Preparing students for the internal assessment task

Assessing the internal assessment report

The report should be approximately 2,000 words in length and use the headings given below. Please note that students using alternative headings or layouts will not be penalized for this as long as all the marking criteria are addressed.

- Introduction (6 marks)
- Exploration (4 marks)
- Analysis (6 marks)
- Evaluation (6 marks)

As the investigations and therefore the approaches to the investigation will vary, the marking criteria are not designed to be a "tick the box" markscheme, but rather a holistic assessment of the student's research skills. Each section needs to be seen within the context of the whole. As such, a certain degree of interpretation is inevitable.

The marking rubric is laid out in four sections. The chosen descriptors in each section should be highlighted and a judgment made as to the appropriate mark for each section. The comment box should contain a justification for the judgment. Comments made in the margins of the scripts are also encouraged as this will allow the moderator to see the thinking used in assessing the work and enable them to support the teacher in the assessment.

The following tips are designed to help focus on the intention of each section, rather than provide a definitive approach.
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General comments

The range of achievement in each section of the report ranges from complete absence to full explanations.

- If the expected content is completely missing or meaningless, then a zero is awarded for that section. If a part of a section is missing, the overall marks for that section should be adjusted downwards to take this into account.
- A description with an explanation as to why something was chosen with explicit links to other aspects of the investigation, such as the hypothesis, is considered to be a full explanation and discussion. Often the links can be inferred by the reader. The student must make the link purposefully for it to be regarded as explicit.

No credit is given for referencing in this task. However, a student who does not reference their work and acknowledge sources would be flagged up during moderation under the academic honesty guidelines.

Although there are no marks awarded for following ethical practices, it should be clear from the proposal form and consent forms that ethical standards have been met. During the moderation process unethical investigations are flagged up by moderators and submitted to the ethics committee. Reports deemed unethical will be awarded zero.

Components of the report

Introduction

The introduction should clearly state the aim of the investigation, as well as the reasoning behind the choice of investigation. The thinking should be supported by the literature, with one or more references to published studies. It is important to note that this is not a literature review and one targeted study is more useful than several studies which simply repeat the point.

The information given must be targeted at the aim of the investigation rather than a general account of the topic matter to demonstrate focus on the issues at hand. The student should also explain the relevance of their investigation. This amounts to a brief explanation as to why this research is worth doing. It is important that the choice of topic and the aims are commensurate with a DP level course. Very simple aims will probably not score well for the analysis and the evaluation, so a holistic view of the work should be taken.

In addition to stating the Independent and Dependent Variables, the student should show how these translate to the measurements that will be taken. The measurements chosen need to relate to the hypothesis. This is what is meant by operationalized.

Exploration

The exploration looks at the overall approach in terms of design, choice of participants, control of variables and materials. Students need to take their area of inquiry and translate this into a workable method. The data generated using the method must be of sufficient quantity and quality that it can be treated in an appropriate manner to generate a conclusion. If the method devised does not lead to sufficient and appropriate data, students will be penalized in the analysis.
Analysis

The analysis looks at the data generated and how it is processed. If there is insufficient data then any treatment will be superficial. It is hoped that a student would recognize such a lack and revisit the method before they work on the analysis.

Raw data will be presented in the appendix alongside any calculations, consent forms and ethical protocols. This section looks at the methods chosen to process the raw data and how the processed data is presented and interpreted.

Any processing of the data must be appropriate to the focus of the investigation in an attempt to address the aims given in the introduction and the hypothesis. The conclusions drawn must be based on the evidence from the data rather than on assumptions. Given the scope of the internal assessment and the time allocated, it is more than likely that variability in the data will lead to a tentative conclusion.

A good report will contain a suitable graph linked to the hypothesis. The graph is essentially an illustration of the hypothesis in the context of the data generated. The report should have both descriptive and inferential statistics. Students should be able to demonstrate the thinking behind their choice of statistics, for example, the choice of mode, median or mean should be relevant to the nature of the data. The choice of statistics does not need to be justified, but an inappropriate choice should be penalized as an inaccuracy.

Students are encouraged to use software for statistics, but the outcome needs to be put into the context of the aims of the investigation.

If the candidate does not include raw data or a print-out from the statistics software in the appendices, only low marks may be awarded.

Evaluation

In the evaluation the student is expected to put a conclusion into the context of their original aim. In other words, does the conclusion support their original thinking? If not, a consideration of why not will lead into an evaluation of the limitations of the design, choice of participants and materials together with suggestions as to how the approach could be improved to generate data that could help to substantiate the conclusion. As there are always improvements that can be made, students will be expected to refer to limitations even if their data supports the hypothesis and the research reported in the introduction.

As the design of the investigation is a group enterprise, the evaluation is the best place for a student to show engagement with the aims of the investigation, the theory or model and experimental design that underpin the aims. As such, students should be advised to look at the strengths as well as the limitations of the method used in exploration. A student may also support any conclusions or an alternative conclusion with further reading of their own, not shared with the group.

Finally, suggestions for further study should be related to the field under investigation and its relevance explained. These could include different approaches to the same subject such as the collection of qualitative data, for example, for the purposes of triangulation. Seemingly unrelated lines of investigation should not be credited.