

Projects

Extended Project

OCR Level 3 H856

OCR Report to Centres for June 2014

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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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CONTENTS

Projects

Level 3 Extended (H856)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Content	Page
H856 01 and 02 Level 3 Extended Project	1

H856 01 and 02 Level 3 Extended Project

General Comments

As always it was encouraging to see a very diverse and interesting range of Projects. The quality of documentation was particularly good in some cases with very informative URS sheets and excellent signposting. In some cases there was a real lack of the required information for moderation and centres had to be repeatedly asked for Mark sheets and PPRs. In one or two instances the forms required for other examination boards were utilised and this caused considerable problems.

Where the URS sheets were particularly helpful was when they kept a sharp focus on the specific requirements for each AO, project management skills in AO1, independent research in AO2 and skills development/progression in AO3, for example. It also helps us a great deal if a centre gives us as much information as is possible about the nature of the 'journey' the candidate has undertaken, particularly if a candidate has moved well outside their 'comfort zone' of A Level. If the finished Project looks as if it might prove challenging for a moderator to find the relevant evidence to back up the marks awarded, then some signposting would help. The hallmarks of the best Projects seen this session were:

- excellent project management skills demonstrated from the start
- real challenges being overcome in genuinely independent research
- lots of evidence of skills development
- ample reflection on the whole learning process.

Where we tended to reduce marks substantially was when there was a real lack of awareness of what was expected at Level Three and a serious lack of evidence to justify the marks awarded. It is worth stressing that in the specification, at the top of each of the assessment criteria details it says 'The learner will provide evidence of....'.

While it was good to see a growing number of group projects, some of which were very successful, there were some where it was simply not possible to identify the individual contributions of the candidates. It is essential that each individual candidate's own work and skill development is made very clear. We always recommend that group members have different supervisors.

AO1

The key to success here always lay with ample evidence provision. The best made it clear that it was very much their own choice of topic, did not worry too much about the title and showed lots of evidence that they knew it was all about project management. Centres which really stood out were those where it was clear there had been a very comprehensive training programme before learners set out on the EPQ, following the guidelines set out in the Teacher Guide. From some of the PPRs seen it was clear that candidate preparation was limited to one very brief session, and as a result many of the finished projects had only a limited grasp of what the EPQ was all about and tended to just replicate A Level work. We are really looking for ample evidence of careful planning throughout the project. In some instances all we got as evidence for AO1 was a photocopied Gantt chart which was identical for every candidate from that centre. We would also recommend strongly that a candidate doing a dissertation submits a great deal more evidence than a simple essay plan if they wish to get high marks here. We saw several projects which were just long essays, awarded 12/12 for AO1 and the only 'planning' seen was a 25 word essay 'plan'.

AO2

There was some very impressive independent research seen and it is really good to see the way in which some learners really went out of their way to gather information and then review it intelligently and critically. Again this seems to be an area where the well trained and briefed know how to attain high marks here and ensure that their work is both well evidenced and really reflective. We are still, however, getting some Projects where the only research done seems to be a brief look at some googled sites and the AS textbook. Comments in the PPR like 'I went to the College Library and they had no books on the subject....' to justify this sort of 'research' do not impress. Learners really need to know what a 'wide' range of resources looks like at Level Three, as well as what is looked for in resource evaluation. As always, the well trained do well.

AO3

The best here had made an impressive journey and had taken the opportunity provided by the Project to develop a new range of skills. They had either moved right away from their A Level work or they had taken very great care to ensure that they demonstrated substantial progress in skills (as opposed to just knowledge) if they were staying close to an A level or other course being studied. Detailed evidence of skills acquired or developed is vital here. Too often there was too much focus on content, and we tended to find that when the URS comments for AO3 simply replicated comments made for AO1 and AO2 as there simply had been no 'skills' progress or development.

AO4

Presentation evidence was often very good indeed. It was encouraging to note that presentations had much less focus on content and much more on skills acquired and developed- in fact real awareness of what the project really involved and what they had learned from the process. Centres which took care to ensure that learners were aware of how the presentation process could be utilised to give evidence of all the AOs did well. Well evidenced questioning which had the right focus was good to see from the Moderator's perspective. There was still a tendency to give too much emphasis on the outcome, and too little on the process. Without exception the very best had a really comprehensive and highly reflective, diary/log from the outset, which had ample evidence that the learner had really learned a lot about learning during the process.

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001