



PRINCIPAL MODERATOR'S REPORT

EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION

SUMMER 2016

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

The question is often asked whether the Extended Project is a top-heavy qualification for the most ambitious students who are aspiring to go to university. Yes, many projects, possibly the majority, are inspired by that ambition. There are some breath-taking efforts, indeed. In the top-echelons of the mark range, usually the effort is huge, and the quality is unquestionable, although on occasions one or the other is relatively deficient. Setting out questions and challenges for tutors and supervisors, this is the first one: Are your top projects water-tight in terms of effort and quality?

However, much lower down the rank order, while it has to be acknowledged that there are fewer candidates, they are increasingly producing quite impressive positive achievements that reflects engagement in all four assessment criteria/objectives, and from 2015-16, all eight learning objectives as well. Is your entire cohort getting full value from these learning objectives, initially as identified discretely?

The new Extended Project specification has clarified many of the complexities from the initial 2010-11 specification. It has taken us some years to unravel positions on a number of fronts that are intrinsic to the qualification. The project, however, can only be simplified so much, as long as it is a qualification of inter-related criteria (Manage, Resource, Deliver and Review). In your centre, how do you respect these four areas separately, yet allow them to contribute to one another?

The other initiative for 2016 was the introduction of the E-portfolio (the online submission platform). This was not, nor will be, compulsory, but it offers a modern (if not futuristic!) way of completing a project. It does, however, not change the project – rather it hardens the view that the project should be, with its component parts, finally a cohesive whole, a kind of narrative. A minority of E-portfolio candidates managed to complete the entire project in one computer file, while others delivered a dozen or so bits for the moderator, requiring the moderator to open a file specially to see the candidate's signature! It was ever thus, of course. But 'think narrative', try 'joined-up thinking'. Will your candidates benefit from the security advances and the different ownership rules of the E-portfolio OR will students and tutors alike prefer what is familiar?

Two issues that need to be shared with centres:

Dual-certification of project material is not allowed. Although sometimes this is not black-and-white with the existence of different boards, specifications and options, as an issue it should be dealt with by a candidate and the tutor in the early stages of the project process. In the spirit of the qualification, the candidate should be extending beyond his/her particular A level studies in that subject.

'Missing parts' are intermittently a problem for moderators in judging the value of a project. Sometimes it is a written account, at others an electronic contribution. Centres tend to ask for special dispensation, but it would certainly be preferable if candidates were taught that security is a key part of project management and that they stand to lose credit and/or need to replace a missing component. If this report leaves the screen at this moment, then rest assured that the composer of it will have to re-write it!

Project Title and Documentation

Project titles and questions are becoming more rigorous year-on-year, but a rigorous-looking topic still needs vigilance. Beware the problem of the far-reaching question that is in reality unanswerable because it looks into the future, or a question that stirs a problem on an epic scale that will not be solved within 5000 words. Humility is a quality not always displayed in the Extended Project Qualification. Do your candidates really monitor the details of their project questions sufficiently closely and for long enough in the process?

Artefact projects tend to have different pressure points. These too are generally fuelled by ambition, but they do not always have sufficient planning behind them, nor are they necessarily adept at looking through the eyes of the discerning critic. Sometimes in the case of more technical projects, there becomes a blur between what is a legitimate download and what needs explaining as the candidate's own work. There are, however, fewer projects now that are 'thin', although when they appear they do potentially upset a centre's rank order, and undermine an otherwise sound sample of its cohort's work. The project documentation is increasingly successful at differentiating between those candidates who are grudging with their time and those who are generous. High-ranking candidates particularly sometimes enthuse about the learning from their process, while others see it as a chore to be done, but at least do it. Do all of your candidates provide 'an open window' to view the specifics of their project process or, in their minds, do they complete a bureaucratic exercise?

Project Outcome

Artefacts are gaining ground in WJEC Extended Project. Last year, a snare drum, this year a ball gown stand out, but there are many more. Each one depends for its success on a 'professional' outcome, but also on the managing and the research, both of which are done with relish in the examples that earn something like the ultimate credit.

While the advice for those who do complete an artefact project is to match the quality of your end-piece with your efforts on paper, there is also a message for those writing dissertations. Like the snare drum and the ball gown, the good-old essay should aspire to not having 'a stitch out of place'. Writing, if not perfect, should be cohesive; conclusions should at least be rational, progressive and challenging.

Does your centre look searchingly at the continuing need for students to progress in their writing skills at this level?

Project Presentation

There was a blockage until recently in the project qualification with the unfortunate role played by Powerpoint in the presentation stage. The presentation was rewarded in some cases according to the number of slides and, on occasions, the amount of writing on them! This, of course, was nothing to do with a presentation and little to do with how to use Powerpoint. For the record, Powerpoint is ok as a contributor to the evidence from the event, but credit for the presentation (in the absence of audio-video material, which is not required) should take the form of reasonably detailed appraisal of the 'talk' and the 'question-and-answer' session. As a centre, do you get the maximum out of the project presentation for your candidates?

Assessment

There is some important advice for centres applying the marks for the eight learning objectives.

- Use a broad range of marks in Band 2 and Band 3 particularly for each learning objective. Be increasingly rigorous in the award of the higher marks.
- Now that there are two marks to award for each assessment objective, be discriminating in the marks awarded for each. Be prepared to trade-off marks according to best-fit principles.
- Check that the class and, where appropriate, the centre rank order and range of marks for each AO is sustainable as a realistically broad spread. Do the same of course with the overall project totals.

The new marking system has been well received. The standards are entirely compatible with previous years, but the language is clearer, as are the focal points for each marking decision. As mooted earlier, however, the marks awarded are not for discrete items. For example, the plan is part of the planning, but self-evidently not the whole story.

As the EPQ is a qualification that is 100% internally assessed, it is really important for a centre to have its rank order of marks reliable (i.e. within tolerance). External assessment, through the evidence of a moderation sample, then approves centre marks, OR nudges them in one direction or the other, OR stretches/squeezes them according to findings.

Thank you to all centres that continue to support WJEC Extended Project Qualification. At every stage, WJEC is available to support centres, in areas such as, for example, project titles. In Autumn 2016, CPD events are available in different locations around the country to support both new and established centres. Details of the CPD events are available on our website.



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