

Foundation & Higher

OCR Level 1 & Level 2 Projects H854 H855

Report on the Units

June 2010

H854-5/R/10

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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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H854 01 & 02 Level 1 Foundation Project

General Comments

There was a significant increase in the number of projects entered this year, many of which were completed as part of a Diploma. The majority of these were focused on the Principal Learning and it was clear that in a number of cases, these had been heavily teacher-driven. There were few submissions achieving the highest mark band for this qualification, and it may be that centres are entering the higher achievers for the higher level project.

There is still some confusion within centres about what the project is; there are still some submissions which follow a cut-and-paste approach, with the resulting projects being little more than a collection of documents about the topic. Centres are strongly advised to seek guidance and support from OCR, through INSET.

Many candidates commented on how much they had enjoyed working on their projects as they were their own choice. Clearly the freedom and ownership that this qualification offers to candidates is a positive feature. There were a small number of projects which could be deemed to be inappropriate, either in their choice of topic, or in the materials that were included, and centres are advised to consult OCR's Ethical Guidelines when supporting students in their topic choice.

Marking by centres was rather varied this year. It is clear that some centres have assessed the outcome and skills associated with Principal Learning, rather than assessing the process and project management skills. A number of centres submitted work late, or with the required documentation missing, such as the PPR or Unit Recording Sheet. Centres are reminded that these documents are a compulsory part of the submission and must be included.

It was pleasing to see that some centres had adopted the practice of identifying where candidates had met the Assessment Objectives. However, in other cases, the comments on the PPR and URS were very brief.

There was also evidence that some supervisors had been reluctant to intervene in candidates' work, possibly because they believed they could not do so, or would compromise their candidates' marks by doing so. This is not the case.

Comments on Individual Questions

AO1. Since the majority of projects submitted were done as part of a Diploma, the topics and titles had been chosen with a Principal Learning focus. However, centres should note that there is an option for candidates to choose something which enables progression and is not necessarily linked to PL. Many of the projects suffered from a breadth of scope which resulted in a loss of focus. Some centres had given the candidates a task, and this had restricted their achievement for AO1 as their choice was not individual. In a small number of cases it was unclear what the outcome was, as candidates had not identified this. Centres may find it helpful to use the Verification of Topic and Title form (VTT), and should consider including this in the project. It is not compulsory to do so, but in these cases, it would have been helpful.

AO2. It was pleasing to see that many candidates had included a bibliography, and although these were often brief, there was often good evidence of research in these. It was sometimes difficult to see why certain information had been selected, and there was heavy reliance on the Internet, often with the assumption that because it was online, the information must be reliable. Some candidates had included many pages printed off from the internet as part of their project,

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and although these were often identified as "off the internet", they added very little to the project, could be mistaken for plagiarised materials and cost the centres additional postage.

AO3. Evidence for the development and realisation of the project was an issue for many centres. The lack of, or poorly used, PPR was the main cause of this, and centres must realise that this document should be used to provide such evidence. Without this, candidates' achievement is severely restricted. In some centres, good evidence had been provided, however. Many projects which had an IT focus had provided screenshots of the development process. A number of Creative and Media projects had included preliminary designs, or sketches showing the designing process.

Centres should consider the use of photographic evidence for artefact projects and avoid sending large bulky packages through the post. The OCR Repository is also an option for submission of work. The awarding of marks for this AO was often focused on skills related to Principal Learning or the quality of the outcome rather than on project management skills.

AO4. Many candidates at this level found this Assessment Objective challenging. Most evaluations were a description of what the candidate had done with comments on the quality of the outcome. Some candidates considered time management issues, but without the timeline required by AO1 and the evidence of the process in AO3, these comments were limited. There seemed to be little awareness of the process of project management. There was virtually no evaluation of sources, for example.

H855 01 & 02 Level 2 Higher Project

General Comments

A significant number of submissions this session were done as part of a Diploma. These tended to be focused on the Principal Learning. It was clear that in a number of cases, these had been heavily teacher-driven. Some centres adopted the practice of giving candidates a list to choose from, which impacted on their achievement for AO1.

There was a greater variety of outcome types chosen this year, although the performance projects were problematic. These were often done as group projects, which can cause problems with assessment as it is difficult to see what has been achieved individually. Also, a number of these did not have a clear outcome. Indeed, in a number of cases, there was a lack of clarity about the intended outcome, and centres may wish to use the Verification of Topic and Title form so that the outcome is clear to the moderator, even though this is not a compulsory part of the submission. Some candidates had clearly misunderstood what was required in a report. A number of centres understood 'Performance' to mean 'put on a performance', rather than having the candidates performing. While event management is a possibility for a project, it is very difficult for candidates to evidence, particularly for AO3.

There is still some confusion within centres about what the project is, and these centres have been strongly advised to seek guidance and support from OCR, through INSET. It was a cause for concern that a number of centres referred to this specification as the "Extended Project", when the correct name is "Level 2 Higher Project". It is also clear that some candidates have had to complete their work in a very short space of time, and Diploma Centres in particular should consider the timing of when to produce the project.

Marking by centres was rather varied this year. It is clear that some centres have assessed the outcome and skills associated with Principal Learning, rather than assessing the process and project management skills. A number of centres submitted work late, or with the required documentation missing, such as the PPR or Unit Recording Sheet. Centres are reminded that these documents are a compulsory part of the submission and must be included.

It was pleasing to see that some centres had adopted the practice of identifying where candidates had met the Assessment Objectives. However, in other cases, the comments on the PPR and URS were very brief.

There was also evidence that some supervisors had been reluctant to intervene in candidates' work, possibly because they believed they could not do so, or would compromise their candidates' marks by doing so. This is not the case.

Many candidates commented on how much they had enjoyed working on their projects as they were their own choice. Clearly the freedom and ownership that this qualification offers to candidates is a positive feature. There were a small number of projects which could be deemed to be inappropriate, either in their choice of topic, or in the materials that were included, and centres are advised to consult OCR's Ethical Guidelines when supporting students in their topic choice.

Comments on Individual Questions:

AO1. A wide variety of topics and titles were chosen, but some projects were over-ambitious in what could be achieved in the time allowed. Some were poorly scoped and suffered from a loss of focus. Some titles, whilst being interesting and individual choices, were more like dissertations than reports/investigations, and centres are reminded that a dissertation is not an option at this level. Although an increased number of submissions had Gantt Charts and/or timelines, evidence of planning was generally poor. Some centres had given the candidates a task, and this had restricted their achievement for AO1 as their choice was not individual. Other centres had offered a list of titles to choose from, and this also restricted their achievement for this AO.

AO2. Many candidates had supplied a bibliography of their sources, and the higher achieving of these demonstrated good critical awareness of the value and reliability of these sources. It was heartening to see that many candidates had used sources other than the internet. Some candidates had used the internet proactively, by conducting online surveys or using forums to gather qualitative information. Many candidates had enthusiastically contacted celebrities or experts, and it was disappointing to see how few replies they had received. There was an issue with some of the projects which had an historical focus, and this was how to carry out primary research. Centres need to alert candidates wishing to undertake these projects that primary research in such projects may be difficult to realise and may limit their marks for this AO. The majority of candidates included questionnaires or surveys as their primary research, with some good tabulation and analysis.

However, there was very limited explanation of the rationale behind these, and in some cases, there was limited relevance other than the fact that candidates were asking questions about their topic. If the project is an investigation, the questionnaire should have a clear focus on the question being asked in the title, rather than being linked by topic. The primary research should not appear just as an 'add-on'.

AO3. Some centres have worked hard with candidates to develop and realise their projects, and have been rewarded with appropriate marks. Many projects which had an IT focus had provided screenshots of the development process. A number of Creative and Media projects had included preliminary designs, or sketches showing the designing process. Nevertheless, it is obvious that some centres need to focus on how to evidence some of the AOs. The lack of, or poorly used, PPR was the main cause of this, and centres must realise that this document should be used to provide such evidence. Without this, candidates' achievement is severely restricted.

The awarding of marks for this AO was often focused on skills related to Principal Learning or the quality of the outcome rather than on project management skills. This was very evident in artefact projects, where candidates seemed to focus their efforts on producing a high quality outcome with minimal understanding of project management. In these projects, there was very little evidence at all of developing and realising the outcome; in many cases, the evidence consisted solely of the finished artefact.

Centres must consider the use of photographic evidence for artefact projects and avoid sending large bulky packages through the post. The OCR Repository is also an option for submission of work.

AO4. There was good awareness of the process of project management in a number of projects, but all too often, evaluations were a resume of what the candidate did, with a little comment on what they would do differently if they had to do it again. A significant part of the evaluation should focus on how well the candidate performed in relation to their plan. If they have done little planning, then this will be reflected in their evaluations. There was also very little evaluation of sources and methods used in the project. Candidates who had focused heavily on the quality of their outcome reflected in detail on this in their evaluations, which resulted in low marks for this AO.

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