Projects

Extended Project

OCR Level 3 **H856**

OCR Report to Centres for June 2017

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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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General Comments:

This year's submission for the level 3 Extended Project was generally of a very high standard. It was good to see such a range of projects and formats, which represented a significant level of achievement for many of the students. Most centres had carried out very thorough marking with annotated URS sheets explaining their rationale. The most helpful had very specific and individualised remarks that ensured that the moderator was well-informed as to the level of personal challenge involved in the project.

The most effective centres mentored candidates so that they were able to combine project management skills with a well-researched and in-depth topic. In these centres there was evidence of the teaching of what makes a well-managed project, which incorporated the use of appropriate research skills and methodologies. There was also evidence of supportive mentoring which included, at times, critical engagement with the ideas and arguments that candidates were discussing. These centres had found an appropriate balance between independent study as an unaided, unsupported venture, and independent study that is overly controlled by templates and teacher-led deadlines for individual tasks. Moreover, these centres showed evidence of well-trained and well-supported mentors who shared a common understanding of the aims and standards of the qualification.

The centres that were less successful in their approach were those in which candidates emphasised either project management or the research outcome to the detriment of the other. There were also centres which over-supported or under-supported candidates, either stifling the candidates' ability to demonstrate independence by supporting them too rigidly with a series of templates, or leaving them completely to their own devices and not effectively facilitating the independence that the students need to acquire. The emphasis with the Extended Project is to guide the candidate rather than to lead, but there does need to be some mentor input in order for candidates to be successful.

Planning and management was carried out in a range of different styles – again some centres clearly allowed complete freedom in this and others were obviously providing diary templates which stifled the creativity of the students a little in some cases, and did not allow the most successful project managers to show off their skills. Centres should also be reminded that the Project Progression Record is a valuable document in providing evidence of planning and evaluation and students should be encouraged to complete this fully.

Research was again very varied in its scope and format, some centres had clearly communicated the need for evaluation of sources and many of their students had done this very well. Other centres had good referencing but little in the way of evaluation or criticism of sources. Many centres had encouraged students to use questionnaires, and these were generally well used and analysed. It was encouraging to see that in most cases the most appropriate methods of research were being used to realise the project outcomes, whether that be secondary or primary research.

Skills development was generally clearly indicated in the student evaluations and diaries as well as evident from the outcome. The most successful projects were those in which students had strayed significantly from their comfort zone in some way. In some cases there were outcomes that felt closer to subject essays than the result of an independent research project, however, and it was difficult to see where the skills had been developed over and above those required for the students' existing courses.

Most students had delivered a presentation of some form at the end of their project, and these were properly evidenced in the submissions. Most presentations had been reviewed by staff members, but relatively few had been peer reviewed by other students, which is a shame, given the opportunities for learning on both sides. Students own evaluations were clearly evidenced through commentary documents, diaries, and the Project Progression Records.

The overwhelming impression from moderation of the projects was that centres are embracing the spirit of the Extended Project Qualification, and that the students had gained a huge amount from its completion. My congratulations to all centres for their involvement.

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