

Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2013

Extended Projects Qualification

Dissertation (P301)
Investigation (P302)
Performance (P303)
Artefact (P304)

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P301 Dissertation

Student Performance

The quality of writing, depth of research and the level of sustained argument and counter-argument led to work of impressive maturity at the upper end of the performance range. A small number of highly articulate students produced studies worthy of undergraduate programmes. Weaker project work tended to come from students whose research skills were not well developed, so that the range of sources used was limited and referencing and source evaluation were weak.

Whilst there was evidence of more detail in project proposal forms, many lacked detailed plans of activities. Students are expected to review their progress in relation to their plan, which is why it should be detailed. There tended to be limited detail of objectives and reasons for the choice of project. Reflection was missing from some logs. A well written log should provide a reflective account of the project journey, addressing problems encountered, as well as solutions, and showing evidence of on-going reflection on the ideas behind the project.

Referencing and the presentation of the bibliography were variable. Some centres had obviously taught the students the importance of referencing. Some students however clearly did not know how to cite sources appropriately. In the best work, footnotes were used effectively.

The most common area requiring development continues to be the evaluation of source reliability. Effective source evaluation was rarely seen. Students should be encouraged to write evaluations which address the provenance of source material directly (e.g. addressing the status of the author and the status of the institution responsible for publication). Evaluative comments need not be lengthy, but they should address the crucial issue of reliability, rather than, for example, simply discussing utility.

It is important too that sources are investigated, and the investigation should be in-depth for the higher mark band positions. Some students interpreted the 'research review' to mean literally a review, in which the sources were described, but not investigated to find information which bears on the research question. There was also a tendency for the importance using a wide range of resources to be under-estimated. A small number of websites, for example, does not usually constitute a wide range.

Centres where students were accessing a range of sources which included good quality sources (ie books or journals for specialist/academic audiences) tended to produce better titles, provide stronger, more coherent arguments, draw better justified conclusions and adopt recognised academic referencing conventions more accurately.

It may be useful to centres to note that an increasing range of academic journals are now being made freely online and can be found by typing 'open-access journals' into a search engine, or using the Directory of Open

Access Repositories. There was evidence of the use of academic material from search engines such as Google Scholar, which lifted the tone of writing based on the sites accessed.

As in previous series, written reviews of the project process appeared more frequently but were often brief and very rarely covered all the aspects in the first two paragraphs of the AO4 marking grid. Suggestions for further work on the topic are often neglected. Some evaluations were completed extremely thoroughly and showed good insight concerning what could be improved.

Suitability of work submitted

Choices of initial title tended to limit students in cases where they did not lead naturally into argumentative material.

Assessment Evidence

A number of centres submitted samples with missing EDI forms, work from other units mixed in, addition errors, with the highest or lowest mark piece missing, or without the ten requested samples.

Most centres provided oral presentation evidence and assessment sheets. Almost all students completed the proposal forms and most students were encouraged to include an activity log. The general presentation of the samples was very good, with treasury tagged reports being the preferred option. The use of poly-pockets or the placing of the dissertation within A4folders was a real obstacle to moderation, making it hard to find and access information effectively, particularly when students had not included page numbers.

In a small number of projects, material was found that had been taken directly from sources without quotation, although the incidence of this was low.

Centre Performance

Some centres appeared to misunderstand the nature of a literature review. Instead of guiding students to integrate source material into a synthesized review, they expected students to summarise the information from each source, almost as a list, without making connections between sources, or exploring the significance of what the sources said in relation to the research question posed. The best literature reviews take the form of a coherent narrative, organised either chronologically or thematically, with analysis and synthesis of source material.

Some centres seemed to award AO4 marks largely on the basis of the presentation and then take no account of any written evaluations the students had produced, even where they were detailed and reflective. Conversely, it was quite common for high AO4 marks to be awarded even when there was a lack of detailed written evaluation. It is normally expected

that the AO4 mark will be awarded based on a combination of the oral presentation and written evaluation.

In some cases, the amount of time spent on development of work seemed to be less than the recommended 80 guided learning hours. Centres should bear in mind that the Extended Project is a Level 3 qualification, and that, in size and level of demand of the work, it is comparable to half of an A level, and should therefore attract comparable teaching support.

P302 Investigation

Student Performance

There were some interesting and challenging investigations submitted this year. It was encouraging to see evidence of the use of taught skills by some centres in this award.

Suitability of Work Submitted

Questions/hypotheses still tend to be too broad. There was some uncertainty as to how to assess tutor guidance in relation to how much support is acceptable. It is expected that the student will 'own' the project; they should make their own choice of objectives and explain their own reasons for carrying out the work. It is acceptable for them to receive guidance and supervision from a tutor, but it is expected that, to access the higher mark positions in AO1, the student will refine their hypothesis or research question independently. In general, if students had more guidance at the planning stages they would score more highly in other areas.

Some projects had been undertaken (at least in data gathering and analysis) in groups yet this had not been declared. Proposal forms tended not to be well completed and it should be emphasized that they should be signed off before the project commences. Many proposal forms were completed retrospectively and little effort was put into them.

Where a sensible question was chosen and a decent amount of data gathered, students were able to score well and easily. Projects based mainly on highly qualitative results were thereby limited. A very significant number of projects involved little or no primary data. It is difficult to access the higher mark band positions in this unit in such cases.

The majority of projects were generally well-structured. A small number tended to ramble. Many included lots of unnecessary packs of questionnaires, tables of raw data etc. Only a handful of projects at the top end could be described as easy to read and many lacked a structure which aided the presentations of ideas.

Assessment Evidence

Project plans tended not to be very clear. In many cases, the presentation of this information was untidy and did not appear to have been well thought through, particularly in the mid to lower mark band ranges. There were some improvements with logs but in the mid to lower bands logs still tend to look like they have been added on at a later stage and tended only to contain a handful of factual statements. Projects at the Proposal stage were often good but were sometimes let down by lack of support and checking, so that proposal forms were not signed off, not checked over and/or lacked detail such as timings. The best were excellent.

Bibliographies on the whole tended to be poorly organised, suggesting that limited tutor guidance was given in this area. They were predominantly web-based, but at the top end of the mark bands there was evidence of academic referencing systems or at least efforts to put sources in alphabetical order. Literature/source reviews were hit and miss and often presented very carelessly as if students were unsure where to put them. Rarely was there enough breadth or depth in a literature review or consistent referencing. Often resources were web-only (with no date of access given) and few could manage Harvard referencing or the use of Word's bibliography function. It was rare to see sources commented on; only the very best candidates managed this. Data gathering varied hugely in success. A number of students still didn't produce bibliographies and simply gave a list of references. One common theme was the issue around primary data. Many candidates did employ methods of gathering their own data such as questionnaires and surveys. However, the number of participants, in many cases, was simply not enough and too many projects had only superficial primary data. Such projects would have been better fitted to the Dissertation unit.

Often evaluation of the project process was too brief and lacked depth or substance. In many cases there was no evaluation section at all. Opportunities for reflection were missed in Activity Logs. Oral presentations were predominantly judged to be of high quality but often slides showed them to be wordy. Students clearly find this process difficult to engage with effectively and need more guidance from centres. Several centres did not match comments to ticks on the Oral Presentations Forms. Some slides were simply cut and paste text from the project, with the quantity of information ranging all the way up to the point at which the whole project was on the slides.

Centre Performance

Those centres that provided some study skills sessions did much better than those that didn't. There were a few exceptional projects which showed independent research, data gathering as well as analysis and synthesis of findings. There were a number of projects where little effort had been made to match the marking to level 3 criteria, with projects being basically at level 2 standard.

P303 Performance

Student Performance

A range of work was presented. The performance outcomes for most were fully realised. There were the more typical drama, dance and music projects along with some broader events being staged including sport and philosophical debate. This suggests there is the opportunity for this unit to serve the full range of candidate interest and ability.

The projects that were particularly successful in terms of the project title were ones where students were able to marry performance style or genre with target audience and had the awareness to consider fully the significance of both form and content. Weaker project ideas were more task-based and linear in their development.

Suitability of work submitted

Where group projects were undertaken, the more successful had outlined relevant individual roles and responsibilities as part of the initial refinement of the project, and thus the roles were needed by the project, rather than being bolted on to 'give everyone a job'.

Assessment Evidence

A range of titles, performance outcomes and events encompassing dance, drama, sport, ITC and catering were presented. The most effective titles had a research focus as the title or commission. Many project titles would benefit from refinement, especially in regard to the target audience or the genre of the performance outcome. Greater focus on pre-planning and identifying potential difficulties could also be encouraged. In the weaker projects, limited information was included on the project proposal form, with scant regard to individual outcomes or timescales.

At the top end of AO2 there was some excellent practice, with detailed bibliographies which referenced a range of primary and secondary sources, but there was mixed practice. Research was sometimes implicit in the outcome. Some centres were not confident to include primary research in the form of practical performance skills research as evidence. Candidates tended to place downloaded material in the main body of the work, rather than appendices, where it would be more appropriate. Greater links between this research and the performance outcome were often needed.

In the main, individual projects were presented and so candidates were clearly identifiable in the performance outcome. Thorough preparation and rehearsal were evident at the top end of AO3, with high quality performance outcomes. Detailed working logs gave an on-going synoptic overview of the development process.

The considering and evidencing of the exploration of alternative ideas could be encouraged as this was often lacking. At times the performance material

was not sufficiently challenging and again a focus on a research-based project could facilitate this. At the lower end of the performance range, very limited time was given to the development of the piece.

In AO4 (Review), there were examples of excellent practice, with centres including recordings of the review presentation that greatly aided the moderation process. The Oral Presentation Record Form frequently commented on high mark band 3 achievements against all criteria and yet candidates had not provided evidence of their resources or their ability to assess the project or how well they had performed. At times it seemed that evidence was only focussed on their ability to give a good presentation, rather than their evaluative skills overall.

Centre Performance

Most centres delivered a complete sample with the relevant paperwork. However, several centres missed the national coursework deadline. Errors of addition occurred in several centres and not all provided the work of the highest and lowest candidates if they were not included in the sample identified by the board. Not all candidates had been entered for the right unit. Several EDIs needed signing and dating. Several discs of performance work were blank or corrupted and replacements had to be requested. A majority of centre assessors used the language of the assessment criteria on the Candidate Record Sheets, which greatly aided the moderation process.

Several centres did not include a recording of the performance outcome.

P304 Artefact

Student Performance

The stronger centres supported the varied interests and enthusiasms of the students. Such centres encouraged personalised and individualised investigations to take place, which truly extended the student. As a result students produced work which was of a high standard and demonstrated professionalism.

There was evidence, from the students' own comments, that they had identified closely with their project work. Many students referred to their increased research skills, the independent method of working, often for the first time, and the benefit of their Project as preparation for University. Several candidates acknowledged their newly-found depth of knowledge of their chosen theme, but often scantily referred to the artefact, which was seen as an add-on rather than the purpose of the research.

Suitability of Work Submitted

Some centres relied too heavily on blogs and YouTube when a hard copy, for example of the presentation slides, would have quickly clarified the main activities. Where work is other than hard copy, the location and link would be better placed on the Candidate Record Sheet and must be easily located. Most centres sent photographs of large items or gave links to websites. A few centres still sent huge artefacts by post. This is not required, nor is it helpful to the moderator.

Problems occurred when website artefacts were sent without file paths, a working link, or DVD of them working, or work was sent requiring software to be downloaded or purchased.

Assessment Evidence

More detailed planning and focus in the project proposal form for the development of an identified artefact, linking the research and developed approaches needed for the production of an artefact could increase the success of students.

Planning lacked detail in some portfolios, with unrealistic timescales being nominated. Many proposal forms lacked the detail and discipline that milestones and more focused task-breakdown would give. Some centres are still focusing on content-based research, rather than research into materials, techniques and processes. Some students were incapacitated right from the start with unsuitable proposal forms.

Some centres allocated very few hours for design and making to be completed with overly ambitious proposals, such as aiming to produce a range of artefacts. In these cases students would have benefited from teacher intervention to help them focus on the achievable, and encourage them to revise planning at an early stage.

Good practice was seen in the form of use of the AO headings in the Activity logs. Many logs were perfunctory, single line lists of a generalised task, whereas several were lengthy diary-like confessionals invoking the passion the student had for their newly discovered area of interest and the skills they employed to manifest this information as a practical production. Problems remain between research into the subject or chosen theme and examples of how others have dealt with similar techniques, processes and problems. This latter area was usually less well-developed.

Portfolios frequently contained large quantities of downloaded material, some with highlighter use, but with limited analysis and little synthesis beyond the obvious to support ideas. Analysis and opinions of the student were almost lost in these downloads and centres need to highlight the importance of digesting and interpreting this data.

The willingness to take on new skills, as with sewing, animation, painting or CAD, should be praised, but students taking on new skills also need to plan for time to be allocated to researching the materials and techniques to be used. This was not always the case, and commendable as the achievement in a new area is, there was often a lack of innovative use which is a feature of the higher mark band in AO3.

Evidence for assessment of areas such as *development of the Artefact* and *its refinement during the developmental process* (AO3) was sometimes limited. Although this process was sometimes implicit, evidence should be compiled to make these practical decisions and developments explicit. The weaker evaluations tended to contain statements which were obvious and lacking in self awareness.

Centre Performance

Many centres failed to send the correct sample for moderation, often failing to include the highest and lowest scoring student or the full requested sample of 10.

Weaker performance was seen when centres set narrow options, such as DT-type improvements to a scenario or setting. These re-designs were answered by making fairly simplistic and obvious solutions, without innovation or challenge. The work produced was 'straight forward' and as expected; at a basic level, without challenge. Other proposals, such as for the strip down and rebuild of motor bikes or car parts were again too narrow and lacked innovation, development and extension beyond practical craft skills.

The use and completion of Candidate Record Sheets was generally good. Teacher-assessor comments were frequently detailed and communicated the assessment decisions taken. In some cases teacher-assessor comments were not in line with specification.

There were more frequent occasions in this series when a portfolio was wrongly submitted to artefact.

Points for development

- Support students at the planning stage in formulating their questions, briefs or commissions, defining their objectives and identifying whether there is access to suitable resources.
- In considering choice of unit entry, bear in mind that P303 Performance addresses events and / or experiences which may be watched or listened to.
- P304 Artefact involves planning and the creation of an object, whether tactile or technical, to meet some need or purpose.
- When submitting work for moderation, please ensure that the top and bottom marked pieces are always included, whether or not they are requested.
- In general, written evaluation could be improved by more thoughtful, perceptive consideration of the extent to which objectives had been met, together with thought about weaknesses in the work, possible extensions, and lessons learned from the project process.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

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