students knew that it was vital to provide evidence that the criteria had been met. On several occasions moderators contacted centres asking for the evidence to back up the marks awarded and discovered that centres were unaware that any evidence had to be provided. These were centres that tended to produce many 5000 word essays.

### Criteria specific factors

AO1 The best really spent a lot of time and effort on the planning process. Not only were there good initial plans, but also changes were documented and reasons given for the changes. There was also detailed planning for every part of the process. Reasons were given for the choice of the topic as well and the transition from topic to title were documented thoroughly. Centres which really trained in Project Management skills and commented on their development on the URS made moderation straightforward.

AO2 The best really thought about the wide range of resources expected (and not just the first 10 sites on Google plus the AS textbook) and overcame some real challenges in their search for information and resources. Good evaluation of material helped and evidence of the collation/selection/analysis/evaluation of material etc was also vital for high marks. Long bibliographies in themselves do not warrant high marks – it is the thought and effort that has gone into them as well as evidence of how they were utilised and evaluated. It would really help if centres would emphasise in the URS where major challenges were overcome.

AO3 The best really kept a consistent focus on skills and did not just write an essay. Several moderators reported that they could be confronted with dissertations which bore a marked similarity to coursework options or A Level topics. In many cases a massive effort had been put into these dissertations, but in the absence of anything more than a simple essay plan, a reading list that clearly had been given to the student, and half a page of 'outcome' evaluation, they could not be seen as serious candidates.

AO4 A good diary log/record and a well-organised and evidenced presentation were vital for success here. The best invariably had a presentation where the focus was not on content, but on the students' learning process, and the skills acquired and developed. There was serious evaluation of the process as well as the outcome. Comment by the students on how, or whether, the EPQ had influenced their Higher Education/career plans is also important here.

Finally, it is worth stressing again that the L3EPQ is equivalent to half an A Level and is assessed to A level standards and therefore needs to be given the appropriate time and resources to be completed.

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