

EPQ – Frequently asked questions

As soon as the EPQ comes onto the radar in the 6th form prospectus, a lot of questions start floating around and this can lead to some students becoming confused about what exactly the EPQ involves. The following information should answer many of those questions.



What is the EPQ?

The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is free standing qualification offered by AQA. It involves choosing a topic and carrying out some research into that particular area, then creating EITHER a 5,000 word report OR an artefact plus a 1,000 word report. After that, you must deliver a small presentation to a group of non-specialists about your topic, lasting approximately 10 minutes.

So what are my options?

1. A written report of 5000 words.
2. Production of an Artefact and a report of at least 1000 words on how you produced it. Artefact projects must have the Centre Coordinator's approval.

Why should I do it?

It allows you to develop your personal interests on a topic about which you feel genuinely passionate or which could be useful for your future study or work plans. In addition, it helps when applying for university and jobs, as it demonstrates that you have acquired a range of independent skills.

The EPQ is NOT, however, a compulsory requirement for university applications.

It demonstrates your commitment to a subject, and allows you to develop the independent research skills needed for undergraduate study.

If you are lucky enough to receive an interview from your desired university, it gives you something to talk about and really get your teeth into, so you don't run out of things to say.

Does the topic have to be related to my A-levels?

No, not at all. It can be on literally ANYTHING you want, within reason. You cannot do a project on WW2 for example - that's far too broad. You must eventually boil it down to an individual research question.

It would be wise to choose your topic based on what you intend to study in the future or a field of work which interests you.

Topics must not be the same as any topic you will study as part of your other qualifications in either Year 12 or Year 13. Please contact course leaders, if you are unsure.

The only thing you can't do is base a project on something which is unethical or involves materials which are not age appropriate!

How can I choose a good topic?

While we can't tell you exactly what to do, some basic advice would be:

- don't duplicate anything you will study at A-level or on a BTEC.
- choose an aspect of a subject you want to study in more depth.
- the topic must be clearly focused.
- make sure the topic allows scope for detailed research.
- ask your subject teachers for specific subject related ideas.

I'm more creative, so what could my 'artefact' be?

If you feel that the best project for you would involve producing something and writing a shorter report, here are a few ideas for a product:

- a short story or book
- a filmed performance (dance, dramatic..)
- a website or program
- a piece of art
- a musical recording
- a short film or media clip
- a model or something you've made

The importance is placed on how you research your product and the production methods and reflection, which go into production, not just on the product itself. **You must seek permission from the Centre Coordinator before starting an artefact project.**

What kind of research can I do?

Again, what and how you research is up to you but you should:

- distinguish between primary and secondary resources
- bare in mind sampling errors, or the validity of the data (especially blogs/wikis)
- assess the credibility of the data (ie. does the author have anything to gain by misleading us into thinking it is true?) have a look here: Check out <http://www.criticalthinking.org.uk/u...ofcredibility/>
- avoid plagiarism
- reference all your findings
- keep a detailed log of your research.

Where do I start?

Some useful places to start gathering research are:

- primary research such as surveys/polls/questionnaires/ interview experts in your topic
- books, journals and reports
- the Internet

- Official publications
- Newspapers

How is the EPQ graded?

A*-E. Candidates who don't achieve at least an E will be not be awarded with the qualification. **You are not graded on your essay/artefact, but on the methodology of producing it.**

Assessment objective weightings [specification - page 10]:

20% - management: identify, design, plan, and complete the individual project, or task within a group project, applying organisational skills and strategies to meet stated objectives

20% - resources: obtain and select information from a range of sources, analyse data, apply relevantly and demonstrate understanding of any appropriate linkages, connections and complexities of your topic.

40% - 'develop and realise' the project: select and use a range of skills, including new technologies, to solve problems, to take decisions critically, creatively and flexibly, and to achieve planned outcomes

20% - present/review/evaluation: evaluate outcomes including own learning and performance. Select and use a range of communication skills and media to convey and present evidenced outcomes and conclusions

How long will it take to complete the course?

The course typically runs from September to submission of the written report at the end of February, then there is a presentation and completion of the final documents. Your participation on the course will be finished by mid-March.

You will have one supervision session per fortnight and one lecture per fortnight.

It is expected you spend around 120 hours in all, some may do it in less, some may take considerably longer - they are only guidelines.

I have more questions, who should I contact?

For further information, email Mr Harbron (nharbron@qehs.net) or check out the AQA Exam board specification.

AQA Specification: <http://store.aqa.org.uk/over/pdf/AQA-EPQ-W-SP-07-08.PDF>