EPQ – from pilot to now

Started as a pilot – first assessed in 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Entries</th>
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<td>2008-2009</td>
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<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>11,277</td>
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<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>16,131</td>
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<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>19,603</td>
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<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>20,558</td>
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<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>22,449</td>
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<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>23,137</td>
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<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>24,641</td>
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</table>

AQA – EPQ has the largest market share: 68.6%
EPQ – now and the future

The Future:

The current specification has just been extended to 2020. It will continue to be a central part of qualifications offered by AQA. The specification will then be reviewed but the qualification is very much here to stay.
Some university responses - excerpts from Which University Guide.

‘How do universities view the EPQ?
The general message from universities is that they really like the EPQ - a quick flick through online prospectuses confirms this:

- **University of Manchester**: 'The skills that students develop through the Extended Project are excellent preparation for university-level study.'

- **University of Liverpool**: 'We encourage candidates to draw upon their experience of undertaking the project when writing their personal statement.'

- **University of York’s** Admissions Administrator for English, Sheila Cosgrove, put this into sharper focus when she gave us her opinion on it: “The EPQ is a definite strength in an application. It can create the heartland of a personal statement and give it depth and substance.”
## Performance Table Points and UCAS points for EPQ

### Performance tables

See our at-a-glance guide showing how the EPQ counts towards Performance Tables and UCAS points.

### Performance table points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A*</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>3</td>
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### UCAS points

<table>
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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Does EPQ affect a student’s performance in other A levels?

An analysis of the effect of taking the EPQ on performance in other level 3 qualifications


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Cambridge Assessment is the brand name of the University of Cambridge Local examinations Syndicate, a department of the University of Cambridge. Cambridge Assessment is a not-for-profit organisation.

Does EPQ affect a student’s performance in other A levels?

Conclusion of the study:

“The performance of individual students was analysed, using a multilevel regression model to compare EPQ and non-EPQ students, after accounting for prior attainment and other background characteristics. The results showed that there was a small, but statistically significant effect, with those taking EPQ achieving better results on average in their A levels than those not doing so.”
How might the *Projects* benefit students?

Recent AQA research asked:

‘… are the skills required of the EPQ transferable to more curriculum-embedded Qualifications?’

…the results indicate that, after controlling for other available explanatory variables – of which mean GCSE prior attainment score is the most critical – taking the EPQ enhances the odds of achieving a higher grade A level (A*-B) by 29 per cent. For each incremental grade achieved in the EPQ, the chances of being awarded a higher grade A level increases by 7 per cent’.

‘*Does the Extended Project Qualification enhance students’ GCE A level performance?*’

Ben Jones,  Head of Standards AQA
(Centre for Education Research and Practice June 2015)
Do Universities consider the EPQ in their offers?

The following Russell Group Universities include EPQ in their offer:

- University of Birmingham
- University of Bristol
- University of Cambridge
- Durham University
- University of Exeter
- University of Leeds
- University of Manchester
- Newcastle University
- University of Sheffield
- University of Southampton
What is a typical offer for students with a good EPQ?

“EPQ admissions policy

• The University of Southampton was the first to introduce an alternative offer scheme for applicants who excel in the EPQ.

• Under this scheme, eligible applicants to subjects across our humanities, business, law, social sciences and related programmes may receive two offers – our usual offer plus an offer of an **A in the EPQ and one grade lower in their A level subjects** (e.g. AAA at A level; or AAB at A level AND an A grade in EPQ).

• This additional offer reflects our confidence in the EPQ as an excellent preparation for the kinds of independent study necessary for students to succeed at a research intensive university such as Southampton.”
What is a typical offer for students with a good EPQ?

“At the University of Birmingham, applicants who take the EPQ and meet our offer criteria will be made:

• the standard offer for their programme of choice,
• plus an alternative offer which will be one grade lower plus a grade A in the EPQ.

For example, where our standard offer is AAA, the offer would be AAA; or AAB plus A in the EPQ (though please note that this excludes our Medicine (A100) and Dentistry (A200) programmes).”
What is a typical offer for students with a good EPQ?

“The University recognises that some A-level students may also choose to offer the Extended Project. In some cases we may make two alternative offers, one of which involves success in the Extended Project (e.g. either AAA at A-level or AAB at A-level plus Extended Project). Please check the relevant admissions statement.”
Aims of the EPQ

EPQs offer opportunities for students to:

• Develop and improve their own learning and performance as critical, reflective and independent students

• Develop and apply decision-making and problem-solving skills

• Extend their planning, research, critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and presentation skills

• Develop and apply skills creatively, demonstrating initiative and enterprise

• Use their learning experiences to support their aspirations for further study and/or career development

• Transfer skills developed as part of their project to other areas of study
Overview of the Extended Project Qualification

Students are required, with appropriate supervision, to:

• Choose an area of interest
• Draft a title and aims of the project for formal approval by the centre
• Plan, research and carry out the project
• Deliver a presentation to a non-specialist audience
• Provide evidence of all stages of project development and production for assessment
The Project Process

1. Taught Skills
2. Choice Initial Ideas
3. Approval of Candidate Proposal
4. Planning Review
5. Resources & Research
6. Mid-Project Review
7. Production
8. Written Report
9. Project Product
10. Project Product Review
11. Presentation
12. Summary and Reflection
13. Log
Taught Element

• Up to 30 guided learning hours (of the total 120) should be spent on teaching

• Centres should not leave students to undertake independent research without teaching them core skills
  • Centres who *do not teach core skills are not delivering* the project according to *specification requirements*

• There will also be other skills that a centre may choose to add

• Individual students may have more specific needs
Taught Element

Core Skills Required:

- Time management skills
- Research skills and evaluation of sources
- Report writing skills
- Referencing and bibliography creation
- How to avoid plagiarism
- Presentation skills
- Reflection and evaluation
Taught Element

Exercise:

- How can I manage the delivery of the Taught Element in my Centre?
- What issues are there?
- Who else do I need to involve?
Assessed outcomes

The three required elements are:

• Project Product
• Production Log
• Presentation
The Project Process

- Assessment is *terminal* and *holistic*
- Evidence for any objective may come in different forms for different projects.
- Outcome is:
  - Written report MAX 5000 words (not guidance)
  OR
  - Artefact + Written report MIN 1000 words (up to 5000)
It is not appropriate to change a title in order to:

- ‘Capture the tone of my essay with greater accuracy’
Presentation requirements

• A written record of the *Presentation* with the *Supervisor* and confirmation of relevant questioning.

• The *Presentation* must be:
  • Live
  • For a non-specialist audience
  • Of an appropriate form
  • Supported by answers to questions from the *Supervisor*
Examples of project titles

- Will the title encourage independent research and analysis?
- Does the title seek a research-based conclusion?
- Is the title ethically sound?
- Is it possible to answer the question posed in the title?
- Will suitable research material be available?
- Is this topic suitable for a level three project?
- Will the candidate be able to remain objective?
Examples of successful titles

- To what extent has the chick flick genre evolved narratively and ideologically?
- Can I plan and run a successful pop-up restaurant in Newcastle?
- As a reflection of her social attitudes and political involvement in Egypt, to what extent can didacticism be seen in the works of Narwal El Saadawi?
- Breaking the quantum barrier: Could the advent of quantum computing start the next revolution in weather forecasting?
- Could flooding of the river Parrett in Somerset during the 2013 winter floods have been prevented?
Assessment

Steps to ensure that your centre’s assessment is **accurate** and **consistent:**

- Attend AQA standardisation
- Arrange internal standardisation
- Oversee assessment
- Arrange internal moderation
- Submit projects for external moderation
Various models are possible e.g.:

Model 1:

- **Start** EPQ in June of Year 12
- **Submit** EPQ in May Year 13
- **Advantage:** No competition with potential AS exams
- **Disadvantage:** Possible staff changes more likely
- **Disadvantage:** Competition with A2 exams
  (but this can be overcome by using an internal centre deadline)
What is the best delivery plan/time? What models of delivery work best?

Model 2:

- **Start** EPQ in June of year 12
- **Submit** EPQ in November Year 13
- **Advantage:** Concentrated period of Taught Skills post AS or internal exams followed by summer vacation
- **Disadvantage:** Candidates have less “thinking” time in which to try out a variety of potential research topic

This model can be improved by introducing the idea of EPQ earlier in year 12 but starting formal delivery post AS or internal exams.
What is the best delivery plan/time?
What models of delivery work best?

Model 3:

- **Start** EPQ in September of Year 12
- **Submit** EPQ in May Year 13
- **Advantage**: Time pressure removed, candidates could have an internal centre December deadline, supervisors not pressured by November submission date
- **Disadvantage**: Possible staff changes more likely
- **Disadvantage**: Competition with A2 exams (but this can be overcome by using an internal centre deadline)

Various other models are possible, including starting and completing the project in year 12, however, the major drawback here is that students may not have the maturity of thought to cope with demands of this A2 qualification, which is designed to prepare them for independent University/employment style work.
How do Universities support the EPQ?


Below are just some of the universities that provide specific support for EPQ students and their supervisors:

- Southampton University
- Durham University
- Manchester University
- Birmingham University
- University of Leeds
- Newcastle University
- University of Sheffield
- University of Exeter
- University of East Anglia
- University of York
How do Universities support the EPQ?

The University of Southampton believes the EPQ offers an unparalleled introduction to the skills needed for students to thrive at leading UK universities like ours.

We were the first university to introduce a dedicated admissions offer for students who excel in the EPQ, and we work with schools across the country to support students and raise the profile of the EPQ.

The Learn With US Transition programme is the focal point of this support. Our academically trained team offer talks, workshops and visits designed to support every stage of the EPQ - from forming research questions to library skills, referencing and writing up.

Find out more about what we offer below, or to make a booking, see our booking form.
How do Universities support the EPQ?

https://www.dur.ac.uk/4schools/programme/ks5/resources/

We welcome VI forms undertaking personal studies or working towards their EPQ to use the resources of the University Library (see our KS Workshops page for further details). We have also produced a series of support guides that focus on different aspects of research which we hope students will find useful.

Research Skills

This guide contains an overview of and introduction to Research Skills, including how to devise a research strategy, how to carry out research and how to record information.

Planning Your Essay

This guide introduces students to how to break down and understand questions, structure an essay and write an essay (including sections about appropriate style and referencing).

Using Sources

This guide focuses on the different types of sources available to researchers, the advantages and disadvantages of working with each type and advice on how to assess the credibility of what is being used.

Using the Library

An introduction to using a University Library with detailed guidance on using and getting the best out of the Library catalogue. Although based on the Durham University Library, the guide is useful to anyone wanting to make use of a large library.

Presenting Your Work

This guide contains practical advice on presenting research including creating posters, giving verbal presentations and making PowerPoint presentations.
How do Universities support the EPQ?

Support for teachers and students

The University of Manchester gives A-level students and their teachers access to a range of dedicated resources and support for the Extended Project qualification. As a research-intensive university, Manchester is very supportive of the skills that the Extended Project encourages learners to develop. We have been involved in working with local schools and colleges since the Extended Project qualification was first piloted.

The EPQ gives A-level students excellent preparation for university-level study, and may help boost their UCAS application. The skills that students develop through the Extended Project are directly relevant to and useful for university-level study. Students can refer to the Extended Project in their UCAS personal statements and at interview to demonstrate some of the qualities that universities are looking for.

Resources for Extended Project Tutors

All resources are free of charge.

1. Making a Start
2. Smart Reading
3. Engaging with Visual Culture
4. Referencing, not plagiarising
5. Report writing
6. Effective presentations
7. Visualisation and Presentation of Data

The resources are in the form of downloadable power points and worksheets for students and supervisors.

http://www.manchester.ac.uk/connect/teachers/students/post-16/extended-project/resources
How do Universities support the EPQ?

“At the University of Birmingham, we recognise the EPQ as valuable proof of your capacity for independent learning, as well as your passion for the subject you want to study at a higher level. So when we see it on your UCAS application, it shows us that you’re serious.”

http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate/preparing-for-university/epq/index.aspx
How do Universities support the EPQ?

http://www.ncl.ac.uk/library/assets/documents/epq_resourcesTeachers_guide.pdf

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**EPQ Resources – Teacher’s Guide**

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**Citing and referencing**

Citing References Quiz
https://ilrb.cf.ac.uk/citingreferences/sourcequiz/index.html
(An interactive quiz which asks students to identify what is being referenced)

Citing and referencing
https://ilrb.cf.ac.uk/movies/flash/4citing.html
(Short video showing university students discussing why they should reference items)

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**Searching and Research techniques**

Planning your search
https://ilrb.cf.ac.uk/searchtech/planning_your_search/course/course9105.html
(Tips for the planning of search techniques, interactive questions aimed at getting you to think of all aspects of your keywords etc)

Tips for research success
http://www.transitioning2college.org/module_tips_for_research_success.html
(Students share research tips)

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**Supporting Information**

Writing development centre
http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/wdc/learning/essays/writingreports/structure
(Based in the Robinson Library, Newcastle University to support students with their academic writing)

Information literacy toolkit
http://www.ncl.ac.uk/library/staff/infolit/toolkit/
(Interactive toolkit supporting all aspects of Information literacy)

Interactive tutorials/activities to make you information literate
https://pilot.library.qut.edu.au/index.jsp
(Aimed at undergraduates but would be useful for ‘A’ level students)
How to Research in a University Library - Workshop (half a day - 1 day)

This interactive workshop offers your students the opportunity to research and study in Newcastle University’s Library. The workshop is supported with taught sessions on research skills, plagiarism, referencing, searching for resources as well as providing a useful introduction to university life.

"The students are still talking about it; this morning I even overheard one student telling her Geography teacher about her EPQ on Mussolini, using the University Library and she's a 'proper student.'"  
- School Librarian
Bursaries and Scholarships

University of East Anglia:

https://www.uea.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/scholarships/scholarships-for-2017-entry/bright-spark-scholarship

BRIGHT SPARK SCHOLARSHIP

The Bright Spark Scholarship rewards your academic achievement and research project with £3,000.
AQA Website Materials

- For copies of the specification, production log and many other related useful materials and advice go to: http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/projects/aqa-certificate/EPQ-7993

- Make sure that all staff involved with EPQ have a copy of the “Projects Quick Guides”
Specific AQA support for EPQ

http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/projects/aqa-certificate/EPQ-7993/teaching-and-learning-resources

Teaching guidance

- Delivery model guidance (51.5 KB)
- Quick guide to artefacts (61.3 KB)
- Quick guide to being a Centre Coordinator (46.3 KB)
- Quick guide to being a Supervisor (47.9 KB)
- Quick guide to group projects (55.2 KB)
- Quick Guide to internal standardisation (40.5 KB)
- Quick Guide to practical science projects (37.7 KB)
- Quick guide to providing evidence of the project product (46.0 KB)
- Quick guide to the presentation (44.4 KB)
- Quick Guide to using a technical mentor (104.2 KB)
- Quick Guide to working to a brief (68.3 KB)
- Quick guides (537.3 KB)
- Taught skills guidance (71.1 KB)
- The Production Log and its purpose (51.3 KB)

Learning resources

- Extended Project activity pack is a useful student guide for the EPQ.
- Wellcome Trust Ethical Guidance is a useful resource for students and teachers concerning research ethics, produced by the Wellcome Trust.
Contacts

AQA Projects Team
• Project Advisers
• General specification queries

AQA website
• Information & resources

CPD
Face to face, online & in-school
• Coordinator Training
• Taught Skills
• Feedback – exploring best practice
• Amazing Artefacts
• Coordinating Larger Cohorts
• Delivering Levels 1 & 2
• Standardisation

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0203 671 8014  teachercpd@aqa.org.uk
Thank You