



PRINCIPAL MODERATOR'S REPORT

EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION

SUMMER 2017

Grade boundary information for this subject is available on the WJEC public website at:
<https://www.wjecservices.co.uk/MarkToUMS/default.aspx?l=en>

Online Results Analysis

WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC secure website. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.

Annual Statistical Report

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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General Overview

This summer saw the largest WJEC Extended Project entry yet with an increase of 28% of new centres choosing WJEC's EPQ. By enlarge, the samples received for moderation were well presented with far fewer centres submitting work in individual plastic wallets or with large amounts of actual research notes; something that is much appreciated. The team of moderators were also very grateful for the efforts made by centre coordinators to despatch samples by the 15th May deadline and thereby ensure time for efficient moderation; again, thank you.

In terms of the format, all centres are now using the latest specification documentation and AO mark schemes to deliver the qualification. The vast majority of centres continue to use paper submissions although it was pleasing to see an increase in the number of centres opting to submit their candidates' Extended Projects online via the e-portfolio platform this year. Much of this pioneering work was developed by Andrew Morse, a long standing WJEC employee and on behalf of the board I wish him good health and happiness in his recent retirement. His e-portfolio remit has now been taken on by our E-assessment Team. For contact details and further e-portfolio support, please visit the WJEC website.

Returning to general matters, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all centres of the importance of the wording marked in bold on the Extended Project Learner Declaration. This itemises what each submission must include and these components are therefore mandatory. As such, candidates who, for example, do not perform a presentation, should not be submitted. Similarly, the specification makes it clear that if a dissertation is submitted, it must be a minimum of 5,000 words. Written outcomes that fall short of this total are therefore, again, unlikely to reach the required Level 3 standard and could be penalised.

Project Title and Documentation

As in previous years, the most successful projects tended to display a number of key characteristics, namely:

- Well focused, analytical dissertation questions that avoided candidates simply narrating developments in a particular topic. As a general rule, questions that encourage candidates to demonstrate higher order thinking, for example, 'To what extent....' and 'How valid is it to argue that....' tend to work well. Similarly, causation questions that focus on 'Why ...' are often well managed. By contrast, questions framed in terms of, 'What are....' and 'How do... ' tend to lead candidates down more descriptive avenues and are therefore best avoided. Finally, I would remind centre coordinators of the need to discourage candidates from developing questions that 'future gaze'. Conclusions need to be firmly rooted in evidence; a difficult task for a candidate who is seeking to judge what a certain situation will be in twenty or thirty years time. Questions such as, 'How likely is it that Brexit will make Britain more prosperous by 2030?' should be avoided.

- Wide ranging research that had explicitly influenced the final outcome. Some candidates, especially those who produced technology or artistic artefacts, struggled here with the main emphasis being upon design and manufacture or creativity rather than the clear application of research. In the worst cases, research appeared as simply a 'bolt on' activity that had little or no bearing on the final outcome. One possible useful piece of advice here is again to help the candidate phrase the question more carefully at the start of the process. For example, rather than, 'Design and manufacture a...', candidates could instead consider, 'Research and realise a...'
- Fully referenced outcomes with explicit source evaluations and logically presented bibliographies. Again, this aspect of the qualification tests how successful a centre's taught course has been in preparing candidates for the demands of the Extended Project in terms of key skills.
- A Learner Record that was completed with attention to detail and real thought. Too many candidates pay lip service to the sections of the Learner Record and thereby miss key opportunities to offer detailed Assessment Objective evidence. EPF2d, for example, is often poorly completed which can undermine a candidate's AO1 LO2 mark.
- Strong presentations that are again well evidenced by both candidates and supervisors. See later comments.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind centres about the need to avoid dual accreditation. Dual accreditation is not allowed and it is the responsibility of the centre to ensure this is avoided. The EPQ supervisor will need to confirm that no work to be submitted for the EPQ is also to be submitted, or has been submitted, for any other accredited qualification(s), including the Welsh Baccalaureate. Centres should be satisfied that this is the case, investigating or seeking guidance from WJEC, if necessary. If the student can demonstrate that their Extended Project has properly extended the work completed for the Advanced WBQ Individual Project, or any other qualification, it is good practice to ensure that a copy of that work is available to the supervisor at the time of final assessment or made available to WJEC during the moderation process, should we request it. If you have any concerns regarding dual accreditation, please contact us to check before your students embark on their EPQ.

Centre coordinators are expected to check that project proposals do not overlap significantly with other subject specifications offered in their institutions. The rule is that students are not allowed to pursue an EP on a topic which they could be examined in for a separate exam. Similarly, they are not allowed to develop a topic for the EP which they will also be submitting as coursework in another subject. It would be really helpful if, as part of the question approval process, supervisors and centre coordinators explicitly confirmed this in the Learner Record. Connected to this issue, it is expected that, given the nature of the qualification, EP candidates will have a free choice of topics and questions, rather than being artificially restricted to one subject area by their supervisor.

Project Outcome

As always, centres provided a varied mix of both 5,000 word dissertations and artefact based projects. In the most successful cases, real attention had been given to ensuring consistently high standard outcomes. In terms of advice here, I would recommend that centre staff encourage dissertation candidates to look closely at their concluding paragraph(s) as a 5,000 word undertaking really should warrant more than a three sentence final judgement. Similarly, candidates who undertake artefact based projects must remember that they need to research both the nature of the artefact as well as the topic content. For example, if a candidate develops a fitness magazine, we would expect to see not just research into the biological/sports science content but also research into fitness magazines themselves. This should really include explicit attention to copyright issues regarding the use of photographs and the costing of the magazine in terms of a determined retail price and calculated profit margin. It would therefore be worth emphasising to candidates early on that artefacts are far from a soft option. In fact they can involve twice the research work.

Project Presentation

The Principal Moderator's 2016 Report highlighted general issues regarding EP presentations and these comments were followed up by further general guidance in the subsequent CPD events held last autumn. However, there are still many candidates who offer uninspiring presentation evidence yet receive Band 3 marks from supervisors. Moderators clearly do not attend presentations and they can therefore only go on the evidence submitted. For many candidates this can amount to little more than a few very wordy PowerPoint slides and glowing supervisor comments stating that all questions were 'answered very well.' Centres should encourage all candidates to submit their presentation scripts or cue cards as evidence to justify AO4 LO7 marks. Similarly, candidates should be encouraged to explain the thinking and skills behind any electronic presentation; for example, why a particular animation was selected or a particular image included. The presentation is a key and integral part of the Extended Project Qualification and as such it must not be short changed just because it comes at the end of the process. I would also emphasise that there is no requirement to use PowerPoint or Prezi packages. Exhibitions and 'trade fair' formats can be equally valid approaches.

Assessment

Regarding assessment in general, some centres appear too keen to award the highest mark within each band with the result that candidate scores are not fully differentiated. WJEC guidance is that supervisors should firstly identify the most appropriate mark band and should then start from a mid-mark within the band. If they deem it a particularly good example within the band, the mark can be moved up. Similarly, if there are elements that suggest a weaker example, it should be moved to a lower mark within the band. As an example therefore, a secure AO1 LO1 piece should be marked at 9/10, not 10/10. This is of course particularly important when dealing with AO3 marks, given the wider mark band. It is also worth noting that internal standardisation still varies considerably between centres. Clearly, WJEC appreciates that, especially in the case of larger entries, it is not possible for centre staff to standardise every single project. However, standardisation exercises are important activities that help to sharpen the accuracy of all supervisors within the team. To this end, we would encourage centre coordinators to discuss the importance of standardisation with their leadership team to ensure that the appropriate time is made available for staff, thereby ensuring a meaningful process.

Finally, as in previous years, all staff involved in the administration of this year's moderation would like to thank centre staff for their hard work in helping the Summer 2017 season to run smoothly. I hope to see a number of centre coordinators and supervisors at this autumn's CPD events, available at different locations, that will deal more fully with the strands identified in this report. Key focus points this year will therefore include:

- Making best use of EPF2 Learner Record documentation
- Skills development and AO3 LO5
- Powerful presentation evidence: best practice for AO4 LO7
- Avoiding superficial evaluation in AO4 LO8

Details of WJEC's Extended Project CPD Autumn 2017 events are available on our WJEC website.



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