

What makes a good project title for the Foundation and Higher project?

Introduction:

The choice of the title for a Higher or Foundation project is vital as it sets the scene for the entire qualification and, therefore, the overall grade that the learner will gain from their work. This qualification is designed to provide students with an opportunity to select a subject to research that they are enthusiastic about and which genuinely interests them. The subject that the learner chooses should have a link to their plans for further study, work experience or employment aspirations (particularly for learners taking their project as part of a diploma qualification) or it could be a personal interest or hobby that provides the rationale for the project. To start learners thinking about the topics they would like to research for their projects it is a good idea to ask them what they are thinking of doing after their project is complete, what type of job roles they may want to do, what subjects they like at school or college, what hobbies they have and collate these in the form of a spidergram and then suggest that they choose something which links to one of the topics given.

Level 1 learners may need direct support in choosing a feasible and reasonable project title. If, for example, they want work in childcare they might be successful in their project by researching relevant creative and therapeutic activities for children and then creating an activity or toy in the form of an artefact. If the learner is interested in construction they might choose to research a design brief for a workstation for an office or similar. Or if they hope to go on to train to be an engineer, an engineering artefact would be a sensible choice. Learners interested in ICT might choose to research the efficiency of various IT programmes or develop a website for a specific purpose. This may seem obvious, but it isn't always clear to students that it is worth making a connection to their potential future areas of work or study.

How will the project work?

When deciding on the actual project title it is important to ensure that learners are supported in choosing a project title that will allow them to gain the best possible marks in each of the 4 relevant assessment criteria. Although the learners tend to focus on the project outcome, the majority of marks are awarded for the development processes that the learner goes through when working towards their outcome. The actual project title should allow learners to spend approximately 40 hours of the 60-guided learning hours carrying out their project, providing evidence for the 4 assessment criteria. (The remaining 20 hours should be taken up by the tutor / assessor teaching the skills needed to carry out the project.) Learners need to be supported in choosing titles that are not too ambitious. Titles such as 'how can I build a fast car?' or 'how can I build an eco friendly school?' provide the learner with a brief that is too wide and will, at best, be only superficially covered if at all, in the time available. The scope of these titles is also outside the capabilities of level 1 / 2 learners.

Equally the choice of project title needs to be interesting and allow learners to carry out research to develop their project. In this case title choices such as 'what do I need to do to become a nursery nurse' or 'what are the health effects of recreational drugs' tend just to result in one task being carried out and restricts the learners in demonstrating planning and development of their own views and

arguments. These titles often attract marks in mark band 1 only for each assessment objective.

For any project title it is important that valid and reliable research can be carried out that is relevant to the chosen topic. If, for example, a learner decides to choose a straight-forward task, there will be nothing to research, and it will be hard to meet the requirement to gather and use research resources in order to attain marks for assessment objective 2.. Suppose that a student decides that his project will be to record himself playing some guitar music with a friend, this would be a poor choice of project title since no research would be involved. However, if the learner were to choose to research what influences led to a particular genre of music being developed and then went on to write and or perform their own version of that style of music there is a need for reliable research to be carried out for the successful completion of the performance outcome.

When choosing their project titles learners also need to ensure that the title will involve substantial development work in order to gain significant marks in AO3. This criterion is worth 44% of the marks for the total qualification. If a student has chosen as their title a question which could be answered by just writing a brief 2 page report, it will not constitute a worthwhile project that would gain marks in mark band 2 for AO3. The time scale for carrying out the project should be outlined in section 3 of the project proposal form and this should work as a check for the learner to ensure that their chosen title will sustain the project qualification for a suitable length of time to develop necessary skills and knowledge.

Once the learners project is underway and nearing completion, learners need to carry out a review of their project process and their outcome in order to gain marks in assessment objective 4.

This review involves the learner in addressing how successful the project has been. One part of this involves discussing the extent to which the initial objectives have been met. This means that the objectives need to be clear and specific. Objectives are decided once the actual project title is chosen. They sit underneath the project title and can be used to break the project title down into manageable, bite sized tasks. For example, if a learner has chosen to 'design a website'. This could be a successful project only if the objectives that sit underneath this broad title are specific and within the capability of the learner to carry out. If the chosen objectives are vague, it will not be possible for AO4 to enter into a meaningful discussion of the extent to which they have been met or not met and why this has happened. The website project title would need to be more specific and objectives need to state who the website would be for, what information it would disseminate, the target audience, how and when to launch the website and a method to evaluate if the website is it for purpose etc.

Group work:

Many centres /learners carry out projects within a group environment. In many ways this qualification does lend itself to successful group work and this can be very well orchestrated with level 1 learners. However, when choosing projects for group work, it is essential that each member of a group has their own discrete task to carry out so that they can provide their own individual evidence across all 4 assessment objectives. All learners in the group can achieve this by deciding on the

same group title but then taking ownership of individual project objectives to research and develop. This will be noted on the project proposal form and the activity log will then demonstrate the individual learners progression through the project process to achieve their own project objectives (s). Obviously it is also appropriate that the activity log shows the progression of the whole group alongside the individual learners activities.

Group work can support the evidence for review in AO4 as each individual can reflect not only on their own success in meeting project objectives but also the part played by others in the group and the group as a whole.

Links to other curriculum areas:

If a student chooses to produce an artefact or performance for their project outcome, it is quite possible that they are already doing similar work for other qualifications (e.g. Art and Design BTEC Dance GCSE) or as part of an interest or hobby they have (playing a specific type of music in a group). For their project they should show that they have extended themselves in a new direction, perhaps by learning a new technique or acquiring a new skill. So, for example, an art and design student might choose to start working in a new medium (e.g. ceramics), or a guitarist might teach themselves the techniques needed to provide the accompanying sound-track to a video. Projects will not be certificated if evidence provided by a learner matches that already submitted for another qualification but it is appropriate for knowledge learnt in another qualification to be used as a trigger for project work as long as the actual work carried out is new.

Using an appropriate project title:

Having a clear, specific, focused project title that then leads to clearly focussed project objectives is crucial. The form that the objectives take will vary according to the type of project outcome the learner is working towards. Learners can choose to submit their project outcome in the form of a written report, an investigation, an artefact or a performance. Unlike level 3, all learners are registered on the same unit according to level regardless of the type of project outcome. If learners carry out a performance as their project outcome, centres are asked to ensure that individual learners can easily be identified on any CD provided. Regarding the artefact, centres are asked to provide evidence of the outcome in an appropriate manner such as annotated photographs and sketch books that chart the progression of the artefact. Whichever outcome is chosen there must be appropriate and relevant records of research and a report showing the process that the learner has gone through to achieve the outcome, along with a project proposal form, an activity log and a review.

There are a number of suggestions of appropriate project titles given in the student guide for the level 1 /2 project. The Edexcel project website has examples of both level 1 and level 2 projects with commentaries written on the marks awarded to them and why.