CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL PROJECT QUALIFICATION

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Paper 9980/01
Project

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Key messages

It has been interesting this series to see the broad range of topics explored by candidates and witness the energy they have put into their projects and their research.

General comments

As planning and preparation are crucial elements so the working relationship between the candidate, their supervisor and the centre coordinator is important. That said, the project should be led by the candidate, with some support; their ownership of their project should be made clear in the log which accompanies the report.

All centres submitted the material necessary in the correct format so that projects could be assessed.

Comments on specific assessment objectives

AO1 Research

The best projects used a question rather than a statement as the basis for their report which helped to move away from a narrative and descriptive account – this is important in order to meet the full range of the assessment criteria. Once the question had been stated it was justified, often by explaining the candidate's fascination with their topic or some personal connection to it and more detail invested in this aspect helped the candidate move up the mark levels. In the most successful projects, the question clearly guided the candidate's research and the material in their report and then clearly explained, and justified, why they had selected their particular research methods; this could be driven by the kind of research available, the candidate's own skills, or specific issues which affected their choice such as a lack of centre resources. Some projects did use appropriate methods, but without any explanation or justification for their decision they could not access the higher mark levels. The most successful reports also had a clear sense of design and planning from their initial idea to the completion of their report; this could be seen in features such as a focused contents page which demonstrated a relevant structure or the use of helpful subheadings. The best evidence of planning is seen in the log and this is a key document. Its timeline gives insight into the project journey and illustrates the design and planning process, as well as detailing the support given by research conducted or sources read and their impact on the project's overall development. Some research logs were simply a list of dates and what was done, without any evidence of impact and were very brief, suggesting that the development of the project had not been recorded at every stage or reflected on. Others contained a lot of entries of meetings between the candidate and the supervisor; in some instances it seemed that the work of the candidate was heavily influenced by their supervisor and, as referred to above, it is the candidate who should take the lead in this aspect and demonstrate that in their log.

AO1 Analysis

The best projects demonstrated excellent analysis of their sources and research findings, perhaps by explaining in some depth what these features showed and then eliciting similarities or differences between them. Doing so helped to demonstrate that analysis was focused on the research question consistently through the report in a more than cursory way. This was often linked to the quality of the conclusions throughout the report, perhaps by using them to consolidate evidence and findings which had been analysed and so build an argument in an incremental way. Using this method, conclusions were often able to support a clearly articulated answer to the question which was logical and reflective of the evidence which had

presented and analysed. In some projects information was presented from different sources but in a more descriptive way, with little analysis or the building of an argument towards an overall answer to the project title. In some instances it was not easy to distinguish the words of the sources from those of the candidate and this distinction needs to be clear; a helpful way to do so is with good and clear referencing.

AO1 Evaluation

The best projects contained a detailed and insightful discussion of both the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods they had used. This might be done by explaining gaps in data or unexpected difficulties experienced in a research method, such as not being able to access sources of an appropriate level or struggling to get hoped for responses to a survey, through to explaining the features of the research methods used which made them well suited to the type of data collected. To move up the mark levels the sources used were also evaluated and this could be explaining why the author was a credible source or by discussing strengths and limitations of the argument developed in the source or a group of sources. In this series the evaluation of sources aspect was less often seen; in many projects the discussion of the research methods often focused on one of the strengths or weaknesses, with comments at a level which was superficial and lacking in detail and depth.

AO2 Reflection

The best reports included a section headed 'Reflection', although reflection could just as easily be weaved throughout the report, and some had a section headed 'Reflection' but what it contained did not meet the assessment criteria. Successful reports reflected on the overall strengths and limitations of their project in a detailed and insightful way, perhaps by exploring the range of evidence available and the successes or challenges they encountered in their project journey. These reports also reflected on the impact of their project on the candidate, thoughtfully discussing how their research had shaped or changed their views from their initial stance. Some projects omitted this aspect altogether and others referred to learning skills without reflecting on the impact of their research on their views. Many projects used a good number of words to consider what future research might explore; this is of interest but is not an element of the assessment criteria.

AO3 Communication

The most successful projects communicated well throughout their report by using a clear structure which was easy for the reader to follow. Most candidates used subject-specific terminology accurately and effectively in their report, which enhanced its overall quality and helpful footnotes of technical terms were often seen. Successful reports used an appropriate form of citation and referencing throughout to show the source of their ideas and information; they also utilised appropriate methods to present data and used this as the basis of their analysis, avoiding simply repeating in another way the data which had been presented. The best reports were also accompanied by a bibliography which included all the sources used in an appropriate and consistent format. In some instances the sources in the bibliography could not be clearly located in the report, and the numbering in the bibliography dd not match that in the report, whilst others were very brief and patchy in the level of citation given.