

Principal Moderator Report

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Pearson Edexcel Extended Projects
Qualification
(ZPJ30)

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P301 Dissertation

Student Performance

Projects which led to largely descriptive responses did not score well and tended to be over-marked by centres.

Proposal forms were often well filled in. Few questions were vague or unfocussed, though the use of 'to what extent...?' type questions was notable. This style of question may lead to less engagement in argument.

Activity logs tended to be reasonably full, though only the best showed intellectual management of the process of formulating ideas behind the project.

Reflection in the log is to be encouraged, as is the creation of plans with targets which allow for ongoing monitoring of the project process.

In AO2, the standard of research was often high. The best students submitted maturely written literature reviews and most provided some form of review. Referencing too seemed stronger, though url dates were frequently absent. Source evaluations were often seen in separate sections, although some of these focussed on only a handful of key sources.

However, there were still many cases in which no literature review was submitted, with research being subsumed into the discussion. Whilst this approach can work, there was a danger of the discussion becoming little more than an extended review of sources, with limited engagement in argument.

Few students were aware that word processors contain functions for creating in-text citations and automatic bibliographies.

In terms of organisation, a literature review in which sources are connected to form a coherent narrative is preferable to one which simply lists source after source.

In AO3, the standard of writing was high and the content relevant and thoughtful. The large majority of pieces in AO3 were in MB2 or 3 and there were some exceptional pieces, well above the standard expected at this level.

A number of students did interesting but essentially limited projects based around the presentation of ideas or around a fairly closed question. The quality of the title was again the biggest limiting factor here; where the chosen title lends itself to descriptive writing it is difficult for the student to meet the criteria relating to the construction of argument.

The best projects showed evidence of the construction of good lines of argument, with systematic consideration of counter-argument. A large number however did not present a clear personal perspective and defaulted to the more traditional consideration of alternative viewpoints. Students should be encouraged to state the point they will defend at the start of a discussion section, rather than leaving the expression of their own views to the conclusion.

In AO4, the normal expectation is that candidates will submit a written evaluation of the project process. Most candidates did submit a written review and enclosed their presentation slides though some centres still relied on powerpoint slides alone as evidence. The written review provides evidence which, taken together with the teacher-assessor's remarks on the oral presentation, should support the mark for AO4.

The quality of evaluations continues to improve with many centres clearly giving guidance on good structure for these sections. At times, however, written reviews were limited in scope. The depth of reflection was insufficient to warrant the mark awarded, or the comments lacked precision, being of a general nature.

Suitability of work submitted

Many students made use of the recommended dissertation format (abstract, introduction, literature review, discussion, conclusion, evaluation, bibliography and presentation).

The focus of the discussion should be on the development of argument and counter-argument.

Assessment Evidence

Most samples were well constructed and received on time. A significant number of samples were incomplete, with missing scripts or EDI forms missing pieces, or with incorrect addition of marks.

Internal standardisation did not always take place, but of more concern was that fact that where it did, it did not always pick up either major errors in assessment or errors in addition.

The general presentation of the samples was usually very good, with treasury tags or single sided wallets being sent.

Centres are advised that it is not necessary to send all the source materials with projects.

Centre Performance

The best centres are very effective in their tutoring and preparation of candidates and punctilious in their assessment and standardisation processes.

Some centres clearly supported students well, with feedback on their work. Less successful centres simply set the project as totally independent work, with little guidance.

A very small number of submissions contained material which had been taken word-for-word from websites, with little or no editing.

P302 Investigation/Field Study

Student Performance

This series, as in the past, there was only a small entry, largely from returning centres entering a small number of candidates. A reasonable range of suitable topics was seen, with a couple of nice iterative pieces of work based on experimental data gathering. Use of graphical display and mathematical statistical analysis and data sample sizes were in general more appropriate. In weaker projects data still tends to be presented in pie or bar charts with no analysis beyond obvious comments. It is the links and correlations that show an understanding of the research and data trends that make a project more than just a recording task. Titles tend to be still too broad; a clear hypothesis should be stated (a hypothesis is not a question) and then tested and then 'answered' and ideally the level of confidence given. It is vital that the limitations of the process are appreciated; without this AO3 marks are limited. A single experiment (even with different variables) does not lend itself well to the iterative reflective journey expected. A number of projects still lack significant primary data altogether (or it is peripheral). Small sample questionnaires based on social or ethical issues with very wide scope tend to perform poorly. A project which basically tests a few variables of one particular set up can also not be described as Extended.

Suitability of Work Submitted

Where a narrow, testable hypothesis was proposed, projects had the focus required to meet the expectations of depth and analysis. This unit is differentiated from Unit 1 by the expectation of a more scientific and mathematical approach and thus the conclusion should involve the rejection or acceptance of the starting hypothesis at a declared level of significance. It is acceptable for students to receive guidance and supervision from a tutor or external expert, perhaps from a tertiary centre throughout, but it is expected that, to access the higher mark positions in AO1, the student will refine their hypothesis or research question independently and show an independent self-reflective journey and a clearly understood conclusion. It is abundantly clear that candidates who receive good guidance at the planning stages are able to score highly in all areas.

Proposal forms were completed to a much better standard, though the breakdown of tasks and assignment of milestones could have been fuller in some cases. It was pleasing to see the majority of Proposal Forms being signed off in advance of the research journey. Where a focused question was chosen and a decent amount of data gathered, students were able to produce detailed conclusions. Projects based on mainly qualitative results are more limited. Most projects did fit the expectations of Unit 2 and only a couple might have been better submitted as Unit 1 Dissertations. The quantity of raw data collected does affect the quality of statistical analysis; more mathematical testing was seen in good projects.

Projects need to be well-structured and showed clear headings, labelling and illustrations. Projects are sometimes still hard to read and would profit from a more in-depth introduction as to what is being tackled. The more complex the

subject, the clearer the communication should be; projects must not assume prior knowledge.

Assessment Evidence

There was good evidence from the majority of centres of consistent application of the marking grids, so that the ranking of scripts was in agreement with that of the moderator. However, in some cases a lack of annotation particularly or other evidence did not support the high marks awarded in a couple of sections, particularly the lack of comment and analysis in the Bibliography. The level of source evaluation and understanding of the requirements of a Bibliography and full referencing in the text is still misunderstood. End notes which are not linked to specific quotes or secondary material are not sufficient. Weaker projects tended to simply give a list of references (URLs) at the end and are often completely web based. There is no attempt in many projects to show critical selection of sources used. AO2 marks thus tend to be the most lenient; there must be a taught element for this skill, as candidates cannot be expected to get it right on their own. The accuracy of marking had certainly improved from returning centres. Few centres showed hard evidence of a skills course (this could be referred to in the Activity Log); though in the quality of work in some cases this was implicit. Marks given in AO1 and AO4 were generally supported and the Proposal Forms tended to be fuller and more detailed. However, the lack of print outs of PowerPoint slides can make it hard to support high AO4 marks. The majority of the Centres are appreciating the importance of the preparation phase. Activity Logs have improved and are more thoughtful. The need for copious data to analyse mathematically and statistically and the testing of a hypothesis has still not fully been grasped. 'Investigation' is not the same as 'Practical testing'. Where a single set up is used with different variables, unless this is set in the context of comparable academic research, there is no real extension.

Activity logs were fuller, though not all centres used the Edexcel form and some were still too factual. A thoughtful log, showing the iterative nature of the project with decisions made and problems overcome add marks in both AO1 and AO4. Questions/hypotheses were generally more focused but some projects are still too much of a single task or experiment. There must be extensive development over time, involving self-reflection and re-appraisal to fulfil the idea of an Investigation.

AO2 continues to be the weakest section and the most leniently marked by centres at the top end. Bibliographies tended to be poorly organised if present at all. At the top end of the mark bands there was evidence of academic referencing systems or at least efforts to put them in alphabetical order. It was rare to see sources commented on – only the very best students managed this. The mark scheme specifies evidence of critical selection and analysis. Data gathering varied in success. Sample sizes in questionnaires have improved but the realisation of statistical significance is still barely addressed. The use of extensive data sets is still rare (these do not have to be gathered by the student, though they must be raw and unanalysed) but where used, they gave easy access to analysis marks and allowed standard statistical correlation tests to be used. The depth and extent of statistical analysis really continues to

separate the best projects and there needs to be an explanation of how the test works and what the results mean.

Often the self-reflective evaluation of the project process was too brief and lacked depth or substance. Oral presentations were predominantly judged to be of high quality but often slides showed them to be wordy and there was insufficient evidence presented to support some of the marks awarded.

Centre Performance

Centres entering multiple candidates marked by more than one tutor should show evidence of some internal moderation. Samples were generally in accordance with expectations. Packaging is much improved in the majority of cases, though the lack of Exam Board envelopes and the use of ordinary post can lead to deterioration of scripts, especially in winter weather. Centres continue to show evidence of responding to external moderator feedback from previous submissions, which is pleasing. The level and frequency of annotation was much better and, where the wording from the marking criteria is used to highlight the award of marks, this greatly aids moderation, though individualised comments are also needed. Proposal Forms were correctly credited for good time management, though as stated above, breakdown of timings at the proposal stage continues to be a weakness. Some good data gathering projects with proper statistical treatment were seen and these tended to score much better than those involving questionnaires. It must be made clear that a data gathering exercise must be extended beyond the type of single task/experiment which might be seen in a typical A-level Science or Geography course.

Wide ranging activities should be carried out over an extended period, facilitated by constant Centre monitoring. Short duration tasks, carried out unsupervised (including out of Centre) can lead to single data sets and 'closed' projects. It was very pleasing to see a successful project completed with the help of a local HE college.

Any group work must be clearly stated, highlighted and individual contributions clearly acknowledged. It is unlikely that a single question with a common questionnaire can be written up individually by multiple candidates.

Sample sizes must be large enough to allow mathematical analysis and some statistical significance in findings to be present. Presentation of data in bar graphs or pie charts alone is insufficient at this level, trends and correlations or testing must be carried out. In AO2 the level of referencing and secondary source analysis expected is no less than in Unit 1.

Bibliography and referencing tended to be better and in some cases very detailed but, literature analysis and evidence of critical selection of sources, questionnaire design and mathematical methods is needed. Centres where projects were started late in the year and where there was no evidence of skills teaching rarely produced high mark projects.

Most Centres submitted scripts before the deadline and samples were generally well presented (tagged A4 sheets). The degree and depth of annotations varied and needs to be continually encouraged. Internal Moderation was evident from

most Centres, but this was not expected given the majority of single scripts. EIE forms are still sometimes lacking and Centres must check that Candidates have signed the CRS.

Centres should be encouraged to include copies of PPT slides as this does greatly assist award of AO4 marks.

It is good to see a couple of risk assessments being carried out and included in the planning of the projects; in most cases this would be expected.

All projects seen matched the level 3 criteria, and showed evidence of the basic format and depth resulting from the number of guiding learning hours expected at this level.

P303 Performance

Student Performance

This series saw a collection of work being presented from a small cohort, covering the range of performance disciplines including music, dance and drama along with lessons and events. The performance outcomes were well prepared and fully realised with clear intentions.

The work seen this series again demonstrates this unit can provide the chance to perform work inspired from a range of starting points, interests and disciplines, both in terms of the form of the work and the content.

Where the idea and intention for the work considered the performance outcome from the start, it was more likely to produce a process that objectively developed all aspects of the work; skills and techniques appropriate for the style or genre, the intended audience response, rehearsal or preparation activities.

Where project ideas were more task-based and linear in their development opportunities, they were less able to access the full range of marks available. A clear and refined Commission Brief can be a useful alternative to a question.

Suitability of work submitted

This series again saw suitable work submitted for this unit. Both group and individual projects were presented and for both types of project, the most successful were those that were honestly informed and led by the project objectives, rather than 'fitting' a project to a current talent or general area of interest.

The clearest work seen this series was a result of genuine enquiry taking place. Where a selection and rejection of ideas and techniques was applied to a comprehensive development process, aimed at meeting the objectives, original and creative work was produced.

We saw some relevant and thorough research processes being undertaken and where findings were used to inform the next phase of the development process the work was a better fit to the demands and requirements of the unit. Where time had been taken to explore and consider alternatives, the creative decisions had a positive influence on the work.

Assessment Evidence

Project titles may still benefit from further refinement, especially in regard to the target audience or the genre of the performance outcome. In some projects, limited information was included on the project proposal form, giving too little information of how objectives would be met. Where a clear context to understand the creative intentions is present, it helps understand the validity of the process.

Timescales were mostly realistic, however resources such as time and space may need further consideration at the planning stage.

Again this series we saw that for some projects research was sometimes implicit in the outcome. However, it should be an aim for all projects to be informed by clearly referenced sources. More centres included primary research in the form of practical performance exploration as part of the student evidence. We again saw fewer students placing downloaded material in the main body of the work. It should be noted that this only adds value to a project if it is clear what and how information has been used to develop or inform the work.

Clear links between the research and the performance outcome were seen again this series which is reassuring. Thorough preparation and rehearsal were evident with well-prepared performance outcomes, lessons and events being produced. Comprehensive written support materials gave a clear account of the development process.

The considering and evidencing of the exploration of alternative ideas still requires further encouragement. This should take into account the style of the performance outcome and the content being communicated.

Summative evaluations included some excellent practice, with centres including recordings of the review presentation that greatly aided the moderation process. Where the review was more descriptive it was not always possible to access the full range of marks available.

Centre Performance

This series, centres submitted a complete sample with the relevant paperwork. All centre administration was completed appropriately.

Most centre assessors accurately used the language of the assessment criteria on the Candidate Record Sheets, which supported the moderation process. Candidate identification with clear audio and video recordings was very much appreciated.

P304 Artefact - January 2016

Student Performance

This was a small cohort and no group projects were presented this series.

Overall centres entered individualised projects linked to the students' skills and interests and future plans. Centres submitted portfolios that demonstrated the full range of candidate ability. On the whole students submitted appropriate proposals and evidence for the Artefact unit. At the higher end students presented outstanding Extended Projects that demonstrated an ability to innovate and mature higher-level critical thinking skills.

As previously, outstanding projects had a detailed design brief as their starting point. The most successful design briefs demanded a challenging initial research phase. The brief made specific reference to considerations such as style, medium, influence, purpose, materials, techniques, genre, user-group etc. Proposals phrased as a questions continued to be less effective starting points for the students.

Suitability of work submitted

Most students correctly submitted photographs of the final artefact, rather than the artefact itself. However, occasionally centres posted original bulky original artefacts. Photographs of the artefact should be of good enough quality to moderate the marks awarded for the skills employed and overall 'success' of the final outcome.

A very small minority of students appeared uncertain which unit they were attempting and there were sometimes inconsistencies in the description they gave to their own work. Projects were sometimes labelled as Dissertations and centres are reminded that when the outcome is ephemeral (i.e. a performance or event), P303 is the appropriate unit.

This series most projects sampled demonstrated the 'stretch and challenge' demanded by the Extended Project. There were far fewer examples of students submitting work or formulating proposals that would be more appropriate Level 1 or Level 2 Projects.

Assessment Evidence

AO1

As in previous series planning was un-detailed in some portfolios; timescales and resources were areas that often lacked thought. The evidence provided by stronger students identified very specific tasks to complete and the resources that would be needed, whereas weaker responses included generic lists that were not specific to the needs of their individual brief. As in previous series, activity logs had a tendency to be over-rewarded lists of actions, with little reference to on-going planning and management and the steps take to overcome any problems.

AO2

This assessment objective was again the most likely to be over-rewarded. At the top end a rigorous research phase was identified from the outset and effective primary and secondary research documented that informed the final outcome. However, research was often 'narrower' than the 'wide-ranging' assessment suggested, with brief bibliographies revealing the shortcomings. A few centres are still focusing on content-based secondary research, rather than research into materials, techniques and processes. There was a tendency for primary research in the form of questionnaires to be narrow in its scope and lack sophistication.

AO3

Sketchbooks, design 'journals' and annotated screenshots or photographs continue to be used effectively as a way to evidence the visual development of the design and/or making process. Stronger responses reflected the increased weighting given to AO3 and the assessment focus on the process, rather than the product.

A wide range of evidence was presented and there was largely robust assessment of work in the lowest AO3 band. There was often leniency around the band 2/3 border. Some centres seemed unaware of the importance of the supporting material in providing evidence of a rigorous development process and the consideration of alternative approaches. Although evidence of the process and the ideas being selected was sometimes implicit, evidence should be compiled to make these practical decisions and developments explicit. Some centres are over-rewarding artefacts that meet lower band criteria.

AO4

Stronger responses included sophisticated summative evaluation, the completed Oral Presentation Record Form and a copy of well thought-out accompanying slides. At the lower end written evaluations were often brief and lacked genuine reflection against the initial idea. Where AO4 was over-rewarded centres tended to focus on presentation skills in their assessment, rather than looking at all the Review criteria and selecting the 'best fit' band.

Centre Performance

Centres delivered full samples with the relevant paperwork, including the work of the highest and lowest candidates. Not all centres ensured candidate and centre numbers were included on board documentation. It is essential that the authentication statement on the Candidate Record Sheet be signed.

Centres are reminded of the importance of the internal standardisation process to ensure consistency of marking across a team of assessors.

The majority of centres linked their teacher-assessor comments to the assessment criteria and this greatly aided the moderation process. These comments were frequently detailed and communicated the assessment decisions taken.

Centres continue to support the wide-ranging interests of enthused students. Generally individuals were able to clearly articulate how their project linked to their future plans, developing and extending their skills and thinking.

