Extended Project Qualification

As part of their Sixth Form studies, students have the opportunity to study an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) as their fourth option. The EPQ is an initiative which changes the mindset of traditional post-16 studies. It frees the student from the teacher led A level classroom studies and instead puts the onus on the student to pursue an idea or interest of their own and follow it through from conception to completion.

The EPQ is valued highly by universities because it shows that students have cultivated, and can demonstrate, many of the skills required in undergraduate study, including the ability to work independently, to undertake research and to manage and complete a sustained piece of work. The EPQ offers students an exciting opportunity to explore a topic or area of personal interest in depth, to deepen an existing interest or to discover a new area of interest entirely. The emphasis in the Project is on analysis, but the Project itself may take several different forms: some students might choose to write a research based report, others to design an artefact or engage in a performance. The only requirement is that the topic chosen should look beyond the student’s A level syllabuses. Many students will decide to undertake a project at the beginning of Year 12, with the intention of submitting their work in the summer of that academic year. The EPQ is an extra stand-alone qualification graded A*-E and worth up to 70 UCAS points.

Any student interested in undertaking a project will be asked to identify a broad area of interest. They will then be assigned a member of staff who will act as the student’s Supervisor and with whom they will work for the duration of the project. In order to help them plan, research, develop and realise their idea, students will also receive two timetabled lessons per cycle. Here they will learn a range of study skills designed to help them complete the project successfully.

Type of work required and skills involved
Students think of a project they may wish to carry out and discuss their ideas with their supervisor. They initially carry out some research to enable them to answer the questions in the Project Proposal Form.

Students complete a Production Log as they develop their projects and carry out a presentation, which should be for a non-specialist audience, using media appropriate to the type of project. This could take the form of a group presentation in the case of a group project, or a one-to-one presentation to the supervisor. The completed Production Log, the written report, the evidence and the presentation are assessed together by the school’s EPQ Co-ordinator at the end of the process.

There is no final exam. The assessment will be based on the following:

- The completed production log;
- A written report (5000 words for a research or investigation; 1000 words for a practical project);
- Evidence, as appropriate, for a practical project, eg an artefact, or the recording of the performance;
- The presentation;
- The student’s reflection on the project and presentation.

Typical topics over the last few years:

- Should science lead to atheism?
- Critically analyse fracking as a sustainable energy resource.
- Assess the legality of the UK’s involvement in the Iraq War.
- To what extent is trial by jury a successful legal system in the UK?
- Write a short story based on the works of Ernest Hemingway, exploring the author’s style and themes.
- Can violence in film be art? With reference to the work of Quentin Tarantino.
- To What Extent does Dissociative Identity Disorder Exist as a Real Disorder?
- To what extent can valid comparisons be drawn between the Holocaust in the Second World War and the Bosnian genocide?
- To what extent did the unification of Germany in 1871 irrevocably shift the balance of power in Europe until 1914?
- Is time travel possible under Einstein’s theory of special relativity?
- To create a film sequence shot in the style of Hitchcock’s ‘Psycho’.
- To what extent are bankers responsible for the current financial crisis?