



Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate) Principal Moderators' Report January 2021

Grade boundary information for this subject is available on the WJEC public website at:

<https://www.wjecservices.co.uk/MarkToUMS/default.aspx?l=en>

Administration

Entries

The entries for this series were clearly impacted by the pandemic together with the adaptations made to the requirements for the candidates in the reduction from four to three components. However, over three quarters of Advanced centres entered at least one component in this series, with the Global Citizenship Challenge the most popular.

However, there were a considerable number of centres where only the more able candidates had completed the work by the deadline for moderation and this will likely show a skew in results.

Submitting Marks

Centres are to be commended on their ability to submit their marks considering how quickly closure of schools and colleges happened just before Christmas. Where centres did experience issues, they worked closely with WJEC to set realistic extensions to ensure learners were not disadvantaged.

Submitting Work

Despite difficult circumstances, the vast majority of centres uploaded their samples in good time and with all the required administration completed.

Internal Moderation procedures

It was clear that in a minority of centres that internal moderation had been unable to be completed due to centre closure and/or teacher absences.

Individual Project

This series saw a small cohort of entries. There were several centres that had clearly put their top achieving students in for an early entry, but other centres had a wide range of marks. All centres who entered candidates provided secure structures for the Individual Project that supported specific focus on the requirements of the criteria and so enabled candidates to achieve.

Overall, many candidates are to be commended on the quality of the work produced with many interesting and excellent examples of Individual Projects. Centres are to be commended on the appropriateness of their assessment of the work.

Learning Outcome 1

Identify the focus and scope of an Individual Project

Most candidates had titles presented as questions that were clearly of interest to them and had been chosen to link with their future career path. Only a small number of candidates chose overly ambitious titles that made achievable and realistic aims and objectives problematic. Most topics were appropriate for Advanced level, providing sufficient opportunity for the use of complex sources and analysis. Some candidates created additional challenges for themselves by including a comparison element within their Individual Project. This is not a requirement of the assessment criteria and makes completing the Project within the word restrictions of 3,000-5,000 problematic.

Generally, candidates produced clear aims with linked objectives, focusing on their topic. There was noticeably more use of appropriate action verbs in the construction of aims and objectives so giving clear focus. This was evidenced across all centres and well-structured aims and objectives were a strength of the Projects in a number of centres.

The most successful candidates used the structure given by the aims and objectives to produce their Individual Project.

Learning Outcome 2

Select and plan research methods, resources and materials

Rationales continue to be more variable in quality. As noted in previous reports, the strongest examples included a good balance of description, detail and justification of both primary and secondary resources/methods to be used. The assessment of this learning outcome was generally appropriate and consistent across all centres. There remain a small number of examples of centres being generous in rewarding generic rationales for some able candidates. Top band marks require reference to specific sources with detailed justification for their choice e.g., assessing the credibility. Detailed justification for primary methods is also required for top band marks for example: reference to the choice of sampling technique and issues of representativeness; evaluating validity and reliability of research method. Both primary and secondary choices should be explained and justified for top band marks.

There were a very small number of candidates who wrote their rationale in the past tense – this is inappropriate for a detailed advance plan of what is to be done and why.

There were many strong examples of rationales. It is apparent that candidates are increasingly using the rationale as it is intended and thinking through their research before embarking on producing the Individual Project.

Learning Outcome 3

Select, collate, reference and assess the credibility of information and numerical data

Some centres continue to make good use of the annotated bibliography to demonstrate thorough evaluation of source. As noted in previous reports, this is acceptable however, candidates would also be expected to assess credibility of sources as part of their synthesis and analysis within the main body of their Individual Project.

The most successful candidates were confident in raising the weaknesses of sources selected yet justifying their use due to specific strengths; for example, bias being an issue but the source being used due to the importance of raising a particular viewpoint that was relevant to the topic.

The evaluation of the credibility of primary sources remains less well covered even by high achieving candidates. This is an area for development.

Not all candidates referenced within the body of the text which is best practise and only used a bibliography.

Learning Outcome 4

Analyse the numerical data and display using digital techniques

This learning outcome was most often the weakest, but this cohort saw a significant improvement in the assessment and achievement of this learning outcome possibly due to generally more able candidates being entered rather than full cohorts. Less candidates were reliant on primary data to demonstrate skills – those who did generally were assessed appropriately in the lower bands.

Some centres are successfully encouraging candidates to make good use of secondary data to produce their own graphs for analysis. When mathematical formulae were used, the calculations were generally relevant to the topic and enhanced the analysis of the data.

A number of centres have made significant improvements in the use and analysis of complex data so enabling candidates to achieve and access the top band for this learning outcome.

Learning Outcome 5

Synthesise, analyse and use information and viewpoints

This learning outcome remains commonly the strongest and continues to be appropriately assessed in most centres.

It is worth noting that the most successful candidates avoid a descriptive approach and incorporate different viewpoints for analysis and explicit discussion and are therefore able to access top band marks. Top band marks require breadth and depth and evidence of moving the arguments forward through pulling different strands/evidence together.

Learning Outcome 6

Produce and present an outcome

This learning outcome continues to be a strength of the Individual Projects seen. Assessment in centres was generally appropriate. As noted in previous reports, for top band marks presentation should be of “*outstanding quality*.” The use of abbreviations and frequent spelling errors does not reflect “*outstanding quality*.”

Some high achieving candidates were let down by the presentation of diagrams cut and pasted from sources; size and clarity were common issues.

There were few examples of candidates going significantly over the word count and therefore did not produce the outcome required.

Learning Outcome 7

Make judgements and draw conclusions

The most common approach was this learning outcome was to have a distinct section and for candidates to address each aim in turn. There were also a number of examples of candidates offering an overall conclusion explicitly addressing their initial question. This demonstrated the focus and effective structure of their projects – they remained focused on the topic and their aims and objectives throughout.

The strongest candidates referred to specific statistics/findings to produce detailed, evidence-based conclusions together with clear judgements throughout their Individual Project.

The abstract was increasingly more effectively used by a number of candidates, with fewer examples of the abstract content being more appropriate for the rationale.

Learning Outcome 8

Evaluate own performance in managing an Individual Project

Generally, the quality and focus of self-evaluations was more on the project management as required, rather than general skill development. Fewer candidates focused on evaluation of sources rather than on their own performance. Consequently, this was frequently a strong section for many candidates and appropriately assessed in the majority of centres.

Candidates were more successful in their evaluation of their skills, offering specific examples of how their skills had been developed in their justifications.

Enterprise and Employability Challenge

Centres are reminded that templates, writing frames and scaffolding are unacceptable at this level. There are still similarities amongst candidate work especially in terms of Destination Plans and personal financial considerations.

Learning Outcome 1 – Be able to apply Creativity and Innovation

In this series, there were many examples of innovation venture responses that were creative and imaginative. Nevertheless, there were a number that encompassed ideas in response to a brief, which were still highly simplistic, unoriginal and not commensurate with Advanced level standards. In particular, ideas relating to selling smoothies and holding football tournaments are more suited to National and Foundation level, unless there is something innovative regarding the product/service itself, promotion, placement or manufacture of the product/service. In addition, some candidates are still stating their idea for the innovation venture without considering other ideas that they have come up with, and the process in selecting an idea to proceed with.

The Advanced Enterprise and Employability Challenge requires the generation of an innovation proposal. This is not the same as setting up a business. Indeed, using a business plan template should be discouraged. The innovation venture should allow candidates the opportunity to generate original and creative ideas and the process undertaken in order to select the most appropriate idea. There were examples where this was overlooked by candidates; especially those who had been encouraged to utilise a business plan template. This Challenge is not about setting up business; rather it is about coming up with an innovative response to a brief.

Page 18 of the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate Delivery Handbook details what this skill entails. Creativity and innovation can be demonstrated in each of the tasks within the brief. For Task 1, creativity and innovation could be demonstrated in how the pen portrait is developed and presented. There was often evidence of undertaking skills audits in candidate work, but this is not required. Candidates do not need to include their audits in the evidence presented. It is the skill of bringing together the evidence from the audits into an A4 one-sided document concerned with 'self-promotion' - (i.e., a pen portrait) that is required.

In this series, candidates had used more digital literacy techniques in making their pen portraits stand out. Candidates are also encouraged to consider what information they include in their pen portraits that will be most likely to support self-promotion. In some cases, content was either irrelevant or counter to the notion of self-promotion. They could also demonstrate their use of social media by sharing their pen portrait electronically. Nevertheless, in some examples, candidates produced high quality pen portraits. However, in this series there were pen portraits presented as PowerPoint presentations and lengthy Word documents. Centres are reminded that pen portraits **should not exceed** one A4 sided document.

Task 2 provides candidates with the opportunity to showcase their creativity and innovation skills in generating, analysing and evaluating ideas and coming up with appropriate and effective responses. In many cases, evidence did not demonstrate how candidates had analysed various ideas and selected one to proceed with. Some candidates had simply stated one idea and their innovation proposal was based on how this idea was to be operationalised. This should be an area for centres to focus on. There are many ways ideas generation and selection can be undertaken with examples such as blue-sky thinking, spider diagrams, decision matrices and SWOT analyses. In addition, candidates should also be encouraged to display the findings of their innovation venture creatively, which could also support digital literacy in using electronic methods to present findings. In this Series, many candidate responses did this extremely effectively and were able to score highly for their digital literacy skills. Some innovation ventures were highly effective and could have been created and developed by professional bodies which was highly encouraging.

Learning Outcome 2 – Understanding Personal Effectiveness

Generally, candidates were able to perform well against this Learning Outcome in this Series.

Personal effectiveness involves auditing and development consideration, management of own role and responsibilities and evaluating personal effectiveness which can be demonstrated throughout the Challenge. In Task 2, attention needs to be given in ensuring that candidates are able to explicitly demonstrate that they have been successful in their time management, utilising appropriate behaviour, skills and working relationships. This should not be regarded as an implicit assumption if candidates respond to the brief. Sources of evidence seen in this series included action plans, diaries, minutes of meetings and photographs, but a variety of methods can be utilised. In some responses, candidates included a self-reflection in the form of a log in terms of how well they managed their time or worked with their peers, which was a valuable method in evidencing personal effectiveness.

In Task 3, candidates are required to plan out a journey which will get them to their required destination. This is termed a 'Destination Passport'. Therefore, candidates should identify 2 options and the CV, letter of application, UCAS personal statement, job adverts etc. are intended to be relevant to those selected options. Candidates are expected to describe the skills, qualifications and attributes of their selected destinations and consider their current skills set, identify gaps and consider how they may address them. These skills should be in relation to the skills required in their chosen destinations, and not simply analysis against a generic set of skills. This point was lacking in some of the evidence presented.

The Destination Passport should be a focused activity and not a number of files that contain CVs, job adverts, applications and generic skills analyses; instead, these documents should be entirely relevant to the 2 options described at the start of this task. Candidates should also be encouraged not to simply undertake large scale cut and pasting of adverts, for example. Also, as mentioned earlier, templates must be discouraged.

Task 4 involves undertaking a Personal Reflection Presentation in terms of the skills utilised throughout the Challenge. It requires candidates to reflect on the skills, qualities and attributes they demonstrated through the Challenge, giving clear examples. In some cases, candidates reflected on skills they had used in their place of employment or elsewhere.

Or, they reflected on the outcomes generated in response to the tasks, as opposed to the skills developed in responding to the Challenge. However, the focus is specifically intended to be a reflection based on undertaking the Challenge. This reflection will also provide a naturally occurring opportunity to demonstrate digital literacy skills. In some cases, evidence was lacking in response to Task 4. Candidates should also include any supporting evidence that they have used in carrying out this task.

Learning Outcome 3 – Be able to apply Numeracy

Page 18 of the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate Delivery Handbook gives examples of the types of topics candidates can engage with in order to demonstrate numeracy at advanced level. Achieving higher band scores will be achieved by the complexity of the cost analysis undertaken. In addition, L03 Numeracy achievement of Band 2 and Band 3 on the Enterprise and Employability assessment matrix: (Page 22 of the Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Specification) depends on solving a variety of problems. For example, commercialisation of an innovative product (Task 2) and a personal cost-analysis (Task 3).

Most candidates demonstrated some skills of numeracy as part of Task 2 and Task 3. However, complexity was often lacking in relation to both tasks and it appeared that many candidate responses had been scaffolded or were using a template.

Some candidates had accessed an online cost calculator in relation to university costs and mortgage calculations. This did not allow candidates to demonstrate their skills of numeracy as the online calculator did this for them. In addition, some candidates had listed the price of food items at various supermarkets. Again, this does not demonstrate skills of numeracy. It is also very simplistic for advanced level standards and should be avoided unless another layer of sophistication is added.

In addition, the assessment matrix requires candidates to analyse and interpret numerical results. In many responses in this series, an analysis and interpretation of the results following the application of numerical techniques and methods was missing. Interpretation of numerical calculations is an area which centres should focus on. In some cases, candidates had undertaken some fairly sophisticated calculations involving formulae, percentages, averages and standard deviation but why they had selected these techniques and how it contributed to their personal finance considerations was absent. This should be a focus for centres before future moderation opportunities. Furthermore, some candidates had completed workbooks as evidence of their ability to apply numeracy. This must be avoided as candidates themselves should select appropriate numerical techniques to apply.

Nevertheless, there were some responses that used a variety of techniques to suit their purpose. The use of excel is strongly recommended as this will allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to construct formulas in carrying out calculations and also supports skills of digital literacy.

Learning Outcome 4 – Be able to apply Digital Literacy

Generally, candidates were able to perform well against this Learning Outcome. More candidates are demonstrating highly proficient skills in relation to digital literacy by developing websites, for example, presenting their responses in highly original and creative ways or demonstrating extensive use of effective social media

Digital literacy can be considered as having three elements. Firstly, the organisation, storage, management, sharing and protection of electronic information. Secondly, the ability to use digital techniques to present information, including numerical data, tables, graphs and diagrams along with the manipulation and creation of data and information. Thirdly the application of tools that create, share or exchange information or support collaboration and learning. The use of social media should be evident within the Challenge.

In order to achieve higher grade bandings, candidates should be aiming to produce well-structured responses to each task which also demonstrate appropriate presentation techniques including effective use of tables, graphs and diagrams. This is an area that has improved in comparison to previous series. Some candidate responses still lack features such as, but not restricted to, headings, side headings, page numbers, and inconsistent use of fonts and diagrams/graphs that lacked keys.

In some cases, candidates are still uploading multiple files for each task. This should be avoided for future submissions.

Learning Outcome 5 – Be able to participate in an Enterprise and Employability Challenge

It was pleasing to see that most candidates clearly engaged in this Challenge and produced effective outcomes.

Global Citizenship Challenge

It is pleasing to see a continued pattern of consistently appropriate and high-quality responses to the Advanced Global Citizenship Challenge.

Learning Outcome 1 – Be able to apply Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

It was pleasing to see that candidates were selecting increasingly complex and relevant secondary sources and were able to confidently synthesise PESTLE factors. Where incorrect approaches to the task were seen, it was often in work that had been completed in 2019 and may not therefore have benefitted from recent guidance and centre training. As in previous series, the main issues were Personal Standpoints and Conference Contributions which incorporated solutions or discussed raising awareness.

Overall, whilst there has been significant development in learners' skills evaluating the credibility of sources, it is still only a minority who address each strand of the Learning Outcome and critically discussing each of the characteristics. There were some instances of over awarding this Learning Outcome when source evaluation was rudimentary at best. Pleasingly, the trend to evaluate sources in a separate document and not include in the word count for Task 1 was not seen in this series.

The assessment of problem-solving skills was mainly focused on the evaluation of the chosen solutions. Supporting evidence to demonstrate this decision making should include detailed justification of choices to ensure that this element can be rewarded. This is an area that still requires further development in many centres with this strand being over rewarded.

Learning Outcome 2 – Be able to apply Creativity and Innovation

Whilst there has been significant improvements in candidates' creativity and innovation, this has plateaued slightly. The most successful approach was seen when learners generated a range of innovative solutions which were supported by sufficient detail. This detail often demonstrated that they had really thought through the proposed solution and led to a more detailed and critical evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. However, this Learning Outcome is still the most likely to be too generously awarded when there is a limited range of under-developed solutions.

Learning Outcome 3 – Be able to apply Literacy

Overall, candidates produced high quality work and were able to communicate fluently and accurately. Personal Standpoints demonstrated excellent analysis and synthesis and went on to present compulsive evidence to agree with the opinion expressed. Attainment in this Learning Outcome continues to improve and be accurately assessed by centres. If there was a pattern to over rewarding, it was frequently at the top end of Band 3 where full marks were awarded but not justified by the candidate's accuracy and use of language.

Centres are also more clearly evidencing attainment of this Learning Outcome in Task 2 with comprehensive speaking notes and evidence of question and answer session, although this is still an area for development for some centres.

Again, there were sometimes significant discrepancies in accuracy and fluency between Task 1 and Task 3. Centres must be aware that literacy is assessed across all three tasks and candidates must therefore take care over the accuracy and clarity of their work throughout the Challenge.

Learning Outcome 4 – Understand issues involved in a Global Citizenship Challenge

It was quite clear that candidates had understood the Challenge and genuinely engaged with the issue, demonstrating a desire to do something about it. However, the quality of contributions to the Global Choices conference do not always demonstrate the high quality expected for Band 3 work. There should be conscious thought put into the purpose and audience and how this then affects the presentation and material used. Too often, PowerPoints were cluttered or unclear with little evidence of conscious careful construction. Centres should refer to materials from WJEC autumn 2019 cpd events.

Community Challenge

Centres are reminded that templates, writing frames and scaffolding are unacceptable at this level. Only industry standard templates such as risk assessments or minutes of meeting pro-forma are permitted.

Learning Outcome 1 – Be able to apply Planning and Organising

Planning and organisation can be evidenced across each task of the Community Challenge. In terms of the Proposal, evidence demonstrated candidates were able to generally utilise a clear structure, with research into the community groups and potential impacts on the community being particularly strong along with detailed analyses of skills.

However, candidates do not need to define terms such as ‘community’. This should be covered in the prior teaching and learning. In some cases, learners in a cohort used the same sub-headings in their work, which they followed rigidly. Centres are to be reminded that Task 1 is to be completed under controlled assessment (or word count) and therefore candidates’ work is unlikely to follow the same format.

Templates for a Proposal are not permitted. Candidates should be encouraged to write less prescriptively, which is appropriate at this level. The setting of aims and objectives for self and for the community activity is an essential element to the Proposal. Candidates should also be encouraged to set sub targets in order to fully demonstrate their planning and organising skills. Candidates should also be encouraged to set personal SMART targets when planning each element of their activity. In some cases, candidates were not clear as to the difference between an aim and an objective, nor were aims and objectives realistic. This continues to be a focus for centres. If a candidate can be accurate and realistic with their aims and objectives, this will then provide a clear structure and guide for the remainder of the planning and organisation of the community activity Proposal and the subsequent Personal Reflection Presentation.

The planning of the activities still lacks details in some cases and is an area to be developed. Candidates should be encouraged to consider identification and allocation of resources to activities, along with risk considerations. They should also be encouraged to use Gantt charts and other digital programs such as a project management tool. However, in using Gantt charts, candidates must ensure that their use is not superficial. Gantt charts can show what tasks can be done simultaneously and in the required order and should not simply list each task which starts as the previous task is completed. Candidates should also set Success Criteria, so that they may determine the degree of success of their community activity in achieving its purpose. In terms of the Personal Reflection Presentations, some candidates simply repeated the content of their Proposal. Instead candidates should reflect on their personal contribution to the planning and organisation process.

Learning Outcome 2 – Understand Personal Effectiveness

In this series, nearly all candidates demonstrated a realistic ability to use skills audits and analyse the results. Where this was done particularly well, candidates made clear links between the Proposal and an explanation of how their personal skills would make an impact upon the final Challenge. Centres are to be reminded that the skills audit should be analysed in Task 1 before deciding on an appropriate community activity. Copies of skills audits are not required as the focus is on how the candidate analyses the results and how effectively they consider how the identified skills can be used, improved and developed during the community activity.

Some candidates did not provide clear visual or written evidence of them being personally effective in carrying out the activities. It is essential that all candidates collate a variety of evidence of carrying out the activity to access the higher bands. Many successful candidates included annotated pictures, pupil/student voice questionnaires, other stakeholder feedback and/or diaries/log as supporting evidence of not only their personal effectiveness but the impact of the activity in addressing its purpose, including the initial aims and objectives and success criteria. However, centres are reminded that diaries and logs should not be a template, but a document that the candidate has produced in order to record their personal effectiveness.

Some confirmation statements were missing from candidates' work. Confirmation statements are required by all candidates and are essential for assessment. The Confirmation Statement should include comments on how the learner has performed; this may be completed by a member of staff or someone in the community in which the learner has worked. Some candidates were able to provide basic reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of their own personal effectiveness, but sometimes when working as a team did not reflect on team skills. They should also consider the personal benefits they have experienced as a result of taking part in the activity. This is an area for development for future submissions

Learning Outcome 3 – Be able to participate in a Community Challenge

Centres are reminded that candidate evidence should only include the following:

1. A Proposal which should be in the form of one concise document
2. A Confirmation Statement and supporting evidence of carrying out the activity throughout the 30 hours
3. A Personal Reflective Presentation with speech notes

Generally, Proposals completed by all learners were credible. However, centres should ensure that proposed community activities are appropriate for the level of the learners, including allowing them the ability to fully plan, organise and monitor tasks and sub tasks. In some cases, proposals were too simplistic for Advanced level. For example, dog walking provides very little opportunity for a candidate to demonstrate their planning and organising skills. It was evident that nearly all candidates had understood the Challenge and successfully participated in community activities. However, the lack of evidence is still an area to be address for future submissions.

Candidates are encouraged to gather as much supporting evidence as possible to support their community activity, collating a sample of their evidence effectively in order to fully demonstrate planning and organisation, personal effectiveness and overall impact of the activity. In some cases, the Confirmation Statement was the only evidence provided and not all Community Confirmation Statements were fully completed with notes supporting the level of contribution to the Challenge.

Generally, the Personal Reflection Presentations are another area for centres to focus on. Candidates should reflect on whether they achieved their initial aims and objectives and Success Criteria, along with outlining with supporting evidence of the impact of the community activity. Personal Reflection Presentations should not duplicate the content already presented in Tasks 1 and 2. Centres are also reminded that the Personal Reflection Presentation should be of at least 10 minutes and Task 3 should include a copy of the presentation with speakers' notes.

Overall, there were some excellent responses in relation to this Challenge and much evidence demonstrated the impact the proposal and implementation of the proposal had on the selected community.