



Navigating
the EPQ
process
2020-21

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What is an EPQ?

At Westfield Academy we believe in developing students in the sixth-form to become well rounded individuals so that they possess the wide variety of skills needed to embark on successful careers in the future. Alongside their academic skills, which are developed through their studies, we believe that the EPQ qualification gives students the perfect opportunity to develop the other essential skills they will need in higher education and in their future careers.

EPQ stands for Extended Project Qualification. It is an additional qualification that students can complete whilst in the sixth-form alongside their A-Level or BTEC subjects. The EPQ is an official qualification, which is run by the AQA exam board and allows students to gain additional UCAS points which will be useful for university applications.

An EPQ is an individual project students complete over their time in sixth-form. It allows students to develop their project management skills alongside their academic skills. EPQ projects can be completed on a student's area of interest as there is no restriction on what a student can study in this project.

Students need to create their own topic for their project and then research and develop their idea. An EPQ may take the form of an essay (5,000 words), a production or performance, an artefact or an exhibition. Students will also need to complete a 1,000 word report reflecting on their project overall.

Alongside this, students will give a presentation on their project which explains how they went about developing their idea and how their project was completed. Once the project is completed, the EPQ supervisor will mark the work and students will receive an official qualification from the AQA exam board.

Students completing an EPQ will receive supervised guidance during their project, on areas such as how to research effectively and how to complete extended written tasks. This will allow them to flourish and develop their skills and achieve a good grade on their completed EPQ project.

This booklet aims to provide guidance on the different stages of the EPQ process and explain how students will be supported in their project.

Why you should consider an EPQ

An Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is not a compulsory part of post-16 education for students. However, in an increasingly competitive world it gives students the opportunity to set themselves apart from others. It allows students to complete their own project on a topic that they love, develop a wider variety of skills and gain additional UCAS points for their university application. Students applying for apprenticeships will also benefit from having a completed EPQ project on their CV.

An EPQ will allow students to develop the type of skills that universities and employers are looking for. By undertaking this project you will develop skills in the following areas...

- Extensive planning
- Organisation
- Time management
- Research
- Extended writing
- Presenting
- Critical thinking
- Independent study

Over 30,000 students studying in post-16 education currently complete an EPQ project as a way of demonstrating the skills they have developed. Increasingly, universities will include UCAS points from an EPQ as part of their entry requirements (check this when researching courses and universities).

Whilst students can choose a topic similar to something they are studying, students must use their research and development of the project to go beyond what is currently covered in the specification of their chosen subjects. More usually, students choose to complete their EPQ in a topic unrelated to something they are currently studying. Students have taken advantage of the EPQ previously, to create a project on something related to their chosen university course, if they are not currently studying an A-Level or BTEC in that subject area. For example a student hoping to study Psychology at university but not studying Psychology at A-Level may wish to complete an EPQ on the topic of “social influence” as a way of demonstrating their passion and ability for the subject.

More information can be found by clicking on the following link...

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/projects/project-qualifications/EPQ-7993/why-choose>

UCAS Tariff Points

As you will have already read, completing an Extended Project Qualification allows students the opportunity to increase the number of UCAS points that they can achieve. The EPQ is worth “half an A-Level” with regards to the number of UCAS points students will receive when their completed project is submitted. This can help boost a student’s university application by giving them additional UCAS points to the points they will achieve with their other A-Level/BTEC subjects.

The number of UCAS points allocated for each grade of the EPQ can be found below.

Extended Project Qualification (Level 3)

Grade	Tariff points
A*	28
A	24
B	20
C	16
D	12
E	8

How the EPQ works

Once you have decided that you want to complete an EPQ you will be assigned an EPQ supervisor. They will oversee the completion of your project and give guidance throughout the process to assist with any problems you encounter.

Whilst the EPQ project is one that students complete individually, there is a taught element which includes up to 30 hours of guidance. The taught elements of the EPQ will be designed to give students the skills they need to complete a successful project. The taught elements will include...

- Organisation
- Time management
- Research skills
- Bibliographical skills
- The Harvard reference system
- Conducting primary research
- Critical thinking
- Extended report writing
- Delivering formal presentations

Students will be expected to attend sessions on developing these skills which they will then apply individually to their own project to ensure its completion.

These taught elements of the EPQ project will be delivered in three 20-minute sessions per week, during form time over the course of the academic year to ensure every student completing a project receives the required 30 hours of taught skills to assist them.

A student's EPQ supervisor will also check-in regularly with the student to ensure the smooth completion of their project. They will be able to give guidance on how to conduct primary research, how to search for and use secondary research and how to put the final project together.

As students come towards the completion of their project, all students will need to deliver a formal presentation to members of the sixth form team. This is a compulsory part of the EPQ process which has 20% of the marks for the final grade attached to it.

The EPQ booklet

Once students have registered their interest in completing an EPQ they will be given a log book which will assist in guiding them through the different stages of the project. When meeting with their supervisor to check-in on progress, students will need to ensure they have their booklet (regularly updated) with them so that all meetings and guidance given can be logged.

An online copy of the log book can be found by clicking on the following link...

https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/admin/crf_pdf/AQA-7993-CRF-21.PDF

Students will need to regularly update their booklet as they begin their EPQ project. As you will see from the link the booklet is divided up into the following sections...

- Taught skills
- Record of marks
- Record of initial ideas
- Candidate proposal
- Planning review
- Mid-project review
- End product review
- Presentation record
- Summary and reflection

Some sections of the booklet need to be completed by the students supervising teacher. It is therefore important that students only complete sections which indicate they need to be completed by the “candidate”.

Students will need to meet with their supervisor to confirm their topic for their EPQ. They will not be able to begin the research and development of their project until the candidate proposal section has been completed and approved by the supervisor. Once students begin their project they will have one “formal” check-in with their supervisor where the mid-project review will be completed in the booklet. Otherwise, students are expected to complete their project independently.

Choosing your EPQ topic

When it comes to choosing the topic you wish to develop your project about, be as ambitious as possible. The good news about your EPQ is that it can be about absolutely anything!

You are always have increased motivation when studying something that you love, so think about this carefully when choosing your topic. Pick something that you enjoy already as a hobby as this will give you extra motivation for doing a good job and completing an excellent project – you will even have a better base of expertise than choosing something you know nothing about!

Below are some ideas based on questions students have previously used for their EPQ projects...

- *Celebrities as role models: Do they have a positive or negative influence on society?*
- *What are the factors behind England's failure to win a recent major footballing championship?*
- *To what extent have the volcanic eruptions of Montserrat and Mount St Helens differed in their economic, social and environmental impacts?*
- *How does high quality provision effect the learning and development of young children?*
- *What effects do video games have on modern society?*
- *In an increasingly energy dependent world is nuclear power the preferred successor to fossil fuels?*
- *To what extent are nuclear weapons still relevant in today's society?*
- *To what extent has mobile phones changed the way we live?*
- *To what extent should certain drugs be legalized?*

When you have decided what topic you would like to study you will need to complete a **proposal form**. This will need to be agreed with your EPQ supervisor and signed off. This will form part of your EPQ booklet, which as you know will log the steps you take to completing your final project.

Research

In order to complete your project to a high standard you will need to conduct research. This can come in two forms; primary research and secondary research. Over the course of your project you will need to demonstrate that you have used both primary and secondary research.

Secondary Research

Secondary research is the more straightforward of the two. Secondary research requires you to gather research from books, websites, articles, newspapers etc. that already exist about the topic that you are studying. In order for your research to be of full merit you will need to judge the reliability of the sources you are using. Although you will know that some secondary research is more reliable than others (e.g. the BBC website is more reliable than Wikipedia) when judging whether sources are useful you will need to take the following into account...

- Why the research was conducted (this will tell you if it may be biased in any way)
- When it was produced (how relevant will it still be today)
- Who produced the research (was it somebody specialist in their field?)
- Who funded the research
- How was the data collected
- Whether the information is similar to other secondary research produced

Primary Research

This is the more difficult research to conduct but is likely to get you more reliable results and be more impressive in your project. Primary research can take the form of google forms, surveys, questionnaires, interviews etc. where you collect first hand data yourself. This is particularly important as you are able to control the purpose, questions and reliability of this data.

You will be taught how to conduct primary research during your “taught” sessions but here are a few things to keep in mind...

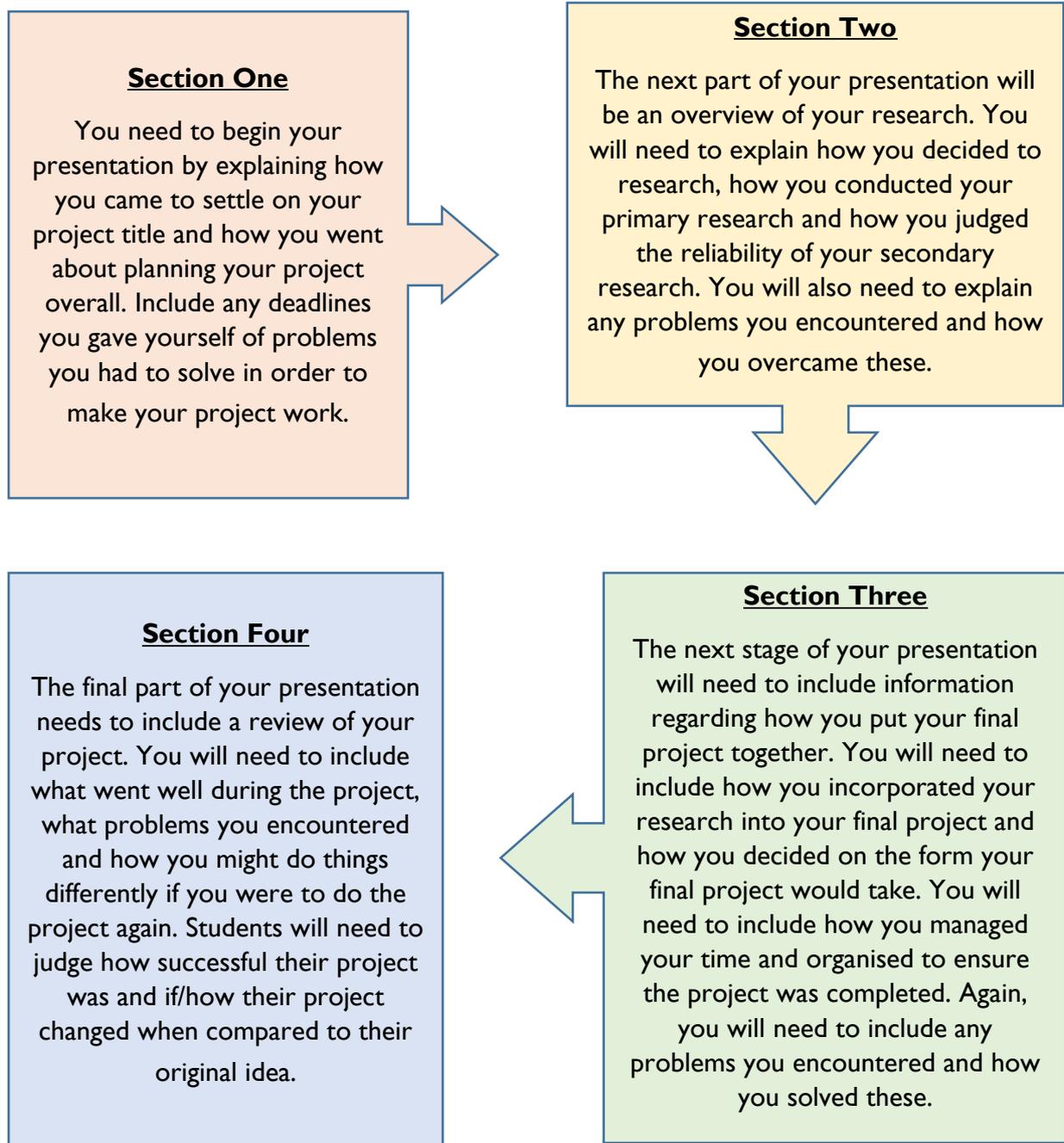
- What data you want to collect
- The best research method to collect this data
- How big your sample size needs to be
- The type of questions you will need to ask
- How to promote your research (using social media to raise awareness)
- How you will quantify and display this data
- How you will use this research as part of your project

Following your research you will also need to include a bibliography as part of your project. This will be included in the taught element of the course to ensure all students have guidance on how this needs to be completed.

Your EPQ Presentation

Once you have completed your research and created your project (whether it be an artefact, essay, performance, exhibition etc) you will need to give a formal presentation reflecting upon your project as a whole. You will present to the sixth form team. The presentation itself should last 5-10 minutes and you will be asked questions afterwards. The presentation is part of the EPQ and counts towards the “Review” section of the project which is worth 20% of the overall grade.

Here are some steps below which outline the different sections your presentation must contain...



The EPQ Mark Scheme

The EPQ is marked across four key areas. The total number of marks that can be awarded for an EPQ is 50 marks. The marks are broken down across the four main areas as follows...

Manage	10 marks	Weighting: 20%
Use Resources	10 marks	Weighting: 20%
Develop & Realise	20 marks	Weighting: 40%
Review	10 marks	Weighting: 20%

A description of each of the four key sections can be found below...

	Assessment Objectives	Weighting
AO1	Manage Identify, design, plan, and carry out a project, applying a range of skills, strategies and methods to achieve objectives.	20%
AO2	Use Resources Research, critically select, organise and use information, and select and use a range of resources. Analyse data apply relevantly and demonstrate understanding of any links, connections and complexities of the topic.	20%
AO3	Develop and Realise Select and use a range of skills, including, where appropriate, new technologies and problem-solving, to take decisions critically and achieve planned outcomes.	40%
AO4	Review Evaluate all aspects of the extended project, including outcomes in relation to stated objectives and own learning and performance. Select and use a range of communication skills and media to present evidenced project outcomes and conclusions in an appropriate format.	20%

A full breakdown of the mark scheme for each section can be found on pages 10-13 in the EPQ specification by clicking on the link below...

<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/subjects/AQA-W-7993-SP-19.PDF>

Submitting your EPQ

You will need to ensure that your EPQ is submitted in good time (students will be made aware of specific dates by their supervisor) as your project will go through a lengthy process before your final grade is awarded.

- I. Once you have completed your final project your EPQ will be marked by your supervisor (in a similar way coursework will be in your A-Level/BTEC subjects).
- II. Your EPQ project, booklet, assessment record and candidate form will then be sent off to the exam board (AQA) where your work will be moderated.
- III. Your final grade will be awarded. Students will receive their final EPQ grade along with their other A-Level/BTEC qualifications on results day in August.

Useful Links

Overview of the EPQ from the AQA exam board

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/projects/project-qualifications/EPQ-7993/why-choose>

EPQ specification from the AQA exam board

<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/subjects/AQA-W-7993-SP-19.PDF>

Student Log Book

https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/admin/crf_pdf/AQA-7993-CRF-21.PDF

Guidance on how to write an EPQ essay

<http://thinkstudent.co.uk/how-to-write-an-epq/>

Guidance on reliability of secondary research

<https://www.eaie.org/blog/8-ways-determine-credibility-research-reports.html>

Guidance on conducting primary research

<https://www.oxbridgeessays.com/blog/everything-need-know-dissertation-primary-research/>

We hope you found this guide useful. If you any further questions your form tutor or the sixth form team will assist you in any way they can!