

CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL PROJECT QUALIFICATION

Paper 9980/01
Project

Key messages

Candidates explored a broad range of topics and learning a wide range of skills. They demonstrated enthusiasm for their research topics in the production of their report.

General comments

Planning and preparation are key to a successful project, with a productive working relationship between the candidate, their supervisor and the centre coordinator central to success. Candidates need to develop appropriate research skills and many projects demonstrated their success. The log is evidence of this; it demonstrates the candidate's journey through the project from an initial question, via the research process, to a viable conclusion. The role of the supervisor is important as a support so, for example, a log entry might say, 'I met with my supervisor and afterwards I reflected on our discussion about waves and I decided to extend the scope of my research'. There are resources on the subject pages of the Cambridge International website to support centres and candidates; making use of these can have a beneficial impact at all stages of a project. A key area of this material relates to the project title. The title sets the trajectory for the project and should be considered in conjunction with the assessment criteria where the focus is on research, analysis and evaluation, so a title is best formulated as a question which allows the candidate to explore their chosen research topic from this perspective.

Most centres have managed the practicalities of submitting a considerable amount of information well. Projects should be submitted once and in Microsoft Word (.docx) format. The report has a limit of 5000 words; any text beyond this limit will not be included in the assessment. The bibliography should be submitted as a separate Word file; as should the research log. The log is a key element of the project and should provide a purposeful but succinct record of the candidate's thoughts and actions alongside references to their design and planning, evidencing the way their research has supported the evolution of their project. Additional files containing evidence of the research undertaken are not required.

Comments on specific assessment objectives

AO1 Research

Many projects begin with a title page which was helpful to clarify the final title of the project and most also provided a word count, the latter is an important requirement. Many projects also included a table of contents which was useful and shows both design and planning. The best projects used a research question as this to provide a clear focus for their research. Once the question has been stated it was then thoughtfully justified in a short introduction, often by explaining why the particular topic was of interest to the candidate or commenting on their personal connection to the area they had chosen to focus on in their research. A project with a statement as the title can lead to a lot of detailed information which is largely descriptive or narrative. Successful projects used their question to guide the material included in the report as well as justifying the research methods used. This could be linked to the kind of research available, the skills of the candidate, the time they had available or limitations linked to resources and facilities. Some projects used appropriate research methods but without providing any justification for their selection and an exploration of this area is an important aspect in terms of the overall success of a project. Projects should also provide evidence of design and planning. Evidence for this could be provided by a focused table of contents, which can incorporate useful subheadings to guide the report writer and reader and could also be clearly evidenced in the log. The most useful research logs contained not only a timeline of what happened but also charted the

developmental steps the candidate had taken as a result of their research. Less successful logs were often simply a list of dates and what was done, without evidence of how this had an impact on the evolution of the project. There were some instances where the log contained an evaluation of source, the strengths and weaknesses of the project or a reflection section; these aspects need to be in the report to gain credit.

AO1 Analysis

The best projects demonstrated excellent analysis of the sources used and of any findings conducted through primary research, often doing so with an explanation of what the sources or findings showed as well as making connections or drawing out distinctions. This analysis was clearly focused on the research question at regular points in the report. This structure enabled a candidate to consolidate their evidence into reasoned conclusions based on the evidence provided, which in turn created a framework which led to a clear overall answer to the research question, thus demonstrating that it was logical and reflective as well as soundly based on evidence. Some projects included information from different sources but with little attempt to analyse them or use them as building blocks in an argument, making it hard to move up the assessment levels. In some projects a large amount of factual information was included but in a descriptive or narrative way rather than engaging in any clear analysis; it was sometimes not easy to know if this material was being reproduced from sources verbatim or had been put into the candidate's own words. The more descriptive approach made it harder to see the development of an argument or any ongoing conclusions which could help the candidate build towards an overall conclusion.

AO1 Evaluation

The best projects included a high level of evaluation of both the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods they had used. This was done, for example, by exploring gaps in data or pointing out strengths and/or shortcomings of a given research method. The sources used in the report were also evaluated; this was sometimes by explaining the legitimacy of the source or its author, or by discussing the strengths and limitations of the argument an author had developed in the source. Less successful reports did not give any detail on the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods or sources used whilst some were one-sided in their evaluation, often focusing on weaknesses rather than strengths. Some reports contained little or no evaluation of the sources used; a good starting point would be to say, for example, that the author is a world renowned expert from a prestigious research institution and so the material used has value.

AO2 Reflection

Some of the best reports included a section headed 'Reflection', but this was not essential as the reflection can be woven into the report. The most successful reflected on the overall strengths and limitations of their project; this might be in relation to the range of evidence they had found, as well as what had gone well, and any particular issues related to the candidate's situation. Successful reports also reflected on the impact the project had on a candidate; this was focused on the role of their research in reinforcing, developing or altering their views on their chosen topic. Some projects contained very little or no reflection; others focused on skills which have been acquired or their enjoyment of the project, but such comments do not meet the requirements of the assessment criteria. A number of projects make detailed recommendations as to areas for future researchers; this is not part of the assessment criteria.

AO3 Communication

The most successful projects had a logical structure and were clear and easy to follow, no matter how technical or complex the subject matter. Many candidates communicated effectively using subject-specific terminology accurately; this enhanced the overall quality of the report and was especially useful in supporting a reader through a particularly technical research topic. Successful reports clearly demonstrated results candidates have drawn, whether from research material or experiments or surveys they conducted by making use of appropriate methods such as tables, graphs and charts. The most successful reports included a consistent and appropriate format in their bibliography by including the author, title and date, as well as a working link for internet sources if this was possible. Some reports were less organised in their referencing and in their presentation of data – there might be a lack of consistency in referencing, data might not be in the most appropriate format or it might not be in a place in the report where it could help a candidate build their argument. Some bibliographies were very brief, some were erratic in the level of citation given, or provided links that did not work, whilst others referenced sources that could provide context but were not of a suitably rigorous nature to be used in a report at this level. The bibliography is a key element of a successful project and merits the same level of attention as the report and the log.