

International EPQ (9695)

Teaching guidance

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Our specification is published on our website [oxfordaqa.com](https://www.oxfordaqa.com). We will let schools know in writing about any changes to the specification. We will also publish changes on our website. The definitive version of our specification will always be the one on our website; this may differ from printed versions.

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Introduction

This teacher guide complements the specification for the Oxford AQA International Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) and should be read alongside it and the scheme of work. This guide will provide the following for teachers and prospective teachers of this course:

- An overview of this specification's philosophy and approach to the study and assessment of International Extended Project Qualification.
- A definition of the roles of coordinator and supervisor.
- Guidance on how to administer and deliver the required elements.
- Guidance on how to assess the completed project.

Philosophy of the International Extended Project Qualification

This qualification offers an opportunity for a student to produce a project product on a topic of their own choice. The purpose is to learn how to plan, resource, complete and evaluate a detailed study in a manner that would be recognised by academic and business institutions.

The development of the necessary skills and their application is an essential element, as is the independent nature of the work. The student is the principal decision maker in the development of their aim and in the implementation of their plan. The responsibility of centres is to provide a taught programme of appropriate skills and to support the decision making without directly issuing instructions.

Assessment Objectives (AOs)

There are five Assessment Objectives for the International IPQ:

AO1: Selection of topic – Identify and select an area of interest, devise aims and objectives and establish a working title using a selection of appropriate sources (10%).

AO2: Planning, monitoring and developing – Produce a project plan which incorporates a time schedule and monitor progress against objectives (20%).

AO3: Demonstration of research skills – Research, select, organise and scrutinise a range of information and resources, justifying the selection of any secondary and primary sources used (20%).

AO4: Analysis and application of research – Implement the project plan, analyse the findings of the research and arrange these findings into a project product. Include a conclusion and communicate outcomes in both a report and a presentation (40%).

AO5: Evaluation of product, process and self – Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the project process (including review of own learning arising from it) and product (10%).

Roles for the administration and delivery

The centre coordinator

One of the key roles for an Extended Project Qualification is that of the centre coordinator. This person is responsible for delivering the qualification within a particular school, college or consortium. Each centre needs to appoint a designated coordinator.

The key areas of responsibility are:

- developing staff understanding of the requirements of the qualification
- devising, timetabling and arranging delivery of the taught skills element (delivery may be delegated to other colleagues or outsourced to other experts but it must be centrally organised to ensure consistency for all students)
- final sign off of all project proposals – it is imperative that the coordinator refers to the 5 point checklist in section 2.4 of the specification to ensure that all students have devised effective proposals that will allow them access to the higher grades
- ensuring that the OxfordAQA assessment criteria are understood by all supervisors and that the marking standard is maintained within the centre. This includes accessing standardisation training, communicating the standard to the supervisors who are marking the projects and then arranging internal moderation of the marking of the assessed projects.

Administrative tasks include:

- registering the centre so that information and advice can be sought and offered
- submitting marks and making sure that projects are sent off for moderation to moderators on time
- ensuring that every supervisor and the centre coordinator has signed the centre declaration sheet which has to be sent with the projects.

The supervisor

Every student needs to have an allocated supervisor who supports them through the project process and marks the completed work. They do not need to have subject knowledge of the topic chosen by the student, indeed OxfordAQA recommends that non-specialist supervisors are appointed whenever possible.

The supervisor/student relationship can be the key to success in the projects. The supervisor performs a key role in helping students through a new and challenging programme of study.

A supervisor is required to:

- field initial ideas from students and take them through the initial planning stage of their project
- comment on the suitability of the initial ideas
- advise them on ways in which they can improve and focus their initial ideas to ensure they can submit a suitable proposal
- explain how the project will extend and develop from a student's main course of study. It is important that dual accreditation is avoided and how it will be avoided **must** be

explained in Proposal B if there is any chance of an overlap with other subjects studied at level 3 (A-level or equivalent)

- hold the planning review, mid-project review and project product review with the student (Additional meetings will probably also be held as and when the student requires support)
- offer advice to help the student progress without directing the course the project takes.
- attend the presentation and keep a comprehensive log of the nature of the audience, the nature of the presentation, the delivery of the presentation and of the questions asked/responses given. This will form the basis of the assessment evidence relating to this aspect of the qualification
- ensure that work is graded to the OxfordAQA standard for International EPQ by following the system of internal standardisation that has been set up by the centre coordinator.

Specialist consultant

Where a student believes that specialist knowledge is required as part of the student's research, a technical mentor can be used. Specialists might be: teachers or lecturers in the relevant subject area, university researchers, and established experts (some students may even contact leading world experts). Where a student is conducting primary research in perhaps a scientific context the specialist might be a technician. Any contribution from a technical mentor must be recorded in the **production log** and any research material gained in this way must be fully referenced within the report.

Taught skills guidance

The success of students relies heavily on the skills demonstrated in the process of planning and completing an independent project. The centre is responsible for teaching these and the **production log** has a section for describing how this has been done. The scheme of work contains suggestions for a taught skills programme which could be used by centres.

Key components

The production log

The production log should contain evidence of the whole project process from initial planning to reflection on the outcome. It is important that this is completed chronologically with each stage dated.

There should be no retrospective completion of the production log; attempts to 'improve' sections late in the process will be regarded as malpractice. Some production log pages are for supervisor and/or coordinator use: submissions checklist, record of marks, taught skills element, part B: supervisor's comments on candidate proposal, part C: centre coordinator's approval of candidate proposal and presentation record part B.

All other pages are to be completed by the student. These pages should record student ideas, planning, decision making, understanding of supervisor comments and the responses to these comments.

The presentation

A compulsory element of the International Extended Project Qualification is the presentation. The presentation should take the form of a verbal presentation, with or without the use of presentation software, and should be delivered to a non-specialist audience. The minimum number of people in the audience is two (one of whom must be the supervisor).

The presentation should not only focus on the project product, but should ideally also cover the following:

- what the project is about
- the reasoning that underpins the project
- the aims and objectives of the project
- what research has been undertaken and why
- a review of the student's performance and achievements
- lessons learnt whilst undertaking the project
- how the project might affect the student's future career/education.

The presentation provides students with an opportunity to tell the story of their project journey, from initial project choice right through to final reflections.

The presentation can be given in the student's first language, together with an authenticated translation, but all written evidence submitted should be provided in English.

Format of the presentation

There are many ways that a presentation might be conducted, for example:

- Viva (witnessed by at least one person in addition to the supervisor)
- lecture
- seminar
- market place (for large cohorts, each student has a stand and will perhaps conduct their presentation several times to a number of small groups).

Students may wish to use flipcharts, posters, PowerPoint, Prezi (or other presentation software) or short excerpts of video material to complement their presentation. In their production log, students may discuss why they selected a particular format, why it was appropriate for their particular product, and any limitations that affected their choice.

The supervisor should ensure that there is a live question and answer session during the presentation. The use of an identical list of questions for all students is not advisable. Questions should be specific to the student and spontaneous. Individual targeted questioning enables the student's knowledge and understanding of issues arising from his/her project to be measured. Supervisors may hear valid evidence as answers to questions that does not appear anywhere else in the student's final package of evidence. Supervisors should use the question and answer session to put such evidence in the public domain by writing down the student answers.

Evidence of the presentation

Physical evidence of the presentation is not required (for example, a video of the presentation or PowerPoint slides used). However supervisors must complete presentation record part B of the production log fully and in detail to give moderators a complete overview of the student's performance for verification purposes. All assessment is evidence based. If marks are awarded that credit the student's responses to questioning, a record of the questions asked and answers given must be supplied so this is visible for moderators.

The written report

Students can either submit a research-based written report as their product or they can opt to produce an artefact with an accompanying shorter research based written report. If they opt for a research-based written report as a product, they should aim to write 5000 words.

The length of the report accompanying an artefact is not of importance but should be a minimum of 1000 words. For the artefact projects, the key aim will be to produce a fully functioning, fit-for purpose artefact. The report that accompanies their artefact should not be a 'write-up' of what they have done but, rather, should demonstrate a synthesis of the research and how the research has influenced every single design decision that underpins the final product.

The title might pose a question or a hypothesis but all titles should provide scope for students to examine opposing arguments and critically analyse the sources providing the evidence for these. Students are expected to access a large variety of sources and select appropriate material to combine into the report. Sources can be primary or secondary. The use of secondary sources should be indicated by referencing using an approved method (eg Harvard, Chicago or APA). Students are encouraged to use academic and professional sources and not rely too much on superficial media or internet sites whose authority cannot be validated.

Primary data could involve interviewing experts, conducting surveys or making practical observations for scientific topics. All these activities should be risk assessed and the ethical aspects examined. The production log should contain the evidence of these procedures. The Wellcome Trust offers guidance "*Ensuring your research is ethical*" accessible at wellcome.ac.uk. Useful guidelines are also available from The Association for the Teaching of Psychology at theatp.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/ATP-Ethics-Guidance-2015-final-final-2nd-ed.pdf. The use of a specialist consultant may be appropriate. Primary sources should also be acknowledged and referenced appropriately.

Where primary research is conducted outside the school or college it is important that the planning stages of the project are completed before any research commences. It is important that both supervisor and student understand that a project conducted independently, eg in a university department, cannot retrospectively be turned into an International Independent Project.

Once the research has been completed, the student should choose an appropriate writing style and report structure, preferably formal and academic. Centres should not direct students to structure their reports to a given format or template. The structure of the report is the responsibility of the student.

The report should not be presented for any other qualification unless this was always part of the original plan. Dual accreditation is not permitted.

The report should result in a conclusion based on the evidence presented.

Assessment

Internal standardisation

Internal standardisation for the International Extended Project Qualification is the process by which the coordinator ensures that all supervisors are assessing the projects to the same standard. It should not be confused with internal moderation. Internal standardisation takes place before marking is undertaken by supervisors whereas internal moderation is organised by the centre coordinator and comes after projects have been marked by supervisors.

Standardisation helps to ensure that assessment is accurate and consistent. Consistent assessment, where every supervisor applies the assessment criteria in the same way, is very important.

The centre coordinator is responsible for internal standardisation. New coordinators should avail themselves of online training. Example material is available on the website to help with this process.

One way to deliver internal standardisation is for supervisors to:

- review the Assessment Objectives and grade descriptors
- assess a number of exemplar projects that have been provided during online standardisation - exemplar projects can be found on the website
- make notes that refer to the assessment criteria and underpin the reasoning behind the marks awarded
- discuss the marks they have awarded, identify any differences and discuss them to achieve a common understanding and application of the assessment criteria.

Marking

When all three components are completed by a student the supervisor can mark the project. There should be no marking done until the very end. Supervisors can read drafts but they should not allocate marks to anything except the final project. This cannot be returned to the student for improvement.

Evidence for assessment can be collected from any part of the process.

Allocation of marks

Once standardised, it's the Project Supervisors who mark each project they've supervised. There are five Assessment Objectives and each objective has sets of criteria statements falling into three bands. Supervisors match the student evidence to the criteria statements to place the project in the appropriate band. The time required to mark in the holistic fashion required for Project Qualifications should not be underestimated. For first-time markers of projects it can be quite daunting. Once the qualification is established in a centre, it helps to 'buddy' inexperienced markers with a marker with more experience. Allocating time so that inexperienced markers do not have to mark alone can be a very effective way to build up confidence.

It's expected that the supervisor will provide clear annotations and notes in support of their assessment that refer directly to the assessment criteria. The 'Record of marks' page in the Production Log should be filled in with detail. It's possible to fully mark projects using electronic copies of documents, if supervisors feel confident that they're able to maintain a holistic approach to the assessment.

Internal moderation

Once Supervisor marking is complete, internal moderation should be carried out. This is the responsibility of the Centre Coordinator but supervisors often take part in moderation.

It's entirely your choice in terms of how your internal moderation is organised. Centres may have established centre policies for internal moderation, but here are some models that have been found to be successful:

In some centres once a Supervisor has completed marking, each project might be 'blind' marked by a standardised marker who was not the Supervisor of the project and the two different sets of marks can be compared. If there are disagreements the Centre Coordinator will moderate and decide on the final centre mark.

In centres where Supervisors are responsible for groups of students, the Centre Coordinator might moderate, say, the highest marked project in the group, the lowest marked project and one project taken at random. If these marks are all agreed then no further moderation is undertaken for that Supervisor.

The Record of Marks page in the Production Log has space to provide comments on the internal moderation and where a project has been sampled for internal moderation, the internal moderator should provide clear annotations in support of any adjustments that have been made to the original Supervisor marks.

Submission of grades and projects

Entries will be made electronically by 21 February each year. Submission of marks is required by 1 May each year. After grades have been submitted sample projects will be requested by the EPQ moderator for moderation. This sample should be sent to the moderator as soon as the sample is requested.

Moderators will scrutinise a sample from each centre. The moderator marks the work and compares their marks with those that you have provided, to check whether any changes are needed to bring the marking in line with our agreed standards. In some cases the moderator will ask you to send in more work.

Your students' work will not be returned to you after the assessment period.

Conclusion

The International Extended Project Qualification is an exciting opportunity for schools and colleges outside the UK to study an A-level standard course which contains many similar features to the UK qualification, while at the same time having distinctive features of its own. This short teachers' guide is an introduction to the course. Further reports, advice and guidance are available on the OxfordAQA EPQ website.