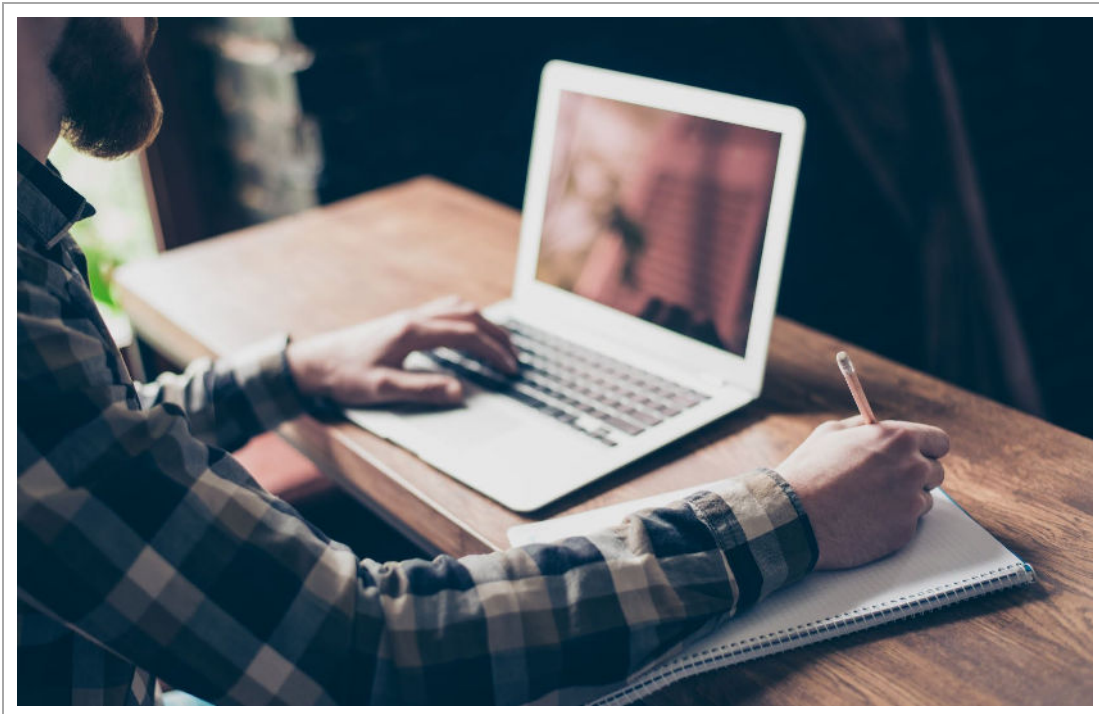


GUIDE TO THE EPQ



CATERHAM SCHOOL

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ABOUT THE EPQ

WHAT IS THE EPQ?

The EPQ stands for 'Extended Project Qualification'. It is a standalone qualification equivalent to half an A level (28 UCAS points) in which students carry out an independent project that is then assessed.

The EPQ is different from any other A level in that it is entirely lead by the students themselves. Students get to plan and carry out research on a topic they've chosen and isn't covered by their other A levels. In this way, it involves extended autonomous work by the student, requiring in total 120 guided learning hours. In short, students are required to:

- Choose an area of interest
- Draft a title and aims of the project for formal approval by the school
- Plan, research and carry out the project
- Deliver a presentation to an audience and answer questions about their project
- Provide evidence of all stages of project development and production for assessment.

WHY SHOULD AN EPQ BE CONSIDERED?

The EPQ has become more and more popular with A level students over the past decade. While A levels are part of a well-established route to university education, the EPQ is designed to extend and develop students' abilities beyond the A level syllabus and offer students an opportunity to develop unique and complementary skills, for example, in planning and undertaking a piece of independent work. As such, students are developing skills and aptitudes that are sought-after by universities and employers.

Moreover, students can investigate subjects of personal interest that may not be covered in more traditional qualifications. Since every EPQ is unique and personal to the individual, it gives each student a unique selling point when it comes to applications and interviews.

The EPQ attracts up to 28 UCAS points and can form part of an offer for a place on a university course.

WHY DO STUDENTS LIKE IT?

Students like the EPQ because it offers them an opportunity to work on something they are truly interested in and committed to. For some, the EPQ is linked to their other A levels. Although you cannot 'double-up' and use a topic from your A levels for the EPQ, you can do something that extends from a topic you've studied. For example, if a student covered 'The Cold War' in History and found it interesting, they might consider an EPQ project on the role of nuclear weapons in contemporary international affairs.

Students can also choose a topic for their EPQ that is seemingly nothing to do with their studies at school, but is something they are very interested in. For example, they might be a keen horse rider or play football in their spare time. From these they could develop an appropriate research question for the basis of an EPQ.

Another appealing approach to the EPQ is to consider whether there is a work experience opportunity that could form a significant part of the research. If so, the supervisor will help the student to develop an appropriate question to focus their research that makes use of their time in the workplace. This can be particularly valuable if they intend to apply for a highly competitive university course or apprenticeship.

UNIVERSITY VIEWS ON EPQ

Universities very much like the EPQ because completing one demonstrates so many of the skills universities are looking for, including self-discipline, passion and time management.

This is summarised by Lancaster university, *"Lancaster University places a high value on success in the EPQ and we are strong advocates of the scheme - we think it is a great opportunity for young people to develop independent research skills which will come in so useful at university. The majority of our degree schemes will incorporate the EPQ into an offer."*

As per Lancaster, many universities will make alternative offers for candidates that hold an EPQ. For example, University of Exeter say, *"for students who receive a standard offer, make Exeter their Firm choice and achieve a grade A in the EPQ we guarantee to confirm their place if they achieve 1 grade below our offer, excluding any subject conditions."* Bath, Birmingham, Southampton and Bristol plus many others, make similar statements.

It is worth noting that some universities including Oxford and Cambridge, Imperial College London, LSE and UCL, will not consider EPQ as any part of a formal conditional offer for any courses, neither will clinical courses such as medicine or dentistry.

STRUCTURE OF THE EPQ

TYPES OF EPQ

There are two basic types of project that a student can choose to do:

- 1) Extended report (5000 words)
- 2) Artefact (+1000 word report)

The best projects are those that demonstrate the student has been able to analyse and evaluate evidence gathered in their research. The student must then bring all their research to a 'conclusion'. For this reason, students should develop a research question they are seeking to answer through their EPQ. Projects where there is simply a title such as 'The Cold War' can tend to be merely descriptive and therefore score poorly.

EPQ TOPICS

As mentioned above, students can choose any topic which interests them and can develop and deliver their work as either an essay, a report on original research, or an artefact (practical work). In considering an artefact, think widely – plays, events, musicals, cookbooks, piece of multimedia etc. could all be options.

Some examples of artefact projects:

- Designing and building a surfboard tailored to specific wave and wind patterns
- A new type of air purifier for low-income countries
- How can a composition for cello be used to convey a range of emotions to an audience? (Includes composition, performance and report)
- What is the most effective way to improve the uptake of cricket in state schools? (Includes tournament and report)
- Should politicians be more like 'the people'? (Includes film and report)
- Is it better to build your own PC? (How to build a 'High Performance' Desktop PC and evaluate it against commercial pre-built alternatives).

Some examples of research-based projects:

- Is it right that football players are paid 1000 times more than a nurse?
- How can school classrooms be best arranged to suit the needs of autistic learners?
- Was the 2016 EU referendum legally binding?
- To what extent could the TV show 'The Wire' be considered 'Shakespearean'?
- Is it ethical to have a child to save another child's life?
- Can large-scale charity fundraising, such as Live Aid and Comic Relief, do more harm than good?
- Should we use parkland in London to build housing for the homeless?
- A comparative analysis of the German and British responses to the coronavirus pandemic.

ASSESSMENT OF THE EPQ

HOW IS THE EPQ ASSESSED?

The EPQ is an internally assessed qualification. Students will need to produce the following 4 deliverables as part of the assessment:

- 1) A production log documenting their journey
- 2) The written report or artefact (with shorter report)
- 3) Supplementary evidence including evidence of the “taught” element (see below)
- 4) A presentation with time at the end to respond to questions.

No one piece of evidence is considered on its own. All pieces of evidence must be presented for a project to be assessed.

Students will be assessed against four objectives and will include their ability to plan and organise, obtain and select information from a range of sources, make decisions and evaluate outcomes.

	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%

The EPQ at Caterham is assessed through the AQA examining board. Samples of completed materials are sent to the examining board on request each year.

WHAT DOES THE TAUGHT ELEMENT CONSIST OF?

The EPQ requires teaching of the necessary skills for both the EPQ and for other areas of academic study. The taught element of the programme is considered extremely valuable because it will support students in developing their ability to move beyond the expectations of students at GCSE and towards the skills and attributes expected of those beginning university or in the workplace. It is expected that at least 30 guided learning hours of the overall 120 hours will be spent on this taught element.

Skills taught as part of the EPQ include:

- ✓ Critical thinking skills – developing the ability to analyse and evaluate sources of information
- ✓ Research skills including the ability to search for and identify suitable sources of information in the chosen subject area
- ✓ Any skills or techniques that will be required for the safe and effective execution of the project which are not part of the candidate's course of study. e.g. safe laboratory or workshop technique, professional codes of practice, ethical guidelines, research methodology
- ✓ ICT skills that will enhance the production of the report and/or the development of the project
- ✓ Project management skills including time, resource and task management
- ✓ The format and structure of accepted academic forms of research report
- ✓ Referencing, the evaluation of sources and the prevention of plagiarism
- ✓ Presentation skills

Teaching will be both classroom-based, in the form of seminars and smaller tutorials, and online through webinars and courses. Attendance at lessons of the taught element will be recorded and will form part of the assessment of the project, under AO1 – 'management' of the project.

WHAT SUPPORT WILL A STUDENT RECEIVE? (ROLE OF TEACHER/SUPERVISOR)

The EPQ is an independent piece of work. Students are being assessed on their ability to conduct research and complete their project autonomously. To support them, each student will be assigned a supervisor (students can request specific teachers if they wish although it is advised that teachers are not experts in the topic of the project).

The supervisor will support and guide the student throughout the entirety of the project. As guidance, the supervisor WILL:

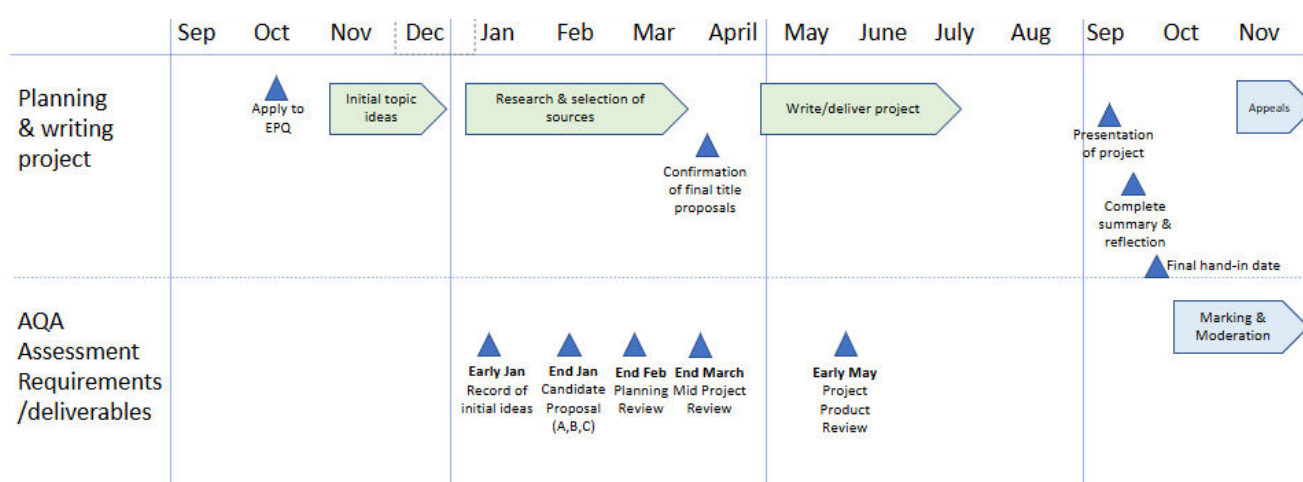
- Mark work completed in taught sessions
- Encourage students by pointing out things they are doing well
- Ask students to identify things that could go better
- Help students to develop a plan or strategy to make improvements by asking questions about their ideas
- Record whether students attend lessons and meetings, are on time and well prepared

The supervisor WILL NOT:

- Find resources for a student
- Tell students the answers
- Tell students how to do things
- Tell students exactly when to do things and set interim deadlines
- Mark and give written comments on drafts of the report
- Fill in the production log, except where it specifically requires a teacher's comment.

In addition, the EPQ Centre Coordinator (Mr Phillips) will also play a supportive role.

TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION OF THE EPQ



IS IT FOR ME?

WHAT SKILLS DO I NEED TO COMPLETE A SUCCESSFUL EPQ?

An EPQ is the longest and most extensive project that you will do during your school years, so it stretches your normal skills. The EPQ requires:

A great interest in the research topic: Interest and curiosity in a subject are the fuel of motivation to keep you going deeper to answer a research question. You are going to be researching and writing about this topic for a year, so you need to pick something you're not going to get bored of.

Organizational skills: Planning the project over a three-term period and making sure that each stage is completed in time, is essential to creating a high-quality end-product and attracting the highest assessment marks in the process.

Good time-management skills: You will be expected to spend a large amount of your own time working independently on your project. Making sure you spend enough time on the project each week, while juggling the demands of your A levels, is key to a successful project. At the same time, don't be afraid to say to your supervisor, "I'm taking a two week break from my EPQ due to mocks" – that's perfectly fine!

To decide if the EPQ is right for you needs good advice from teachers who know you well. For some students, the EPQ will offer little additional benefit over and above what you are already doing. For some, it may be too much to take on in addition to the commitment required for A levels. For others, it may just be that missing link to make your application stand out from others.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

To discuss your suitability for an EPQ or just to find out more, please talk to Mr Phillips in the Sixth Form team (tom.phillips@caterhamschool.co.uk).

