EPQ Stage 1: Choosing a Project 2020-2021

Welcome to the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). The EPQ is a stand-alone qualification equivalent to slightly more than half an A-level (in terms of the UCAS tariff). The EPQ is an opportunity to do a project in a subject area in which you are interested. It provides a context for developing critical thinking and project management skills – these are widely transferable, and may be useful in other courses now, at university or later on as well as future employment.

EPQ Format: The EPQ may be based on a variety of forms and contexts – you can produce a written report or a research project or an essay, you can submit a design brief for a product or make something (called an artefact). You might produce a play or a dance performance or a magazine – there are many opportunities for you to develop a project that is in your area of interest in a format that you prefer. The EPQ topic that you select could arise out of one of your study areas or it could be an area of personal interest or link to your future career ambitions. **However, whilst your topic can be directly related to your studies, it cannot cover the same content.** You cannot base your project on material that you will be examined on (you can't get credit twice). The EPQ consist of a taught element and independent work, **and must be your own idea.** You will therefore have an EPQ teacher and an EPQ supervisor.

UCAS Points
A* - 28
A - 24
B - 20
C - 16
D - 12
E - 8

Supervisor: Although there is a strong element of you working independently and taking responsibility for your own research, you also have support from a supervisor. It is important that you prepare for your meetings with your supervisor to maximise the contact and advice you receive, ensure you meet all deadlines including email work in advance to assist your supervisor in supporting you.

The EPQ Process: The AQA EPQ is a formally recognised and accredited qualification which has 8 key requirements, you will be supported on the EPQ by your supervisor. Further details on each of the stages will be covered as your progress through your project.

INITIAL AIMS

You will identify an initial idea for a project, this will be discussed with your supervisor. You will complete the RECORD OF INITIAL PLANNING.

ACTION PLAN

You will complete a plan of your PROJECT and how you intend to complete your PRODUCT, you will refer to this throughout your PRODUCTION LOG.

PROJECT PROPOSAL

You will submit the formal project proposal and complete the PROJECT PROPOSAL FORM A, your supervisor will complete the PROJECT PROPOSAL FORM B.

APPROVAL

The PROJECT PROPOSAL PART C is filled in by the centre coordinator who either approves the project without recommendations, or may make required recommendations, or requests a resubmission of the form.

TAUGHT ELEMENT

The taught element of the EPQ will be timetabled lessons. These lessons are a mandatory element of your course and your attendance is essential in order to complete the course. During these lessons you will learn the skills needed to undertake your project including formulating your initial ideas, project proposals, academic writing, referencing and plagiarism, secondary & primary data and evaluating sources. Some activities will be teacher-led and some will require you to complete activities relevant to your topic. You supervisor will support you with any additional skills or may refer to you a subject specialist if appropriate.

RECORD OF PROGRESS

The PRODUCTION LOG is completed to reflect the process of completing the project. This includes meetings with your supervisor, your personal planning, reviews of work achieved and reflections on the process.

PRESENTATION

You will complete a verbal PRESENTATION which should include your reflection on the process, and which will conclude with Q&A.

WRITTEN REPORT and ARTEFACT

A project (called the PRODUCT) which consists of solely of written work should be approximately 5,000 words. A project involving artefacts etc. requires a write-up minimum of 1,000 words.

Assessing the EPQ: The EPQ is assessed using four assessment objectives (AOs) each are weighted to represent a total proportion of the qualification.

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, select and use a range of sources. Analyse data, apply relevantly and demonstrate understanding of any links, connections and complexities of the topic.	20%
AO3	**Develop & 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%

Your project will be assessed holistically.

The material to be assessed consists of three items:

1. The PRODUCTION LOG
2. The written REPORT, which may be accompanied by an artefact. Together these are your project PRODUCT.
3. A record of the PRESENTATION to a small audience.

In all that you do you must show evidence of planning, preparation, research and autonomous working
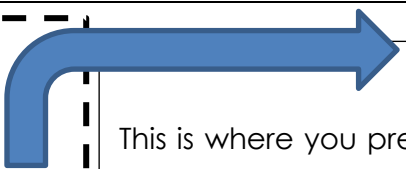
PRODUCTION LOG

This is where you present the record of your journey. Marks for the EPQ are not awarded solely for your final product but on how you got there. The final marks given relate to you showing the process of producing your project and this is recorded in the PRODUCTION LOG.
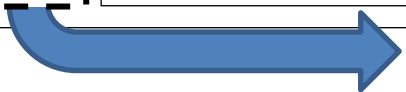
This part of your work is assessed as part of AO1 'Manage the Project'. However, your PRODUCTION LOG can also provide evidence of AO2 'Use OF Resources' and AO3 'Develop & Realise', showing to what extent you have achieved what you set out to do. The review parts of your PRODUCTION LOG and REFELCTION can provide evidence of AO4 'Review'.

WRITTEN REPORT

The report is the core of your EPQ – however, the process of producing this REPORT (documented in your PRODUCTION LOG) is as important as the end PRODUCT.

This part of your work is assessed as part of AO2 'Use Resources' and AO3 'Develop & Realise'.

FINAL PRESENTATION

This can take a number of forms but it is important that your PRESENTATION gives details of the EPQ journey rather than just a summary of your project. This part of your work is assessed as part of AO4 'Review'. However, the PRESENTATION can provide evidence of AO1 'Manage the Project', AO2 'Use Resources' and AO3 'Develop & Realise' showing that you have achieved what you set out to do.

You can see that there is not a straightforward relationship between AOs and what you must do to achieve them.

Learning Objectives

☐ Generate possible topic ideas
☐ Understand potential difficulties with picking a topic
☐ Identify factors influencing topic choice
☐ Assess the choice of topic

There is always more to think about than you might realise when starting an Extended Project. It's not enough just to think about what you are interested in, you also need to consider practical limitations from school or the qualifications you are taking, the types of resources available and your motives for picking the project. Extended Projects can take a variety of forms. Examples include an extended essay or dissertation, report of an investigation, creative writing, an ICT product, a performance or an event.

Projects can come in many forms a written report of 5,000 words or an artefact supported by a 1,000 word report minimum (which must be research based).

Students will obtain ideas for their EPQ topics from a wide range of sources – something you've been interested in from childhood, a TV programme or documentary, an area you wish to study at university.

Whatever your format and title **it is important to research something you are truly interested in, and to keep a written record of any resources (books, articles, websites etc.) you use, even before you start writing.**

Advice from 2018-2019 academic year 12 cohort:

'I would recommend doing a subject that you are very passionate about, as I was, therefore, when it comes to writing the project and completing your production log, it doesn't feel like work and you enjoy doing it. I would also advise people to manage their time effectively.'

'If I was to advise a friend who was going to do a similar project, I would tell them to do lots of research. The more research the better and if one starts with lots of research, it makes the process endlessly easier. Keep a note of where your research came from too.'

'If I were to give any advice to upcoming students would be, at the start focus on finding useful resources and ensure that they're trustworthy.'

If you are struggling to know what topic to pick, consider some of the areas listed below – highlight any of interest to you. These have all been covered in previous years. It's not an exhaustive list, so make sure you think of your own interests…

Arts & Entertainment			
Advertising	Diversity in the media	Music	Propaganda
Architecture	Entertainment law	Painting	Public art
Arts education	Fashion	Paparazzi	Public subsidies 'the arts'
Art therapy	Freedom of the Press	Performance art	Reality TV
BBC licence fee	Identity	Youth culture	
Celebrity culture	Images of Women	Photography	Media and public opinion
Censorship	Interior design	Political use of the media	
Ceramics			

Environment & Construction			
Affordable housing	Community safety	Greenbelt	Public housing
Airport expansion	Congestion zones	Graffiti	Rainforest destruction
Animal welfare	Environmental impact	Habitat destruction	Renewable energy
Architecture	Eco-housing	High rise housing	Road building
Buy-to-let market	Eco-towns	House prices	Road pricing
Carbon footprints	Energy efficiency	Local planning	Second homes
Climate change	Community cohesion		

Business & Engineering			
Advertising	Corruption	Money markets	Recycling
Banking	Economic development	Nuclear power	Supermarkets
Biofuels	Fossil fuels	Pollution taxes	Sustainability
Carbon footprints	Global energy	Product design	Wind farms
Carbon offset	Marketing	Quality of life	Women engineers
Consumer rights			

Science & Technology			
Animal experimentation	Electronic tagging	Impact of IT on society	Social networking
Cloning	Genetic engineering	Transplantation	Surveillance society
Computer gaming	Gene therapy	Internet and terrorism	Medical ethics
Control of the Internet	GM crops	Internet safety	Pesticide use
	Identity theft		Cyber bullying

Health Medicine & Society			
Ageing population	Crime	Hospital infections	Pensions
Age discrimination	CCTV	Human rights	Child Protection
Alternative therapies	Disability issues	Justice system	Race discrimination
Binge drinking	Discrimination	Immigration	Smoking
Care of the elderly	Diversity and equality	Mental health	Substance abuse
Community safety	Drinking laws	Obesity	Teenage pregnancy
	Eating disorders	Parental responsibility	

Sport & Leisure			
Air Traffic pollution	Drugs in sport	Football	Loss of parks/fields
Carbon footprints	Eco-tourism	Football related violence	Money in sport
Commercialisation of sport	Exercise	Gap years	Olympics
Congestion	Fitness	Goal-line technology	Public transport
	Gambling		Tourism

Language & Global Issues			
Child labour	Global warming	Migration	Terrorism
Drugs	Globalisation	National identity	United Nations
Education	Habitat destruction	Overpopulation	War and conflict
Energy generation	Human Rights	Pollution	Waste water

Starting to think of a topic: It may help to begin getting your ideas for a topic into focus. Use this table to consider topics you have studied and what interests you within these topics and what aspects could be extended. Remember that your project can be unrelated to your school studies, you may want to focus your project on your university choice or future career. Fill in the table below with initial ideas, an example has been provided for you.

Area of interest	Current understanding/specific areas of interest	Possible EPQ titles (Your project title must extend **beyond** the work you are already doing in class).
e.g. Gender	Chromosomes and hormones Gender stereotypes Cultural differences Gender roles within society	Do we have any choice in our gender? Is gender nature or nurture? How does the media influence the stereotypes of gender?

Continue on another sheet of lined paper if necessary. Use the internet to help you read around each of the topics above. There should be a good research base for your topic.

Now you have started to generate some initial ideas you should try to keep an open mind and consider further suggestions, as well as some important guidance on what not to do. Remember **you can discuss your ideas, but this is your project, and must come from your ideas.**

1. Avoid a topic that is overly ambitious or too narrow.

You only have 5,000 words and whilst that seems like a lot now you will be surprised about how focused you will need to be, particularly in order to get enough analysis in to reach the higher grades. For example, consider the topic '*The influence of the media on aggression*'. Media is a vast topic. This could be narrowed down to focus on a particular aspect of the media. The title could be narrowed to make research more specific and allow greater depth when analysing, '*The impact of violent video games on adolescent males in the UK*' is far more specific. *It is* more manageable because it focuses on a particular type of media *(violent video games)*, time *(current rather than historic)*, person or groups *(adolescent males)* and place *(UK)*. On the other hand, if your topic is too narrow, you may struggle to find relevant and accessible material. in the initial planning stage you should talk about your topic and research ideas with your supervisor.

2. Avoid emotive issues or a topic which you have a personal axe to grind.

Avoid topics that are linked too closely with issues in your own life, it makes sense to select a topic that is interesting and meaningful to you, but this is not the same as tackling personal issues. If you want to select a topic that you have had personal experience with, for example bullying, it is better to look at it from an objective perspective. Conducting research demands integrity and objectivity, you must be able to draw conclusions based on evidence rather than beliefs and expectations.

3. Dual Accreditation

You cannot submit the same piece of work for more than one subject. This means you cannot select a topic that you will or have been assessed on through coursework or an exam. **YOU should make it clear that the chosen EPQ topic does not overlap with your studies** and your supervisor and centre coordinator endorse this on the project proposal.

4. Don't try and be too original

Original is great, but you need to make sure you can find enough research material on the topic. Again, seek advice from your supervisor if you're not sure.

5. Ensure you remain ethical at all times

This is essential if you are conducting primary research and using live participants in your study. However some research questions can also raise ethical issues. You must also consider the social implications of your research including the socially sensitive nature of some topics. This doesn't mean that you should avoid these types of topics instead you must ensure that your work is free from bias and make the limitations of your findings clear.

Once you have your initial idea you need to consider its viability, this could be through a quick search of the literature to check that the topic is not too broad or too narrow.

Initial Research Ideas for topic/title	
Consider different subsections for this topic, how can the topic be broken down or developed?	
Now search for articles on the topic, make sure you record them in case you use them in your project.	**Any articles/books/websites you research must be recorded in your bibliography on the last page**

You should consider the following points when evaluating your idea:

How does this topic extend your current A-level topic areas?

Does the topic relate to your future career or university choice?

Why are you keen to research this topic?

Could you write 5,000 words on this topic (if you are not doing an artefact)?

Are the initial sources you have found reliable?

Is the literature bias or one-sided?

Are you going to collect your own data?

Is there too much or too little information on your chosen topic?

Is this topic considered socially sensitive?

Is this a topic that you cannot study objectively?

Are there any practical constraints for you to research this topic?

You should now have formulated an initial topic idea. You should discuss your initial ideas with your supervisor and record any comments made so you can include them in your production log. The following activity will help you prepare for your initial planning meeting with your supervisor.

	Yes	No	If no, why not? Comment on your next steps.
I have carefully thought about my topic area and know it really interests me.			
I have considered what restrictions I have in terms of the resources and space available to me and to what extent this impacts on my topic choice.			
I have given sufficient thought to my project title and feel confident it will give me the scope to fulfil the AQA assessment criteria.			
My project title allows me to make use of high-level research skills including planning, analysis, evaluation & explanation.			
The questions I need to ask my supervisor in my initial planning meeting are:			
Any articles/books/websites you research must be recorded in your bibliography on the last page.			

Next Steps: You need to have decided on an initial topic and started to research its viability.

WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL EPQ TITLE:

When you are choosing the title for your EPQ, bear in mind the following points:

1. A good title is clear and specific. You need to have a sharp focus for your project.

The title can take different forms, depending on your choice of format:

- For a report, you should have a specific research question.
- For an investigation/field study, you should have a testable hypothesis
- For a performance, you could have a commission from a client. (The client could be real or imaginary).
- For an artefact, you should have a design brief; again, this will involve establishing a purpose for the artefact which relates to the needs of a client (either a real or a hypothetical client).

With performances and artefacts, a question may help to give focus to the project, but don't use a question which will simply confuse things. The important thing with performances and artefacts is thinking about the work you are doing in relation to the audience or the client. Establish a clear, specific purpose for your project through the commission or design brief. If it is helpful to ask a question, then you can do this as well – but it may simply lead to confusion, in which case, just stick to the task of meeting the demands of the commission or client brief.

2. A good title will lead you into research.

All forms of Extended Project involve significant research. If you have chosen a good title, it will be fairly obvious where you need to begin researching. On the other hand, if your title does not lend itself to research, this may well indicate that it isn't really suitable.

In many projects, the title emerges as a result of a process of thinking and researching. You don't need to fix the title immediately. Choose a title which you think will work and then do some initial research. If you start to find useful source materials, this is a good indication that you may be going in the right direction. On the other hand, if you are struggling to find any research sources, then this may be an indication that your title isn't suitable.

3. A good title will lead into a process of development work.

Your project should last for around 80 hours. If you pick a question which you can answer in a much shorter space of time, or if you pick a brief which can easily be met without much work, then you have probably not picked a suitable title.

For written projects, there should be substantial development of *argument*. You should pick an *open* question: one that can be answered in different ways. Don't pick a closed question which can be answered just by finding out the right pieces of information. There needs to be something to argue about.

In your project, you will be researching different answers, analysing them, and arguing about which answer you think is best. This will mean looking at arguments and counter-arguments, or, in the case of an investigation/ field study, different interpretations of the data.

For performance or artefact projects, make sure that there are alternative possible developmental routes. If you have chosen a suitable title, there should be different ways of designing or creating your project outcome. Then in your project, you will be able to explore these alternatives and evaluate them critically.

4. A good project title will lead to a set of objectives which can be evaluated.

Once you have decided on a potential title, think about the specific objectives for your project. The objectives are the tasks you need to complete in order to answer your question, test your hypothesis, or fulfil the commission or brief for your work. Normally there will be a few objectives. Think of them as the stages on the journey to the completion of your project. Bear in mind that one of the final stages in your project is the review stage. This is where you evaluate the extent to which you have achieved your objectives. It is important, then, that you have clearly defined objectives – otherwise it will be difficult to evaluate the extent to which your project has succeeded.

5. A good project title is at the right level

Remember that the Extended Project Qualification is a Level 3 Qualification. This means that the level of work should be comparable to the work done for an A level. It is worth bearing this in mind when choosing the initial question, brief, commission or hypothesis. If the level of material and ideas you are working with is lower than A level standard, it will be difficult to access the full range of available marks.

6. A good project title will involve extending yourself beyond your other areas of study.

As the name suggests, the 'Extended Project' is all about stretching yourself. The project you produce should not be the same as one that could be submitted for a different qualification. For example, it should not be just like an Art and Design project, an English essay, or a piece of History coursework. You need to show that you have done something different. This can happen in a number of ways:

- You can teach yourself a new skill. If you are doing a practical project, you may want to learn a new technique, work with new materials or work in a new medium.
- You can explore a topic from a number of different points of view. The Extended Project provides a great opportunity for cross-curricular study. Keep a specific question in mind, but explore it using ideas and methods drawn from different subjects. You could, for example, explore the ethics and science associated with

the topic of human cloning, or animal welfare issues. You could look at the history, economics and politics of the European Union. You could look at the philosophy and psychology of mental illness, and so on.

- You could explore a topic which does fit within a single subject of study, but analyze it in much greater depth. Suppose that you are an A level history student, and you have studied the topic of the causes of the First World War. You could use this as the starting point for an Extended Project by looking in greater depth at the concept of historical causation, and examining what it means to talk about 'the cause' of an historical event. In a project like this, you could use your knowledge of a particular historic event, such as World War One, as a case study which helps to give focus to an exploration of the deeper question of historical causation.

Below are some example titles that have been submitted to AQA. Choose some of these to comment on – Are they suitable? Can you improve them? How would you undertake this project?

Example Report Titles

"How do rockets work?"
"What qualifications do I need to be an occupational therapist?"
"Do violent video games encourage violent behaviour?"
"How does illegal downloading of music affect the record industry?"
"Should smokers be treated on the NHS?"
"Is there life on other planets?"

"Caring for my horse"
"Are some adverts unethical?"

Example Investigation / Field Study Titles

"Is there an age group when social networking is most prolific?"
"At what age can children interpret emotions from images?"
"How has marina development affected local marshland biodiversity?"
"Effect of leading questions on witness?"
"How is pepper heat related to colour?"
"Monitoring an fitness programme for improving hurdling performance"

Example Performance Titles

"Can I perform a story through aerial work and communicate the narrative effectively to an audience?"
"Rugby League and Rugby Union - a presentation to sports students."
"Create a skit to be performed to a community audience that advocates the role of education as a long term economic driver and tool for change."
"Can dance communicate what it is like to live in an eastern culture?"
"Beethoven and his life. A performance presentation to show how his compositions and letters inspire my piano playing."

Example Artefact Titles

"How do you design and make a brochure about shipping?"
"To learn new woodworking techniques"
"Design a prom dress"
"Design and create a DVD of a free-running challenge"

Once you have completed this, and have a topic, and a number of suggested titles in mind, keep them safe and bring them with you to school in September.