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# Foundation and Higher Project Qualifications

7991 and 7992

Report on the Examination

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June 2018

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Version: 1.0

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The entry for both levels of the Project Qualification showed an increase over that for June 2018. Moderators were impressed with the quality of much of what they saw and the perceived value of the qualification in centres. A Level 1 Foundation Project, for example, submitted by a Key Stage 3 student, was entitled 'Evaluating the importance of the ratio of ingredients when making a Victoria Sponge', and seemed to fully capture the spirit of the qualification with the student conducting initial research and then devising her own experiment to be able to offer her a conclusion to the issue raised. A Level 2 Higher Project, also submitted by a Key Stage 3 student, and entitled 'Would a White and wealthier community living in Grenfell have been treated the same?', prompted the student's supervisor to comment that '... unlike some of the EPQ students that I have supervised, who see the project as a means to get into a better university, (this student) has completed her project for the sheer love of learning'. For another student the supervisor commented that completing the project had 'been a great motivator for (the student) ... to possibly take an EPQ in the Sixth Form, and this has been so pleasing to see'.

As with previous series, a significant part of this entry consisted of Key Stage 3 students. In earlier series there had been a concern that centres entering KS3 students might not have appreciated that the measure against which the Project Qualifications is assessed is that of a GCSE qualification. It was encouraging to note that there were very few cases where this appeared to be an issue this time.

In the main, centres evidenced having a sound understanding of the AQA standard with marks being appropriately awarded against each of the assessment objectives. In a large number of centres, students typically evidenced a clear understanding of the Project assessment objectives and also provided clear evidence of the skills they had employed in completing their projects. Students from these centres understood the importance of the AQA Production Log in providing a full and detailed evidence of the students' project journey. Some new centres appeared to have under-valued the role of the Production Log with entries in these lacking detail and reflection and, therefore, not adequately evidencing the students' project 'journey'. A few centres still encouraged students to use alternative 'diaries' that added little useful information but frequently persuaded students to use the AQA Production Log less fully. Many students chose to create Gantt charts to help them plan their projects but, having created these, it was often difficult to find evidence of how they were actually used. It is worth repeating the point made in previous reports that it was usually the case that differences in students' overall performance were mostly influenced by how effectively they had used the Production Log.

Comment has been made in previous reports regarding the role of the supervisor. At Level 2 the role of the supervisor is to 'guide' students, whereas at Level 1 it is to 'support' students. In the latter case it may be appropriate for supervisors to provide templates for students in planning their presentations, or for structuring their reports, but in neither case is it appropriate for supervisors to 'tell' students which sources they should use, or what 'content' they should use for their reports. This amounts to over-direction and is inappropriate. In the few cases where evidence of this was presented, it was seen that this diminished the evidence for AO1 Manage and AO3 Develop & Realise, as the ability of the student to 'manage' their own project was reduced.

For AO2 Use Resources, moderators noted some variation in the resources that students had chosen to access in researching for their projects. Inevitably, web-based resources were prominent but better projects recognised that a variety could be still be evidenced through the use of, for example, more specialised websites, research papers and documentaries, whilst others tended to rely solely upon media-based sources. There was a growing number of students conducting literature reviews and, at Level 2, of students clearly evidencing how they had evaluated their sources by the use of, for example, source evaluation grids. Referencing seemed to be a skill that

most centres had spent some time teaching and, although there were inconsistencies in its application, this was generally well-evidenced.

Product outcomes still saw the 'long' written report as the most popular project 'product' although a number of successful artefact based projects were submitted. It was pleasing to note that centres appear to have a much better understanding of what constitutes an appropriate artefact, with the research base for these being clearly evidenced and success criteria being established. Where this type of project was less successful, students had been allowed to produce 'something' without any clear rationale for it being offered and lacking an understanding that clearly evidenced research should be carried out. In these situations, students had been poorly supported by their centre.

Moderators continue to be encouraged by the evidence from many centres of a robust project approval process. Students had been encouraged to confirm that they had considered a number of potentially useful sources at the Initial Ideas stage, and this contributed to the viability of the proposed project. Students were frequently challenged to review the focus and wording of their titles and moderators noted very few inappropriate titles, for example, those set out as a single word or short phrase.

Past reports have commented upon the purpose of the mid-project review and moderators still saw some evidence of a misunderstanding of the purpose of this review meeting. Centres should note that this review meeting marks the completion, by the student, of the research phase of their project and an agreement as to the final title and nature of the outcome. Once this formal agreement has been reached, then the student should move on to the production phase of their project. As in previous series, a few centres encouraged students to start planning and drafting their report prior to the mid-project review. This is not appropriate and does not evidence a sound understanding of the project process.

Moderators were pleased to see evidence of an improved understanding of the role of the presentation. Most projects seen in this series provided clear evidence of supervisors recording how students had been able to respond to questions asked of them in their presentations. The presentation 'question and answer' session offers the student a final opportunity to fully evidence their project journey.

As with previous series, there was no clear pattern in adjustments made to centre marking, except in so far as marks were often awarded at the top of a particular mark band where the evidence submitted did not support this. Where marks have been adjusted centres are strongly advised to attend the AQA standardisation meetings to ensure that the assessment criteria are understood and applied correctly in future submissions.

In the great majority of cases centres submitted marks promptly via e-submissions, and in many cases, in advance of the May 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. Where marks are submitted in advance of the deadline it would be helpful to the moderation team if the requested sample might be sent off immediately. Whilst some centres did this, many waited until after the deadline to make their dispatch. It is encouraging to note that very few centres failed to submit a completed Centre Declaration Sheet. A few centres entered an incorrect total mark on the Record of Marks sheet. In these cases moderators were appreciative of the efficiency with which centres rectified this error to enable moderation to be completed. Centres are reminded that, where more than one supervisor is involved in the marking of projects, then the 'box' on the Record of Marks sheet should be completed where a project has been internally moderated. Better evidence was seen in this series of the internal moderation of marking with clear comments being provided by the centre coordinator for the reasons for either supporting or for changing marks. However, it was clear that some of the adjustments to centre marking arose from a lack of internal moderation of marking.

It was of concern, albeit in a few cases, that centres did not appear to have contingency plans in place in the event of staff changes. Whilst it is the rule that a supervisor will work with a student for the duration of their project, it is accepted that unforeseeable situations may arise where this does not occur. In the interests of the student(s) concerned it must be hoped that a centre does all possible to ensure that students are enabled to successfully complete the qualification. Centres are reminded that in such a situation centres may choose to seek guidance from their AQA Project Adviser.

There were few instances of students submitting their work in bulky ring-binders, or of including unnecessary additional material - usually 'print-offs' of sources that had been consulted. The best submissions saw students clearly indicating the separate elements of their projects – the log, the written report and the presentation.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

### **Converting Marks into UMS marks**

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

[UMS conversion calculator](#)