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Making Sense of the Extended Project Qualification

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What is the Extended Project Qualification?



- EPQ = 0.5 GCE A-level (28 UCAS pts. AS = 24 UCAS pts)
- Graded A* - E
- 80 hours of project work
- Scope for a wide variety of projects
- Assessment criteria relate to quality of process / skills used rather than specified content
- Supervised and marked by teachers
- Welcomed by Universities and DfE

The value of project work



Project work is especially valuable as a context for **developing independent learning**, as it offers **time** and **freedom** from curriculum constraints.

A philosophical approach to EPQ teaching

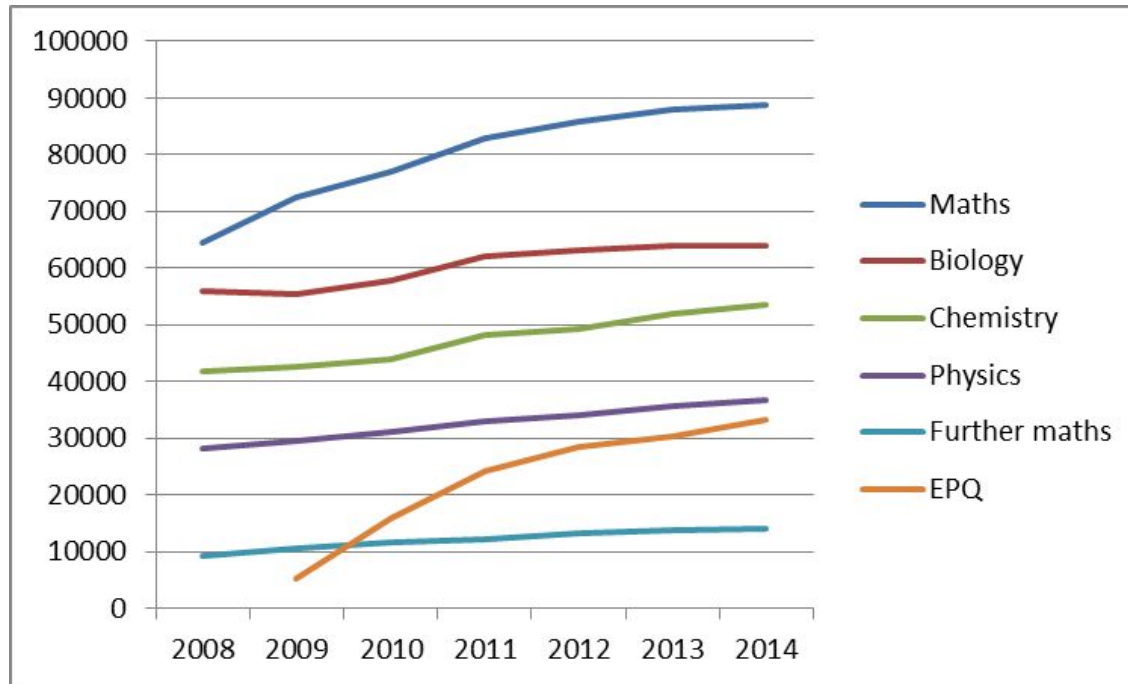


- Being a 'Socratic mentor'
- Asking students deeper, challenging questions about their assumptions and unexamined concepts.
- Allowing students time to develop ideas of their own.
- Teaching to think, not teaching to the test

EPQ Growth



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EPQ: 33,245 entries

Available internationally too

EPQ's role in admissions choices



- EPQ is widely valued as part of the applicant's overall profile.
- It is not currently widely used as a condition of offers, though 'discount' offers are becoming more common.

“UEA recognises the importance of this qualification and the value it places on independent research. As well as giving you the opportunity of applying for our 'Bright Spark' Scholarship in 2017 we will give you an alternative offer, including the EPQ, alongside the standard offer. Applicants who present with the EPQ can achieve one grade lower on the A Levels if an A Grade is achieved in the EPQ.”

The value of EPQ: Research Evidence



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“Regarding some of the recently introduced academic qualifications, this research showed that having an Extended Project qualification or a Cambridge Pre-U GPR qualification alongside AS/A levels significantly increased the probability of attending a university in the Russell or 1994 groups. These qualifications, which require research and autonomous working, have been praised by universities, especially competitive ones, as they allow the development of independent research skills needed for undergraduate study. It is therefore not surprising that they provide ‘better’ access to competitive universities.”

Rodeiro, C., Sutch, T. and Zanini, N. (2015) “Progressing to Higher Education in the UK: The effect of prior learning on institution and field of study”, *Research Matters*, 20, pp.13-21. Available at

<http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/255867-research-matters-20-summer-2015.pdf>

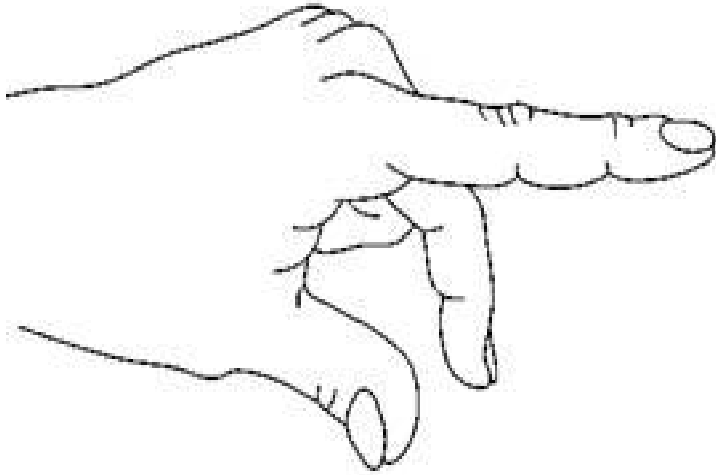
The value of EPQ: Research Evidence



“Students with the EP were more likely than those without it to obtain a good degree (odds of achieving a first class degree increased by 1.25 and of achieving at least an upper second class degree by 1.30).”

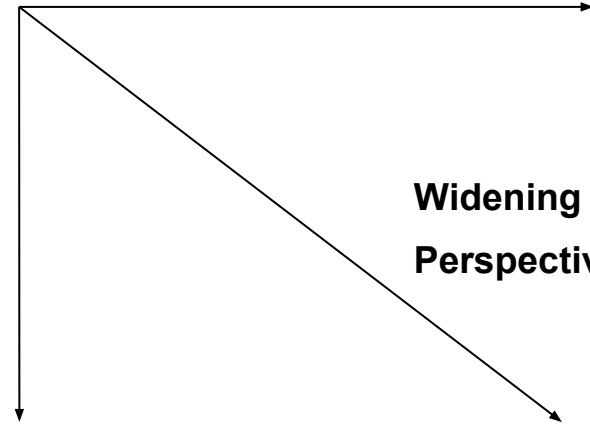
Gill, T and Rodeiro, C. (2014) “Predictive Validity of Level 3 Qualifications”, *Cambridge Assessment Research Report*. Available at <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/178062-predictive-validity-of-level-3-qualifications.pdf>

The EPQ: Extension



**Deepening
Understanding**

Broadening Skills



**Widening
Perspectives**

An EPQ is not simply a big piece of subject-based coursework

The Extension Criterion

Successful EPQs draw on a base of existing subject knowledge and skills but involve **significant extension**

- Options here include:
 - Acquisition of new skills (e.g. field-work)
 - A deeper analytic study, which goes beyond the confines of the A level syllabus (e.g. exploring the nature of history)
 - Exploration of a theme using cross-curricular links (e.g. linking history with philosophy, politics with psychology, science with ethics)

The benefits of a taught course



- Allows scope for skills development
- Encourages deeper, more philosophical discussion and inquiry, leading to richer, more analytical project work
- Allows scope for the exploration of a range of topics, thus widening the field of potential projects.
- Can promote cross-curricular reflection
- Provides an enjoyable, valuable space within the curriculum for ‘learning for learning’s sake’, free from the pressure of the ‘need to know’ culture.
-

EPQ titles



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Should religion and politics be separate?

What is the best alternative to the use of fossil fuels?

Does personality type make a difference to sporting performance?

Do dogs dream?

Is there such a thing as a real hero?

What sort of training regime is best for improving my sprint times?

Is the pen mightier than the sword? An exploration of 3 influential novelists.

Should liberty be sacrificed to security?

Creating a business case for a start-up technology company.

How does perception of flood risk affect households in Oxford?

Is idealism in international relations feasible in the modern world?

Are serial killers born or made?

Create an amplifier for an electric guitar.

Repertoire for a concert at a local arts centre.

Does tragedy still have a meaning in the modern world?

Is it possible to synthesize aspirin in the laboratory?

An exploration of the power of music to affect mood.

A podcast to highlight sporting achievement at Cranleigh School.

Who am I? A film to exploring personal identity.

A performance of scenes from Hamlet for Year 9.

Create an online advertising campaign for a drinks company.



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A focused research question / hypothesis / design brief /
commission is essential



Successful Project Proposals

- ▶ Are the result of negotiation
- ▶ have a clear central focus
- ▶ are often drafted and re-drafted as the project proceeds
- ▶ are linked to the student's aspirations for future work or study

Good questions to ask include:

Is there research material which can be accessed by the student?

Is the project sustainable over a significant period of time?

Is the project at all interesting, to the student or anyone else?

Does the project give an opportunity for the development of a personal perspective?

Is there a central (controversial) issue or question the student can respond to?

A general framework for projects



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Title Page
Contents Page
Abstract
Introduction
Review of Literature / Visual / Technical Research
Discussion / Development / Data Analysis
Conclusion / Evaluation
Bibliography
Appendices



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