# CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL PROJECT QUALIFICATION

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**Paper 9980/01**
**Project**

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## General comments

At the root of a successful project is good planning and preparation alongside a productive and supportive working relationship between the candidate, their Supervisor and the centre coordinator – with this relationship being candidate led. As part of the Cambridge IPQ, candidates have the opportunity to develop high level research skills and many projects demonstrate that these skills have been acquired. The log is an important method by which these factors can be demonstrated as a successful log will show the evolution of a project from the process of devising an initial question through to the final written report. Although an important aspect of the process is the relationship between the candidate and their Supervisor, as mentioned above, the candidate should take the lead and the Supervisor and the centre coordinator play supporting roles. There is plenty of support in the extensive resources on the subject pages of the Cambridge International website; centres can make use of these and should encourage candidates to read them carefully so that one of the skills they acquire is ownership of the process of crafting an original research project. Of particular relevance is material giving guidance on the choosing of the project title and this is worthy of close attention. The title sets the direction for the project so choosing one in conjunction with the assessment criteria, with their focus on analysis and evaluation, helps the candidate explore their chosen research topic from a perspective which will allow them to access all areas and levels of the assessment criteria.

Most centres manage the practical issues around submission well. Projects should be submitted once in Microsoft Word (.docx) format. The report has a limit of 5000 words; text beyond this limit will not be included in the assessment of the project. As words are at a premium, an acknowledgements section is not required, neither is a section with suggestions for further research by others. A small number of projects have been seen with teacher comments still visible; only the final 'clean' version should be submitted. The bibliography should be submitted as a separate MS Word file, as should the research log. Excel, electronic or hand written logs as well as photographs of logs should be avoided and there is no need to submit viva slides. The log is a key element; as indicated above it supports the research process and at best provides a purposeful, succinct record of the candidate's thoughts and actions alongside references to their design and planning, evidencing the way their research has supported the development of the project. It is not appropriate to include material in the log which the candidate has omitted from their report as they have already reached the word limit.

## Comments on specific assessment objectives

### AO1 Research

In this series many, but not all, reports began with a title page – this helps to clarify the final title and a word count should be included. A table of contents helps to understand the flow of a report. The best projects used a question rather than a statement as their title to help in setting an analytical and evaluative focus. The question could then be thoughtfully justified in a short introduction, perhaps by explaining why the candidate had chosen their topic. Projects with a statement as their title often contained extensive and detailed information of a largely descriptive or narrative flavour.

Successful projects used their question to guide the material included in the report, set in the context of a justification of their research methods. Their decision might be based on the kind of research available, the skills of the candidate or limitations linked to resources and facilities. Some projects used appropriate research methods but without any explanation as to why; detail on this aspect is a key element of a successful project in accessing the higher assessment levels.

The most successful projects also demonstrated good planning and design; this might be seen in the table of contents and useful subheadings, and also in the log. The most useful logs contained a timeline and evidenced the development of the project by explaining how a candidate had planned their research as well as how particular sources supported its evolution in terms of their usefulness or otherwise. A simple list of dates and the activity undertaken will struggle to access the higher levels of the assessment criteria. Logs went from one page to over 100; it is what the log demonstrates rather than its length which is important. Some logs contained evaluation of sources, strengths and weaknesses of the project or reflections of the candidate – these elements can only attract credit when they are included in the report.

### AO1 Analysis

The best projects demonstrated excellent analysis of the secondary sources used and any findings conducted through primary research; this was often through the candidate explaining in their own words what the sources or findings showed as well as making connections or explaining differences between them. In projects reaching the higher assessment, analysis was clearly and systematically focused on the research question at regular points in the report with paragraphs and subheadings often used to good advantage. Structured analysis helped with the consolidation of evidence into clear, supported and reasoned conclusions based on the research evidence running through the report; this then led seamlessly into an overall answer to the research question which was logical and reflective of the evidence. Projects which used information from different sources without any real attempt to analyse them or use them to construct an argument struggled to move up the assessment levels; this was often because it was not clear if the material was simply being reproduced from the sources. A descriptive approach made it more challenging to pick out the development of an argument and interim conclusions were often subsumed in narrative content. Many projects had a section at the end of the report which gave a final summation of the answer to their research question, although this can also be done successfully by comments threaded through the report.

### AO1 Evaluation

The best projects evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods used; this could be done by exploring gaps in data or pointing out advantages or shortcomings of research method they had used. Alongside this there was evaluation of the sources; this might take the form of comparing and contrasting different views, commenting on the legitimacy of the source or its author, or discussing strengths and limitations of arguments seen in the sources. Less successful reports were able to use valid research methods but without any assessment of the reasons for their choice whilst some were able to make some comments on strengths or limitation but without any balance or insight in their comments. A good number of reports contained no evaluation of the sources used, which limits the opportunity to move up the assessment levels, although some did make basic points about the writer of the source, perhaps by saying that they were a well-known expert in their field and so their words had value.

### AO2 Reflection

Some of the best reports included a section headed 'Reflection', but it is equally possible to have points of reflection throughout the report. The most successful reports reflected on the strengths and limitations of their project, perhaps by considering the quality of the evidence they had used, what had gone well or not in their research and data collection as well as any particular issues relating to their situation such as difficulties in accessing research or conducting interviews and experiments. Successful reports also reflected on the extent to which the research process and the writing of the report had reinforced, developed or changed their original views. Some projects contained very little or no reflection at all whilst others only reflected on the skills they had acquired; this might be very detailed or a simple comment on having enjoyed the process or learned a lot but does not meet the requirements of the assessment criteria. As mentioned above detailed recommendations as to areas future researchers might investigate are not within the parameters of the assessment criteria.

### AO3 Communication

The most successful projects had a logical structure which helped to make them clear and easy to follow, even for complex subject matter. Many candidates also communicated effectively using subject-specific terminology accurately; this was very useful when reading more technical reports although in some instances it also highlighted a difference in linguistic skills between material taken from sources and the candidate's own words, suggesting not all words used were the candidate's own. Successful reports used appropriate methods to clearly demonstrate results drawn from their research material, experiments or surveys such as tables, graphs and charts. The most successful reports also included bibliographic references for all the

sources used in a consistent and appropriate format – including the author, title and date, with a working link for internet sources and the date the material had been accessed. In some reports there was inconsistency in referencing as well as the presentation of data away from its analysis which made it more challenging to construct a logical and clear argument. As well as listing sources it is how the sources are used which allows the accessing of the higher assessment levels and so candidates should be clear in demonstrating not just the use of sources, but how they have been utilised to develop their project. Some bibliographies were very brief, some were mixed in the level of citation given or provided links that did not work and some gave insufficient information to find the source referred. As this is an academic report sources of a popular nature might provide context but are insufficient on their own to allow a candidate to build an argument likely to reach the higher assessment levels. The bibliography is an important element of a successful project and is deserving of the same level of attention as the report and the log.