Projects

Foundation & Higher Projects

OCR Level 1 and Level 2 Projects **H854 H855**

Examiners' Reports

June 2011

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EXAMINERS' REPORTS

Chief Examiner's Report

It was most encouraging to note the considerable increase in entries at all three Levels. The diversity and quality of what was submitted was often remarkable. An increasing number of centres are obviously aware of the opportunity that the Project can offer their students and are making good use of it. The sheer range of enterprise and talent shown in the projects makes the moderator's role rewarding and interesting.

There are some issues which are stressed in the individual reports. All moderators reported that often they could be faced with a situation where a student had done exceptional work but, because of a lack of awareness of the specification and the assessment objectives by either or both the student and the centre, the marks had to be reduced substantially. There are substantial resources available online to assist with the Projects as well as INSET for newcomers and for those with experience of delivering the qualifications who want feedback. Individual reports are also available on every centre's performance. Another issue which caused some concern was the lack of time given to some students to complete their projects. Level Two and Three require sufficient time to give the students real scope to attain highly. Care should also be taken when entering students who are much younger than the intended 'target' (eg Yr 10 doing L3 and Yr 9 doing L2) that they really have got the time and resources to make a realistic attempt at it.

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. It is appreciated that at Level 1, some candidates may struggle to produce an individual topic and title, but supervisors should avoid giving a brief or title to candidates wherever possible as this compromises what candidates can achieve in terms of marks. Supervisors should ensure that the submitted work has an extended piece of writing which totals 750 words as a minimum. Supervisors should ensure that candidates produce work which is of Level 1 standard (ie Grades D-G at GCSE).

There is still some confusion within centres about what the project is. Some submissions follow a cut-and-paste approach, with the resulting projects being little more than a collection of documents about the topic. In some cases, it is unclear which parts are quotations or references from sources, and which are the candidates' own work. Supervisors are reminded that part of the taught element of this specification should be the appropriate use of sources and the referencing of these.

The completed project must be a holistic outcome, with all components having a direct relevance to the title. At least one centre produced projects which included a PowerPoint presentation on a totally unrelated topic. In such cases, the presentation gains no marks.

Centres are strongly advised to seek guidance and support from OCR, through INSET.

There were some 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. Supervisors should stress the importance of a well-used PPR.

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 (PL) 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. Indeed, a number of projects never really moved from topic to title, with the result that the project was really a collection of material about the chosen topic. Some centres had given the candidates a task, which 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 some cases, it would have been helpful.

Evidence of planning is improving with each series, with the majority of candidates using mind maps or Gantt charts. Some candidates had included a timeline, but these were often lacking dates and simply outlined the process they intended to take. There was heavy reliance on mind maps, but frequently it was impossible to see what part these had played in the formulation and refinement of a title. Centres are reminded that evidence of planning the process as well as the outcome is recommended.

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, and although these were often identified as such, they added very little to the project, could be mistaken for plagiarised materials and cost the centres additional postage. One very encouraging feature was that a significant number of candidates attempted primary research, with the result that this considerably enhanced their chances of a high mark for AO2.

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. 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. Many evaluations were a very brief 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. Candidates should be encouraged to evaluate all stages of the process, including the reliability of sources.

H855 01 & 02 Level 2 Higher Project

General Comments

Entries for this specification were much more varied this series, largely because of a wider range of diplomas being available. Unfortunately, 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. It was also a matter of concern for a number of moderators, that some submissions resembled quite closely some of the units for the associated diploma. Centres are warned that dual submissions are not permitted, and only research done for another diploma unit can be used; the work produced for diploma units cannot be reworked or amended and submitted for the project. Supervisors should be on the alert for projects which could be considered as dual submissions.

It was also noted that a number of centres are entering candidates outside the target age range for this qualification. While this is not prohibited, supervisors should ensure that candidates are appropriately entered and can achieve the standards required for a Level 2 qualification.

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.

Comments on Individual Questions

AO1: It is clear that while some centres are allowing candidates a completely free choice of topic and title, other centres are still giving a brief or task, or a list of titles to choose from. In some cases, these have been extremely closely modelled on exemplar materials produced by OCR and other awarding bodies. Such submissions result in quite low marks for candidates, and usually restrict their achievement to the lowest mark band for AO1. Some centres give an e-template to candidates with detailed guidance on what should go into each section. This is not recommended and again, restricts what candidates can achieve. It is expected that candidates should develop their own structure, and decide for themselves what should be included. Projects which have relied on an e-template are likely to score low marks across all the Assessment Objectives.

It is recommended that candidates state at the beginning of their projects what the outcome will be – report/investigation, artefact, performance or design. Some projects did not specify what the outcome would be and in a small number of cases, it was difficult to identify this. PowerPoint presentations are not acceptable outcomes as these do not produce sufficient evidence to award marks at the highest level.

Some projects were poorly scoped and suffered from a loss of focus. These projects did not really move from topic to title, and became little more than a collection of documents 'about' the topic. 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. Projects about 'the history/development of' something or someone fall into this category, as do projects which are phrased as questions such as, "How does x work?"

Centres using the project as part of a Diploma should also make their candidates aware that these do not have to have a link to Principal Learning; if the project allows the learner to progress to the next level of education, that is acceptable as a title/topic. It may be that a candidate could achieve a higher grade on a topic unrelated to their principal learning, and to deny the candidate that opportunity is not part of the ethos of the Project.

AO2: While some candidates are quite creative in locating a range of sources, it must be stressed that two or three websites do not constitute a range of sources. Candidates are still unquestioningly reliant on internet-based sources of doubtful provenance. Referencing of sources in some projects was poor or absent. Most candidates did attempt some primary research, often in the form of a questionnaire or survey, but these were done with little awareness of variables, and there was little explanation of how and why they were constructed the way they were. Tabulation was usually done well, but the analysis of results was generally narrative. When formulating their title, candidates should consider how primary research is to be conducted and questionnaires must be linked directly to the question asked, rather than being about the same topic.

Supervisors are reminded that they have to authenticate candidates' work and should satisfy themselves that the work is the candidates' own before work is sent to moderators.

AO3: This assessment objective has the greatest weighting, and so it is clear that there should be substantial evidence of the development and realisation of the outcome. However, in many cases, this AO was the least well evidenced. Moderators expect to see some documentation or visual evidence that a presentation has been done or a discussion has taken place. The most logical place for this to be presented is in the PPR. Some of the PPRs seen this series had been used only minimally or, in a very small number of cases, not at all. It must be stressed how influential the PPR can be when awarding marks if it is well-used.

Some candidates had given a great deal of thought to how AO3 can be evidenced, with the increasing use of screenshots and photographic evidence. It was disappointing to find that some digital files could not be accessed as they had been submitted in a format not recommended by OCR. Centres should consult the appendix in the specification to ensure that files are submitted in an acceptable format.

There should be an extended written piece within the project which has a minimum of 750 words. A small number of projects did not reach this minimum and consequently achieved quite low marks.

AO4: Analysis and evaluation are high order skills, appropriate for level 2 candidates. It was therefore disappointing to see that many candidates do not analyse or evaluate effectively. Analysis of questionnaires was usually narrative and limited to an account of numerical findings rather than an explanation of the results. Very few candidates evaluated the whole process. It is expected that some statement of how effective the planning was and how reliable sources were, for example, should be included. Candidates should evaluate all stages of the process of development and realisation. Evaluations were often limited to a commentary or narrative on what was done, how well, and what could have been done better.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

14 – 19 Qualifications (General)
Telephone: 01223 553998
Facsimile: 01223 552627
Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

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