

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2010

Projects

Projects Level 1 and 2 Coursework

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June 2010

Publication Code PR024559

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Foundation Projects Qualification

Level 1 Introduction

Projects follow the same processes as traditional GCSEs and GCEs. As with any GCSE or GCE, each unit is awarded to ensure that the standard is established and will be maintained. It is necessary to ensure consistency of standard in each examination window and as a consequence of this, grade boundaries may be subject to change.

Level 1 Unit 1 Foundation

Suitability of work submitted

Level 1 Foundation projects moderated this series were linked to Principal Learning for the current lines of learning or were competed as a stand alone project. At this level the majority of projects were in the form of written reports, although several construction projects and the creation of fashion magazines (artefact) were also seen. Projects that were submitted as part of the full Diploma qualification demonstrated good links to the Principal Learning of the relevant line of learning. All of the projects submitted this series were original, interesting and varied in terms of topic investigated. Stand-alone projects were equally interesting and varied with a wide range of topics being covered by learners.

The guidance given by centres to learners was clear and constructive. Better Projects at level 1 selected a research question or a design brief that generated the evidence requirements across all four assessment objectives. In projects that did not ask a question and gave a title, for example "Data Bases", there was very little opportunity to carry out the research to generate the sufficient evidence to develop AO3; this also impacted on the evidence requirements for AO2.

Where learners had worked in groups, there were issues in accessing the full range of marks across all assessment objectives. Group projects need to have sufficient scope to allow all group members to generate the required evidence to meet the assessment criteria for each assessment objective. Some group projects sampled this series included project titles and objectives and evidence throughout the project which were either the same or very similar for all learners involved in the project. This made it very difficult to award marks for each learner.

Although it is acceptable for learners to work together on a project, centre assessors must ensure that the objectives for each learner's project are linked to their role and research should be focused on their particular task, allowing the learner to generate sufficient evidence across all assessment objectives.

Learner Performance

The Level 1 Foundation Project qualification requires learners to select and plan a project. Learners are required to record the activities that they undertake during the project, obtain information from a range of sources, apply the information to the project and present this information in an appropriate format. The learners need to ensure they review their project and their own performance.

It was pleasing to see projects at this level were all submitted with a project proposal form and an activity log. Some centres were awarding marks in the higher mark band where evidence was brief and not fully developed.

For AO1, all learners were able to select a project topic. Better projects identified a question or design brief and went on to plan the intended project outcomes. Centres are advised to ensure the timescale highlighted in the project proposal form reflects the 60 Guided Learning Hours allocated to this qualification. In many of the projects sampled this series this aspect was very limited and this hindered learners from accessing the higher mark band. The completion of milestones was also limited; centre assessors are advised to ensure these sections of the project proposal form are fully completed.

Several group work projects were seen this series. Whilst this is entirely acceptable, centres are advised to ensure that each learner has a clear role within the group to fulfil throughout the project and that each learner produces their own individual evidence that can be assessed independently of others' contributions across all four assessment objectives.

Individual roles within a group should be clearly identified in the project proposal form. The objectives should be set in accordance to the task the individual is undertaking within the project.

Majority of the projects seen this series provided a clear rationale for the choice of their project. Learners should be encouraged to include a range of resources such as physical, technological, human or financial required to support the project outcomes. Centre assessors should ensure the project is signed off confirming the scope of the project allows the learners to generate the evidence requirements across all of the assessment objectives.

For AO2, learners were able to demonstrate some ability to obtain information, although, in the weaker learners' work, this was not always relevant to the project title. In the main, evidence of the relevance of secondary sources of data was limited. Learners found it challenging to comment on this aspect. Further support and guidance needs to be given to learners to enable them to achieve this. This can be done by showing how the information would be used or by stating the benefit of the sources to the development of their projects.

The marking grid distinguishes between the 'range of sources' and 'types of information'. This aspect was generously assessed by assessors and some learners were awarded marks in mark band 2 whereas the evidence supported marks in mark band one. Centres are advised that the weaker learners are likely to rely on one type of information even if they use a range of sources and will, therefore attract marks in mark band one.

AO3 has the highest weighting of marks for the Foundation Project. Learners performed poorly in light of the evidence submitted for this assessment objective. In order to award marks in mark band 2, learners are required to develop their project based on the research findings and show some understanding of the topic, concluding with their answer to the research question. In many of the projects seen, assessors had awarded marks in mark band 2 where the evidence showed only limited understanding of the topic. Centres are advised to refer to the guidance given in the specification for this assessment objective.

For AO4, learners are required to generate a review of the project. Performance in the assessment objective was limited. Overall, all learners found it challenging to meet the requirements of the assessment grid fully. In the main, the evidence generated by learners was insufficient to meet the full requirements of the mark band 2. In many of the projects seen learners submitted a generic review on the outcome of the project and did not reflect on the process, the skills and knowledge developed or the overall success of the project objectives as required in the marking grid. Centres are advised to support and encourage learners to set realistic achievable objectives for their project in the project proposal form. Giving them scope to fully develop the review, including giving clear ideas for follow up work to access the full range of marks in the marking grid.

Assessment

In the main, centres demonstrated a good level of understanding of the assessment requirements. However, the following assessment objectives were assessed generously: AO1, AO3 and AO4. Centre assessors are advised to check and refer to the marking grid for the evidence requirements of each mark band before awarding marks against the evidence submitted by each learner.

The majority of centres used the correct teacher assessment form to give feedback to the learners and to annotate the marks awarded for each assessment objective. However the annotation of the evidence was very limited. Centre assessors are advised to clearly indicate the achievement of evidence with the assessment objective and mark band.

Marks for independence for each assessment objective were not always apparent in the assessment by the assessors. Centres are advised to clearly indicate the independence mark; for example, "4 + 1" on the candidate record sheet.

Best assessment practice was evident where centres implemented internal moderation of assessment to ensure that marks awarded were supported by the evidence provided by the learners. This was particularly important where more than one assessor was involved in the delivery and assessment of the qualification. However, in a minority of cases internal moderation processes failed to result in necessary changes being made to marks awarded by centres.

Centre Performance

The required number of project samples was submitted by centres in this series. However, there were two main issues with project samples. Firstly, some centres did not submit the highest and lowest scoring learners. More importantly, some centres did not include a completed Edexcel Online Mark Submission Screen print out indicating the mark submitted for each learner. Centres are advised ensure these issues are addressed before submitting projects for moderation, to avoid the delay in the moderation process.

The majority of centres used the correct project documentation; however the details on the project proposal forms need to be fully completed, in particular the time scale (60GLH) and milestones sections. Documentation for the projects is downloadable from the Project website.

Annotation of the evidence submitted by learners was limited. Assessors are advised to annotate the evidence with the assessment objective and mark band. Feedback to learners was comprehensive; however marks for independence need to be justified by the assessor across all of the assessment objectives.

Statistics

Level 1 Unit 1 Foundation

	Max. Mark	A*	A	B
Raw boundary mark	40	33	24	16
Points Score	8	6	4	2

Notes

Maximum Mark (raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme or mark grids.

Raw boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a learner to qualify for a given grade.

Higher Projects Qualification

Level 2 Introduction

Projects follow the same processes as traditional GCSEs and GCEs. As with any GCSE or GCE, each unit is awarded to ensure that the standard is established and will be maintained. It is necessary to ensure consistency of standard in each examination window and as a consequence of this, grade boundaries may be subject to change.

Level 2 Unit 1 Higher

Suitability of work submitted

The Higher Project qualification requires that learners submit evidence for four assessment objectives. Learners need to select, plan and carry out a project that uses relevant skills and methods to reach their project objectives. During the development of their project they need to obtain, select and use relevant information sources from a range of sources and, where appropriate, from both primary and secondary sources.

The learners are given the best opportunity to produce relevant evidence for the qualification if they are supported in choosing a research question to address or a design brief or commission that requires research to take place that is relevant to the project outcome.

For AO1 learners need to supply a completed project proposal form and activity log that is focussed on the requirements to plan and manage the project. To access marks in mark band 2 the learners need to describe any problems encountered and how they were overcome. Both the project proposal form and the activity log should be supplied on the relevant Edexcel paperwork that is available to download from the Edexcel project website.

For AO2 learners need to demonstrate that they have gathered and used resources appropriate to the project title and these resources should be clearly identified in a bibliography. Resources should be relevant to the project objectives. Learners should be encouraged to comment on the reliability of their sources.

For AO3 the learners need to develop and realise their project. This can be done in the form of a written report, an artefact or a performance. Ideas need to be developed that show some understanding of the topic and some evidence of alternative points of view should be seen. The resultant work should be logically sequenced and show coherence.

AO4 requires learners to review both the process and the outcome of their project showing what skills and knowledge were developed and ideas for follow up work. They should assess how well they managed and performed and these comments should incorporate feedback from others.

The most successful project titles were those that stated a clear research question for the learner to investigate and ones that also gave scope for argument and counter-argument. The least successful titles at this level were those that give a statement to investigate, such as 'the college website'. Such titles did not allow learners to focus their research skills on the development of an argument or opinion.

In some centres' work, the project titles given prohibited the learners from fully addressing the assessment objectives, particularly with regard to AO3.

Many learners that are submitting their project work alongside Diploma studies tended to be rather restrictive in their project title choices, staying safely within the scope of subject matter directly relevant to their principal learning units. In future it would be pleasing to see the learners focussing their project titles on work that extends their knowledge beyond that of the principal unit focus. However, it is very pleasing to report, that in this moderation series, where learners were submitting work for the higher project as a standalone qualification, a very interesting range of

successful project titles were seen that spanned across numerous curriculum areas and areas of learners interests.

Where learners carried out their project as part of group work, although some projects did demonstrate individual development, the majority did not have sufficient individual responsibilities in the process to provide evidence that allowed them to access the highest marks in mark band 2.

Some design project work contained evidence that gave account of the design process but did not address the actual research project outcome as given in the project proposal form.

Learner Performance

As at all levels with the Project qualifications, regarding the written report format, this was seen to be most successful when learners chose a project title in the form of a question and then set out to gather relevant sources of data to address their chosen question. By posing a question to research learners can provide their own viewpoint and then look at a range of sources of information to prove or disprove their views. Conclusions can be drawn and comments made on the reliability and validity of both primary and secondary sources. The most successful written reports ate those where the learner carries out a review of their research source and then enters into a discussion, using their sources, to report on their project question.

The most successful artefact projects were those in which the plans and design were clearly relevant to the initial question and objectives on the project proposal form. Less successful design projects contained information about the design process but did not show how this was relevant to the question posed at the outset. Artefact projects need to be supplied with information regarding relevant research sources and how these are used to develop the final outcome.

Assessment

Some centres were seen to be awarding marks rather generously particularly with respect to AO2 and AO4.

As with the Level 1 projects, some centres are awarding marks for AO1 in mark band 2 when the project proposal forms were very brief. Also, more detail is often seen to be needed in sections 3 and 4 of the project proposal form for marks in mark band 2 for AO1. Many instances were seen where sections 3 and 4 of the project proposal form were completed generically. Information about activities, timescales and resources required for the project should be relevant to the learner's choice of project and not just lists of requirements such as 'access to the internet'. The project proposal form is an important part of the assessment evidence and should not be completed hastily. It is recommended, where possible, that it is typed on computer, allowing the proposal form to evolve with the project.

Regarding AO2, several projects were submitted without clear bibliographies making it impossible to retrieve the sources used. Centres did not tend to help candidates to work towards ensuring that the information presented was relevant and applicable to their research question. Comments on reliability often were absent or lacked depth of understanding.

Regarding AO3, all learners' work seen did attempt to develop and realise their project. However, in some work sampled, the evidence given for AO3 was not always relevant to the project title or project objectives given in the project proposal form therefore making it difficult to agree marks awarded in mark band 2. Some learner evidence sampled lacked coherence and was restricted by numerous spelling and grammatical errors.

In most learners work seen the evidence for AO4 was seen to sit in mark band 1. Centres need to ensure that all learners are supported in providing a review of their project work that addresses all the requirements for AO4 and does not just focus on the actual project outcome. This evidence should review the project process including a review of the learners own learning and performance, stating which objectives were or were not met and why, giving a description of skills and knowledge developed and learnt during the project and also giving ideas for follow up work. Full reviews were seldom seen. Reviews can be supported by peer review where appropriate.

Centre Performance

The Level 2 Project is a qualification that attracts 60 GLH and learners need to be given a sufficient amount of time (at least 20GLH) to develop their skills and knowledge relevant to their area of study. It is recommended that centres use at least this number of guided learning hours to actually teach the relevant research skills that the learners will need to develop their project successfully. Some centres are still not directing the learners to provide clear bibliographies of all sources used.

Only the minority of centres were seen to be internally standardising marks awarded by centre assessors.

There are still issues surrounding group work. Where learners research the same project title centres must ensure that all learners have their own individual roles and responsibilities so that they can provide individual evidence for their project process and outcome. These roles and responsibilities can be clearly demonstrated in the individual's project proposal form as discrete project objectives that sit underneath the overall group project title.

Evidence for AO4 is still seen to be weak in most cases. Although many level 2 centres do support their learners in carrying out an oral presentation (e.g. to their peer group to tell them about their project), only a minority of centres support their learners in using peer evaluation for some evidence towards AO4 - this is a lost opportunity. Although an oral presentation is not a mandatory requirement for AO4 at level 2, it does provide information that can very usefully be used by the learners in judging their own performance and how well they have managed. Where this is not conducted learners would still benefit from a discussion with the tutor / assessor about how well they have conducted their project and, again, this information could be used for evidence towards AO4.

Best assessment practice was evident where centres implemented internal verification of assessment to ensure that marks awarded to the learners were supported by the evidence provided by the learners. This was particularly important where more than one assessor was involved in the delivery and assessment of the qualification or where more than 1 type of outcome was being submitted across a cohort of learners. However, in a minority of cases, internal verification processes

failed to result in necessary changes being made to marks awarded by centres although the moderation process demonstrated that these changes were necessary.

At level 2 assessors can award an extra mark for each assessment objective if the learner has worked fairly independently. Centres are advised to justify the award of this mark; some centres will just annotate +1 in the marks column.

Statistics

Level 2 Unit 1 Higher

	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C
Raw boundary mark	40	33	27	21	16
Points Score	10	8	6	4	2

Notes

Maximum Mark (raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme or mark grids.

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