OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

PROJECTS

Moderators' report

EXTENDED PROJECT

H857
For first teaching in 2017

H857/01/02 Summer 2024 series

Contents

Introduction

Our moderators' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Online courses

We have created online courses to build your confidence in delivering, marking, and administering internal assessment for our qualifications. Courses are available for Cambridge Nationals, GCSE, A Level and Cambridge Technicals (2016).

Cambridge Nationals

All teachers delivering our redeveloped Cambridge Nationals suite from September 2022 are asked to complete the Essentials for the NEA course, which describes how to guide and support your students. You'll receive a certificate which you should retain.

Following this you can also complete a subject-specific Focus on Internal Assessment course for your individual Cambridge Nationals qualification, covering marking and delivery.

GCSE, A Level and Cambridge Technicals (2016)

We recommend all teachers complete the introductory module Building your Confidence in Internal Assessment, which covers key internal assessment and standardisation principles.

Following this you will find a subject-specific course for your individual qualification, covering marking criteria with examples and commentary, along with interactive marking practice.

Accessing our online courses

You can access all our online courses from our teacher support website [Teach Cambridge](#).

You will find links relevant to your subject under Assessment, NEA/Coursework and then Online Courses from the left hand menu on your Subject page.

If you have any queries, please contact our Customer Support Centre on 01223 553998 or email support@ocr.org.uk.

Would you prefer a Word version?

Did you know that you can save this PDF as a Word file using Acrobat Professional?

Simply click on **File > Export to** and select **Microsoft Word**

(If you have opened this PDF in your browser you will need to save it first. Simply right click anywhere on the page and select **Save as . . .** to save the PDF. Then open the PDF in Acrobat Professional.)

If you do not have access to Acrobat Professional there are a number of **free** applications available that will also convert PDF to Word (search for PDF to Word converter).

General overview

Once again, thank you to centres and teachers who support candidates in their individual, independent work to complete an EPQ. Your efforts are greatly appreciated and make a huge difference to candidates as they move to the next stage of their lives.

The most effective projects were produced by candidates who had genuine interest in their topics, whether this was an academic interest, a topic related to a personal hobby or an artefact, event or performance which was close to their hearts. These candidates were more able to persevere and find motivation to keep going through the inevitable difficulties. They were also more likely to narrow a research question or produced a targeted, effective brief.

Selecting an appropriate topic and narrowing it so that it is focused and targeted is essential. Where candidates did this, it provided a suitable framework for the rest of the project. In some instances, projects were too limited or too large in scope to be suitable for a Level 3 qualification with 120 GLH.

Most candidates set aims for their projects, but there remains a need at times for these aims to link more fully to planned outcomes. It is acceptable for some aims to relate to skills development, but some should also relate to the steps which need to be taken to achieve planned outcomes. If this is not done, it becomes harder to candidates to plan those steps, and harder to evaluate success against those aims.

Assessment for learning
At least some aims should relate to the steps needed to achieve planned outcomes.

Assessment for learning
Where candidates have specific areas in which they need to develop, they can identify this in their aims. Their improvement can then be taken into consideration in AO3.

There was evidence of a range of strategies used for topic selection. Many of these were effective, including justifications of topic choice and mini presentations, which gave the candidates confidence for their evaluative presentations later in the process. However, planning relating to topic choice should not outweigh planning and management of the project. At times candidates who already knew which area they wanted to pursue because it was a genuine passion produced performative and time-consuming evaluations of topics which they had no intention of studying. These candidates would be better focusing on selecting a targeted, focused aspect of the topic they are passionate about and working towards a refined research question. In other instances, candidates produced large quantities of activities relating to topic choice and still ended up with a broad, descriptive topic or with a topic with little potential for development. In these cases, candidates would be better focusing their efforts on finding an aspect of a topic which can be made to work – in many cases it can be worth considering an event, artefact, or performance.

A range of planning and management strategies was used, often effectively. This year a greater number of centres used online project management apps, and this was often successful.

Diaries are a required document. The strongest show reflection, evaluation, ongoing review to keep the project on track, problem solving, next-step planning and thoughts about the process. It is less effective where candidates merely describe what they have done, or where successes are merely a rephrasing of what has been done. For example:

"I read two articles. Success: reading two articles." This could be developed into something along the lines of:

"I read two articles. I found one of them really hard to understand, but I kept trying. I looked up some of the terms I didn't understand and made a list of easier sources on this topic to help me make progress. I'll look at those tomorrow. I'm proud that I didn't give up."

Diaries, incidentally, should not be drafted and improved. They should be working documents which are produced in real time as tools.

There was evidence of some strong research, which narrowed and deepened during the EPQ journey. There was also evidence of more shallow research using more superficial resources.

Source evaluations are required. These should include a consideration of the usefulness of a source for the candidate's project and an evaluation of the credibility and reliability of the source.

Assessment for learning

Source evaluations

Candidates should evaluate both the usefulness of the source for their purposes and the credibility of the source using a tool such as CRAAP.

Many candidates produced in-text citations and bibliographies using appropriate conventions. Some separated reference lists and bibliographies which included sources they had read but not directly quoted. This is good practice. However, in many cases there was a need for significant improvement of citation and referencing. Many candidates simply produced lists of hyperlinks (which cannot be followed once the page is printed) or URLs. Some candidates did not produce in-text citations or bibliographies.

Moderators continue to see candidates who believe that they must produce primary research. Many of these produce a survey which lacks purpose and offers little to their project outcome. Primary research is encouraged, but it is not compulsory, and should always contribute to project outcomes. Where effective primary research was conducted this often included, for example, interviews, email exchanges with experts or visits to appropriate locations. There were instances of effective surveys in appropriate areas, but these were outweighed by the ineffective surveys. Where candidates conduct primary research and realise that it is not effective, it is still possible to showcase it by analysing why it was not effective or did not contribute to their projects and by discussing what was done instead.

Candidates all developed a range of skills, many of them effectively. Skills developed should be appropriate to the project and serve project aims. Effective use was made of skills audits and drafts – although these should always be used with purpose and thought. Skills audits which do not go beyond ticking boxes are not likely to be effective. Submitting drafts of dissertations or manifestations of an artefact showing improvement can be useful. However, where three drafts of a dissertation are submitted and only typos are corrected, this is less effective.

There was evidence of effective evaluation and effective communication in presentations. Submission of videos of presentations is not necessary but it is extremely informative for moderators. In some cases candidates produced mini evaluations of various pieces of work, which meant that, by the time they

reached their final evaluations, they had significantly developed their evaluation skills. There is still room for ongoing review to keep the project on track to be evidenced.

Overall, there was much good practice, and almost every candidate commented on how much they had got out of their EPQ. Thank you.

Candidates who did well generally:	Candidates who did less well generally:
- selected a topic which genuinely interested them - refined a research question (or, for an artefact or event, a brief) which was targeted and focused - planned and managed work carefully and painstakingly - made and justified changes to their plans and topics - used appropriate research methodologies - produced well-formatted in-text citations and bibliographies - narrowed and deepened research as they progressed - recognised the iterative nature of research and writing - developed skills appropriate to their outcome - evaluated project outcomes and journeys and conducted ongoing reviews with genuine self-reflection and insight.	- selected a generic topic or a topic they weren't interested in - continued with a general topic, often descriptive - underestimated the importance of planning and management - stuck to topics and plans even when they weren't on track - used inappropriate research methodologies - omitted in-text citations and bibliographies OR used hyperlinks or URLs instead of formatting references and citations - researched broadly and shallowly OR narrowly and shallowly - identified but did not fill gaps in their research when they were writing - developed skills which did not necessarily drive their projects forward - produced 'evaluations' which were descriptive or lacked awareness of strengths and weaknesses.

Most common causes of centres not passing

The most common weaknesses in submissions were:

- an apparent lack of the required taught element. The specification requires thirty hours of taught time covering the skills that candidates will need in their independent work

- portfolios submitted without sufficient supporting evidence. There must be a URS, a PPR, a diary, an outcome (plus a written report for artefacts, events, and performances), a presentation, evidence that the presentation took place, and a portfolio of evidence covering the Assessment objectives

- portfolios submitted with so much irrelevant material that moderators struggle to find relevant evidence. Every page submitted should contribute

- generic, unfocused, descriptive topics. These should be refined into a research question or brief.

Common misconceptions

Misconceptions this year related predominantly to the contents of the portfolio and to research.

Misconception

?

'A template is essential for the portfolio'

Whilst templates are used effectively in some centres, with each candidate adapting them to suit the needs of their own projects and learning styles, they can also stifle creativity and independence.

Misconception

?

'The moderator wants to see everything candidates have produced, especially bulky artwork and photocopies of books'

Moderators want to see a curated portfolio of evidence which demonstrates candidates' EPQ journeys and their development across the assessment objectives. They want to easily locate key evidence to justify marking decisions. This must include a URS, a PPR, a diary, an outcome (and a written piece if the outcome is an artefact or event), a presentation and evidence that the presentation has taken place. There should be evidence across the AOs, but this should be targeted.

Bulky items can be evidenced through thorough photographing or videoing.

Where candidates want to provide evidence of their research, this can take the form of:

- one or two pages of annotated photocopies
- other notes
- a bibliography
- a source analysis document
- effective use and citation of the research in the outcome.

Misconception

'All projects should use the same research methodology. Everyone should use academic sources and produce a survey'

Projects should use *appropriate* research methodology.

Primary research should be purposeful, appropriate to the project and drive project outcomes. Surveys should be conducted only where they can meaningfully add to the outcome. Other forms of primary research include interviews, visits to relevant locations and email exchanges with experts.

Secondary research should usually aim to include academic sources but can include government, NGO and business reports, statistics collected by others, high quality news reports, for example.

Artefact projects are likely to make more use of visual research, trial and error research, technique, or coding tutorials, for example.

Misconception

'Research is information collection and assembly'

Candidates should collect ideas, arguments, and evidence, but they should also engage with these and understand the context in which they exist. Research material should be used to inform and support candidates' own thinking.

Misconception

'A list of hyperlinks or URLs is enough'

At the very bottom of the range, where candidates might genuinely struggle to produce a bibliography and in-text citations, a list of hyperlinks or URLs is better than nothing and can avoid potential malpractice. Across the rest of the range, however, candidates must at least attempt to format references and citations using an approved convention. At the top of the range, it is expected that this should be done well. This can be part of the taught element of the course.

Misconception

'My dissertation is too hard so I can just do a presentation and call it an artefact'

It is, of course, possible to make changes mid-project, and where these are justified and fully planned and managed, this can be effective. However, an artefact is not an easier option to a dissertation. Artefacts are substantial pieces of work which require different planning and research and cannot effectively be substituted for a dissertation at the last minute.

Avoiding potential malpractice

In order to avoid potential malpractice:

- teachers should not offer written feedback

- candidates should cite and reference every source they use, even where they have paraphrased

- candidates should complete work themselves and avoid using AI.

Helpful resources

There are a range of teacher guides on Teach Cambridge covering topics such as planning, presenting evidence and researching and referencing.

Additional comments

Overall, thank you so much for all the hard work that you all put into supporting candidates in their independent work and in administering the EPQ. Generally, this was effectively done. There were, however, a number of areas of administration which could be improved at times:

- there were instances of required documents such as PPRs, URSs, outcomes and presentations not being submitted as part of the portfolio. This can delay the moderation process

- URSs contained arithmetic errors and at times unclear final marks following internal moderation. While moderators understand how arithmetic errors can occur during time-pressured marking, they do slow moderation down

- moderators reported incomplete PPRs. These are required documents and must be present and complete. They must include candidate numbers and signatures. They must also include a list of the other qualifications candidates are taking, and an explanation of how they are developing beyond their A-Level subjects where they are researching in the same area. Ideally candidates would use the PPR as a working document to genuinely think about how to manage their projects

- submissions to Submit for Assessment. In general, thank you for using electronic submission, which facilitates OCR's internal processes. However, at times, there was a need for documents submitted to be much more clearly and effectively labelled. Each file name should include the candidate number and the name of the document, e.g. 1234_Presentation or 5678_PPR. It is acceptable to organise documents into one large file, but it helps if the URS is at the top, followed by the PPR.

- labelling. All files, folders and required documents should include the centre and candidate numbers. Moderators use numbers not names – although a list of names with associated numbers can be useful in cases of errors made in writing candidate numbers.

Supporting you

Teach Cambridge

Make sure you visit our secure website **Teach Cambridge** to find the full range of resources and support for the subjects you teach. This includes secure materials such as set assignments and exemplars, online and on-demand training.

Don't have access? If your school or college teaches any OCR qualifications, please contact your exams officer. You can forward them this link to help get you started.

Reviews of marking

If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our post-results services. For full information about the options available visit the OCR website.

Keep up-to-date

We send a monthly bulletin to tell you about important updates. You can also sign up for your subject specific updates. If you haven't already, sign up here.

OCR Professional Development

Attend one of our popular CPD courses to hear directly from a senior assessor or drop in to a Q&A session. Most of our courses are delivered live via an online platform, so you can attend from any location.

Please find details for all our courses for your subject on **Teach Cambridge**. You'll also find links to our online courses on NEA marking and support.

Signed up for ExamBuilder?

ExamBuilder is a free test-building platform, providing unlimited users exclusively for staff at OCR centres with an Interchange account.

Choose from a large bank of questions to build personalised tests and custom mark schemes, with the option to add custom cover pages to simulate real examinations. You can also edit and download complete past papers.

Find out more.

You will need an Interchange account to access our digital products. If you do not have an Interchange account please contact your centre administrator (usually the Exams Officer) to request a username, or nominate an existing Interchange user in your department.

Online courses

Enhance your skills and confidence in internal assessment

What are our online courses?

Our online courses are self-paced eLearning courses designed to help you deliver, mark and administer internal assessment for our qualifications. They are suitable for both new and experienced teachers who want to refresh their knowledge and practice.

Why should you use our online courses?

With these online courses you will:

- learn about the key principles and processes of internal assessment and standardisation

- gain a deeper understanding of the marking criteria and how to apply them consistently and accurately

- see examples of student work with commentary and feedback from OCR moderators

- have the opportunity to practise marking and compare your judgements with those of OCR moderators

- receive instant feedback and guidance on your marking and standardisation skills

- be able to track your progress and achievements through the courses.

How can you access our online courses?

Access courses from [Teach Cambridge](#). Teach Cambridge is our secure teacher website, where you'll find all teacher support for your subject.

If you already have a Teach Cambridge account, you'll find available courses for your subject under Assessment - NEA/Coursework - Online courses. Click on the blue arrow to start the course.

If you don't have a Teach Cambridge account yet, ask your exams officer to set you up – just send them this [link](#) and ask them to add you as a Teacher.

Access the courses **anytime, anywhere and at your own pace**. You can also revisit the courses as many times as you need.

Which courses are available?

There are **two types** of online course: an **introductory module** and **subject-specific** courses.

The introductory module, Building your Confidence in Internal Assessment, is designed for all teachers who are involved in internal assessment for our qualifications. It covers the following topics:

- the purpose and benefits of internal assessment

- the roles and responsibilities of teachers, assessors, internal verifiers and moderators

- the principles and methods of standardisation

- the best practices for collecting, storing and submitting evidence

- the common issues and challenges in internal assessment and how to avoid them.

The subject-specific courses are tailored for each qualification that has non-exam assessment (NEA) units, except for AS Level and Entry Level. They cover the following topics:

- the structure and content of the NEA units

- the assessment objectives and marking criteria for the NEA units

- examples of student work with commentary and feedback for the NEA units

- interactive marking practice and feedback for the NEA units.

We are also developing courses for some of the examined units, which will be available soon.

How can you get support and feedback?

If you have any queries, please contact our Customer Support Centre on 01223 553998 or email support@ocr.org.uk.

We welcome your feedback and suggestions on how to improve the online courses and make them more useful and relevant for you. You can share your views by completing the evaluation form at the end of each course.

Need to get in touch?

If you ever have any questions about OCR qualifications or services (including administration, logistics and teaching) please feel free to get in touch with our customer support centre.

Call us on
01223 553998

Alternatively, you can email us on
support@ocr.org.uk

For more information visit
- **ocr.org.uk/qualifications/resource-finder**
- **ocr.org.uk**
- **facebook.com/ocrexams**
- **twitter.com/ocrexams**
- **instagram.com/ocrexaminations**
- **linkedin.com/company/ocr**
- **youtube.com/ocrexams**

We really value your feedback

Click to send us an autogenerated email about this resource. Add comments if you want to. Let us know how we can improve this resource or what else you need. Your email address will not be used or shared for any marketing purposes.

👍 **I like this**   👎 **I dislike this**

Please note – web links are correct at date of publication but other websites may change over time. If you have any problems with a link you may want to navigate to that organisation's website for a direct search.