

EPQ

Examination board: AQA

Overview

The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is A Level 3 qualification, worth half an A Level. Unlike other A Level courses in which there is a set curriculum, the EPQ offers pupils the opportunity to research a topic of their own choosing.

Why study an EPQ?

The EPQ offers the chance to explore subject areas that don't appear on a conventional A Level syllabus. Moreover, it contributes to each pupil's wider intellectual and personal development by allowing them to develop those skills which will be vital at university and in the world of work, not least the ability to work independently and for a sustained period on a single project.

Most pupils' research will result in the writing of an essay of approximately 5,000 words. In the past, pupils have written reports on a diverse range of topics including the physics of golf balls, the partition of Sudan, cryptocurrency and the use of Surgical Care Practitioners within the NHS. However, an essay is just one possible output: pupils may choose to use their research to inform design decisions, culminating in the creation of an artefact. Examples of artefacts created or facilitated by former pupils have included performances, events, computer programs, games, experiments and sculptures.

University entry

Many universities recognise the value of the EPQ and make alternative offers on the basis of a strong performance in it.

How it works

The EPQ is delivered by colleagues from across school: we are therefore able to utilise the expertise of teachers from almost all disciplines.

The course will begin with the teaching of those skills and topics necessary for successful research, including effective planning and project/time management, source evaluation and referencing, and academic writing. Pupils will then decide on an area of research and begin the process of finding and

critiquing sources. They will plan, research and complete their project, deliver a presentation on their final product to a non-specialist audience, and evaluate the success of the whole process. Their evaluation will be facilitated by their production log: a record of their progress which they will start on the very first day of the project.

Each pupil is allocated a supervisor. The supervisor's role is not that of a subject specialist, or of a teacher in a traditional sense, but rather that of a mentor or critical advisor: the supervisor will check in with the pupil at various points, prompting them to reflect on their progress so far, providing a sounding board for the pupil as they work through any difficulties encountered, and assisting them with staying on track with their deadlines.

The EPQ process will begin at the start of Year 12, and most pupils will certificate it at the start of Year 13 (but there is some flexibility here).