



PRINCIPAL MODERATOR'S REPORT

EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION

AUTUMN 2020

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General Overview

2020 has certainly been a year like no other in education and it goes without saying that, as the WJEC Principal Moderator, I am very conscious of the challenges posed to both teachers and candidates in making Extended Project submissions for this autumn series. In light of these challenges, centres are to be congratulated on the efficient administration of this year's moderation process, together with the quality of the work seen. It is also worth noting that the majority of centres are now uploading moderation samples via Surpass, the WJEC/CBAC on-line assessment platform. This has a number of advantages both for centres and WJEC, for example in the timely receipt of work and in terms of the significant postage cost savings made. The use of Surpass will remain optional for next summer's entry, however, I would like to encourage more centres to make use of this facility.

Returning to the autumn 2020 series, the submissions were, not surprisingly, from Year 13 candidates, some of whom had received a Centre Assessed Grade at the end of Year 12 but felt that, by completing their projects, a more accurate grade could be achieved. From the projects seen this year, it is clear that the advice and guidance provided, both from documents on the website and from CPD events, is really helping centres to support their candidates meet the requirements of the Specification. In this short report, I would like to pick up on three specific areas where much good practice is being seen.

In terms of the Learner Record documentation, more centres are encouraging their candidates to take their time in completing EPF1. The benefits of this are twofold; firstly, candidates are genuinely exploring a range of topics through significant initial research, thereby ensuring an informed decision regarding their final research choice. Secondly, as a result, there appear to be few projects that show a significant change of direction part way through the course, thereby saving candidates time and anxiety in the long run. Encouraging candidates to reflect on the learning opportunities provided by the qualification is I think important. Research by its very nature takes time and it is therefore good to see centres emphasising this with their candidates.

A second area of improvement noted concerns Project planning. Many more candidates are now making full use of the EPF2 section of the Learner Record to articulate their thinking and explain how their plans have changed over time; to review their set targets and to reflect upon future action points. Again, candidates are therefore able to provide compelling assessment evidence not just for LO2 but also LO5 and LO8. It was also pleasing to note how many candidates were again taking time to consider a range of different planning tools before opting for one that suited their own learning style. To this end, it is noticeable that greater numbers are choosing to use on-line platforms such as Trello, thereby demonstrating the use of new technologies. However, one word of warning. In such cases, candidates should be encouraged to take a number of screen shots to evidence the depth of such planning; a single pasted image is not likely to do a candidate real justice.

Finally, the third area of significant improvement has been in the evaluation of source material. A number of centres have made real progress here with teaching programmes now preparing candidates much better regarding this particular element of AO2 LO4. More candidates are now formalising their evaluations and developing detailed analysis of both source utility and credibility. In the best examples seen, candidates were researching the background of key authors to note their level of specialism in a particular field. Such candidates were therefore able to avoid simplistic statements of 'bias' and needless repetition of superficial points. Their evaluations provided real substance and depth, very much worthy of a Level 3 qualification.

Moving on to areas where there are greater margins for improvement, the issue of the Presentation Witness Statement EPF5 to some extent remains. It is true that more supervisors are noting individual questions and candidate responses during the Q&A episode. However, the depth of these comments varied and, even when details of a particular candidate's response were thorough, too often the supervisor failed to offer any final judgement on the strength of the response. For a Band 3 mark in AO4 LO7, the level descriptor clearly states that candidates need to show an, '**extensive** knowledge of project with **detailed** responses to question.' This can be difficult for a moderator to judge when the candidate's response is recorded in one sentence or indeed if the questions recorded all focus on the research process, for example, how their plan worked over time or what they would differently if they were to repeat the Project.

Another area highlighted in this autumn's series was the length of some of the dissertations submitted. Of course, the Specification states that the dissertation needs to be a minimum of 5,000 words and therefore no candidate will be penalised just because an outcome runs to 6,000 or 7,000 words. However, in the cases of some dissertations that ran to 8,000 words or higher, it was noted that some of the material was less relevant to the question focus. Moreover, not surprisingly, some sections of these dissertations restated points, thereby becoming repetitive in places. Again, more able candidates effectively use the drafting process to develop precis skills, thereby honing their responses and ensuring a consistently high standard outcome. Just one final point to note here on the topic of dissertations. On the whole, supervisors appear well trained in spotting ideologically driven candidates who wish to use the Extended Project dissertation to express pre-held, unbalanced political views. As a result, such candidates are usually dissuaded from this and redirected down a more appropriate, analytical avenue. However, supervisors and coordinators need to remain extremely vigilant in this area. Any candidate that presents a one-sided argument with subjective conclusions would be limited to a Band 1 mark for AO3 LO6.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to draw attention to artefact outcomes. Although these were very much a minority in this autumn's series, where the artefact format was chosen, candidates tended to show a real enthusiasm and commitment to their topic. Moreover, artefacts produced in the creative subjects tended to be linked well to future career ambitions. However, again a word of warning. As stated in previous years, there are two key points to remember when advising candidates about artefact outcomes. Firstly, that they will need to research both the content and nature of the artefact. For example, a candidate who wants to produce an introductory Spanish lesson for a Year 7 class will not only have to research the language itself but also the whole topic of lesson planning and MFL teaching strategies.

Similarly, a candidate who wishes to write a short story set in the Second World War for children aged 8 to 10, will be expected to research not just the war itself but also reading ages, the writing of short stories and on-line publishing. Secondly, it is also vital that candidates explicitly link their research to the development of their artefact. Too often candidates fail to offer sufficient explicit links between the two, leading to a disconnect between the outcome and the research material. One way to tackle this issue is at the Mid Project Review. Encourage the candidate to articulate the key points they have picked up from their research and then ask them to explain how these have influenced their decision making.

Overall, I would like to close by stressing the overwhelming positives from this autumn's series. The qualification certainly appears valued by teachers and students alike and is undoubtedly helping to prepare students for their next steps beyond sixth form and college level. Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all centre staff for their work this year, under the most trying of circumstances. I would also like to specifically thank Glenda Kinsey, our Extended Project Subject Officer, for all her diligent work throughout the year in supporting both myself and centre coordinators.



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