

AQA EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION
HANDBOOK

TRINITY SCHOOL SEVENOAKS

2020-21

Table of Contents

Contents

Table of Contents	2
What is an Extended Project Qualification?	3
What are the benefits to completing an EPQ?	3
What do you have to produce?	3
What might an EPQ project look like?	4
What do universities say about the EPQ?	4
Key Deadlines	5
Choosing a Topic	5
How do I get a high grade in my EPQ?	5
AO1 Manage – (10 marks)	7
Timelines, SMART targets and Gantt charts	8
AO2 Use Resources – (10 marks)	10
Writing a Source Evaluation	12
Harvard Style Referencing for Sources of Information	13
AO3 Develop and Realise – (20 marks)	13
AO4 Review – (10 marks)	15
Evidencing Evaluation and Reflection	15
EPQ Production Log	18
The EPQ Presentation	18

What is an Extended Project Qualification?

The EPQ (Extended Project Qualification) is an increasingly popular additional qualification equivalent to half an A-Level (28 UCAS points). The course requires students to conduct their own independent research project culminating in a 5,000 word dissertation, investigation, artefact or performance. Students also submit a reflective log of their project, which encourages evaluation and reflection skills.

Students are free to choose the topic of their EPQ; it does not need to link their A-Level studies. This makes it an attractive option for students and universities, as it enables applicants to demonstrate their wider interests and concerns. There is no final exam for the EPQ. Instead, this unique qualification focuses on process and independent study.

What are the benefits to completing an EPQ?

Trinity School Sevenoaks is dedicated to securing the best possible future for our students and we encourage all of our Sixth Form students to complete an EPQ qualification in addition to their A-Level programme. The only exceptions to this are as follows:

- if the student has completed the EPQ qualification before
- If the student is planning to study four A-Level subjects to completion

It is widely acknowledged that the skills of independent study, project management and research are developed in depth over an EPQ course. Such skills provide excellent preparation for university-level study or employment. Furthermore, it is of note that while the EPQ only started in 2008, many universities have already introduced new standard admissions statements that explicitly encourage students to complete the project. This encouragement is often in the form of a reduced conditional offer for students who have a Grade A or better in their EPQ. Universities place high value on students who have proven they can deal with the required dissertation element of most degree-level qualifications. In addition, students who refer to their EPQ in personal statements and university interviews frequently make valuable contributions to their application.

Trinity School use the AQA exam board for the EPQ. More information relating to the course specification, past papers and mark schemes is available on their website at the below address:

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

What do you have to produce?

Students have the choice to complete a practical or written piece of research.

- A detailed reflective 'Production Log' documenting their research process
- Evidence of project planning

- An academic, fully referenced written thesis (5,000 words) or an artefact (practical piece of research) and accompanying academic report
- Evidence of a live presentation of their research (this usually takes the form of a printed PPT and accompanying cue cards)

If students choose to make a practical piece of research culminating in an artefact, they will need to write an accompanying academic report. The minimum word count of this is 1,000 words; however, the norm is much more.

What might an EPQ project look like?

An EPQ project can take many forms. The requirements are that it must be a critically informed piece of research accompanied by a log and live presentation. Your 'log' is completed on the software ProjectQ and is as much value as your final product (research outcome). Your live presentation will take place at Trinity and will be evidenced in your submission. Your research outcome could consist of any of the following outcomes:

- Design – a toy/vehicle/website/stage set/blueprint of an invention
- Performance – a concert/play/debate/event
- Report with findings from an investigation – working with disadvantaged people/scientific study/ geography fieldwork/business venture
- Artefact – artwork/costumes for a film or play/ working model/video game/educational game
- Dissertation – critical analysis of the work of an author or film director

What do universities say about the EPQ?

University of Southampton

'The University of Southampton believes project qualifications such as the EPQ offer an unparalleled introduction to the skills needed for students to thrive in Higher Education. We were the first university to introduce a dedicated [admissions offer](#) for students who excel in the EPQ, and we work with schools across the country to support students and raise the profile of the EPQ, and other project qualifications.'

Cambridge University

'We welcome the Extended Project and would encourage applicants to undertake one as it will help to develop independent study and research skills valuable for higher education'.

University of Manchester

'The EPQ gives A-level students excellent preparation for university-level study and may help boost their UCAS application.'

Key Deadlines

Current Year 12 Timetable (starting Year 13 in September 2020)	
Planning Review	April 15 2020
Mid-Project Review	May 15 2020
Project Product Review	September 15 2020
Finish Essay/Artefact	October 01 2020
Presentation Part A	October 15 2020
Presentation Part B	October 15 2020
Summary and Reflection	November 15 2020
Student Entries	December 2020
Internal Submission	December 2020
Internal Marking	January 2021
Internal Standardisation	February 2021
Opportunity for Review	March 2021
Submission of Marks AQA	15 May 2021

Choosing a Topic

When deciding on a topic for your EPQ, it is important to remember that you will be working on your research question for a year – it needs to be something that will sustain your enthusiasm and is of genuine interest to you. Consider linking your EPQ to a passion or something you are committed to outside of your studies.

Consider linking your EPQ to your career or personal aspirations. Finally, consider what you will want to use your qualification as evidence for – will your EPQ topic impress and be useful on your personal statement for your UCAS form? Use the below as a checklist to see if you are on the right track:

- Is your chosen topic something that will sustain your interest for months – is it something which is of genuine interest to you?
- Does your topic have scope for you to show analyse and evaluative writing?
- Is your topic something where you can develop a thesis (argument)?
- Is your topic clearly defined and focussed? Can you demonstrate detailed, specific analysis in your writing or making?

How do I get a high grade in my EPQ?

Completing an EPQ is as much a task in project management as it is about the specific topic you have chosen. In order to achieve a high grade, you will need to ensure that you evidence the criteria for the mark scheme in both your final product (be this a dissertation or artefact and written report), your live presentation and your Production Log. It is about showing detail, clarity and a high level of communication in everything you do.

Read the following AQA descriptors of an A*, C and E grade project:

Grade A*

Students identify their project and produce an effective design and thorough plan. They carry out their project in a highly organised fashion, showing excellent independent working skills and clear evidence of responding very effectively to guidance given. They use a wide range of resources critically, analyse data effectively and apply findings to good effect. They show clear links between sources of information and the themes of their project and fully explore the complexities of the topic. Problems and/or issues are identified, fully explored and addressed. Students select and use a range of skills including, where appropriate, new technologies, to achieve high quality outcomes that fully realise the intentions of the project and to draw conclusions. Students carry out full, in-depth evaluations, showing a high level of insight into how they conducted their project and the limitations of the resources at their disposal. They select and use a range of communication skills to present outcomes and conclusions clearly, in an appropriate format with excellent supporting evidence. Students show a deep and extensive knowledge of the project area of study through their responses to questions.

Grade C

Students identify and design their project. They produce a plan that enables them to achieve the overall objectives and to demonstrate some higher level organisational skills. They are able to work independently in carrying out the project and respond to guidance given. Students use a range of resources, analyse data and apply findings. They show links between sources of information and the themes of the project and explore some complexities of the topic. Some problems and/or issues are identified and addressed. A range of skills are employed and the intended outcomes are generally achieved to a competent standard. In their evaluations, students reflect effectively on the final outcome and on their strengths and weaknesses in carrying out their project. They use a range of communication skills to clearly present outcomes and conclusions in an appropriate format with sound supporting evidence. Students show a good knowledge of the project area of study through their responses to questions.

Grade E

Students identify their project and produce a workable plan. They show some organisational skills in completing the project. There is some evidence that they have responded to guidance given. Students use a limited range of resources, analyse some of the data and apply findings. Some links are made between the sources of information and the themes of the project. Students use a range of skills to partially realise the intended outcomes. They give some thought to the way the final outcomes have emerged and to their own strengths and weaknesses in carrying out their project. Communication skills are used to present outcomes and conclusions with some supporting evidence. Students demonstrate some knowledge of the project area through their responses to questions.

The section below details each section of the mark scheme and ways in which you can evidence this in your Log and outcome:

Your EPQ will be marked according to four Assessment Objectives: AO1 (Manage), A02 (Use Resources), A03 (Develop and Realise) and A04 (Review).

AO1 Manage – (10 marks)

Assessment Criteria	Evidence to support award of top grade
<p>Clearly identifies topic to be researched, including clear aims and objectives</p>	<p>Use Essay/Report and Log to make aims/objectives obvious</p> <p>Include a written introduction to your essay clearly explaining a focussed aim – what are you trying to find out? Why not list your aims and objectives somewhere so it is really clear?</p> <p>Clearly explain in both your log and your final written outcome what your objectives are. An objective is a step you need to take in order to reach your aim.</p> <p>Your choice of topic should allow you to be analytical or evaluative.</p>
<p>Detailed and clear project plan using organisational skills and strategies.</p> <p>Evidence of monitoring the project and developing the plan as it goes forward. Evidence that changes to plan are made with good judgement and clear reasons behind them.</p> <p>Monitoring of project progress against initial plan.</p>	<p>Timelines and Gantt charts</p> <p>The examiners want to see evidence of forward planning and reflection on this planning. The best students develop a detailed Gantt chart that is then reviewed regularly during the project to assess how on schedule they are.</p> <p>SMART targets</p> <p>These provide another way to show that you are monitoring your project over time and are also a ‘strategy’ you are using to organise your project.</p> <p>Detailed and Clear</p> <p>You should be writing a significant amount in your Production log – two paragraphs for most boxes as a general aim. A few lines if not detailed – it is ‘brief’ and this will only get you a U or an E for your final grade.</p>

Evaluation

The mark scheme asks you to 'monitor your progress'. Discuss how your plan is going and how you are adapting it as you move forward. If things don't go according to plan, that may actually help you gain marks – you just need to explain that you have monitored this and detail how you are adjusting your plan moving forward.

Timelines, SMART targets and Gantt charts

You need to evidence that you are employing organisational skills and strategies to produce a detailed project plan and monitor this as you go through your project. A 'project plan' does not only mean planning out your written essay – it means planning out how you are going to carrying out your project from plan to completion. Do you need to buy/source materials? Do you need to go to a museum/archive to conduct some research? Do you need to design a survey and collect data? You will need to allocate time for all of these stages in addition to planning for time to write up your dissertation or make an artefact. In order to achieve an A*, you need to show that you have developed a detailed, clear and realistic plan for your project.

How can you provide excellent evidence of planning?

1. Design your whole project, not just the writing of your essay. If you are writing a dissertation, consider in detail how you can provide detailed evidence of planning. What different kinds of sources will you need to find? Are you collecting primary data? How long will certain tasks take you and why? Consider this as an opportunity to improved your skills and demonstrate this in your planning. Perhaps you are going to attend a writing workshop or complete a free online course to sharpen your skills before attempting the essay. Perhaps you are going to visit an art gallery and interview the curator to enhance your understanding of your topic. Design your project so that it allows you to evidence different stages of planning. Artefacts enable you to show planning through different making stages and through the sourcing of materials.
2. Using a Gantt chart:
 - Include all of the steps you will need to take, however minor, over the course of your project. Break down large tasks into smaller ones – this will help you evidence it as 'detailed'. Include things that are unique to your project and take into account what you know about yourself – are you particularly strong at reading but need to leave yourself more time for the writing phase?
 - Identify how long you will need for each task. Your plan should be unique and individual to your project – a list of the EPQ deadlines is not a detailed plan!
 - Consider when you need to complete the tasks. What will be the most efficient order? Do some tasks need to be completed before others?
 - Present your project plan as a timeline, list of deadlines, or Gantt chart*. Make sure that your timeline fits with the EPQ deadlines*.

- Monitor the progress of your project against this project plan, and adapt if necessary.
3. Make SMART targets and list them in your EPQ Production Log. Look up 'SMART targets' on google or YouTube to find out more about what they are.

Notes*:

- A Gantt chart is a popular project planning tool.. A useful Gantt charting tool can be found at:
<http://www.smartsheet.com/>

AO2 Use Resources – (10 marks)

Assessment Criteria	Evidence to support
Select and use a variety of sources to research identified topic.	<p>Bibliography</p> <p>Regardless of whether you are conducting practical or written research, you need to include a well-referenced bibliography in your dissertation or written report. Most students use Harvard referencing to show this.</p> <p>I would also consider using footnotes to add extra information as a running commentary through your dissertation – this does not add to your word count and is very easy to do on Microsoft Word.</p> <p>Variety – this means 30 high quality sources or more. Having 20 sources where 20 are from the same website is not varied.</p> <p>Selection of Sources</p> <p>You need to show that you have selected relevant sources – do your sources link to your topic? Are they well-selected? Using Wikipedia is not a good idea because anybody can add to it. There is no way of telling what is true and what is biased or fictional on Wikipedia – so for research purposes it is not of any value. Do not use blogs. Use sources from Google Scholar, academic journals, The British Library, museums etc – reputable sources.</p> <p>Show that you have gone the extra mile – go to a museum, archive, or email an expert.</p>
Analyse data and show clear links to relevant theories and concepts.	<p>Style of Writing</p> <p>Lots of students write a descriptive EPQ – this will not score you high marks. It needs to be an analytical essay. Avoid description in your writing of your dissertation or written report.</p>

	<p>Consider how you will analyse your data. Is your data numerical? Is it written? How do people analyse data in the topics of research you are conducting?</p> <p>Show links to relevant theories. Which theories are relevant to your chosen subject? A theory could be feminist, political, sociological, scientific, mathematical, and philosophical – but you need to find an appropriate theory and apply it to your topic.</p>
<p>Analysis of resources used to collect information</p> <p>Sophisticated and informed evidence of analysis of resources for their relevance and usefulness to the project.</p>	<p>Source Evaluation</p> <p>A review of the primary and secondary sources used in the realisation of the project</p> <p>Annotated source materials</p> <p>If you have collected copies of articles, work experience diaries, email exchanges with experts in the field, or anything else that constitutes a source, consider including it as evidence within the Production Log.</p>

Writing a Source Evaluation

You need to demonstrate that you have utilised a wide range of sources in your project. Consider specific books, websites, newspaper articles, journal papers, interviews. For each of your sources, it is expected that you include some kind of source evaluation. You could include this table as an appendix or you could upload it as an extra file to your Production Log.

Reference (in Harvard referencing style)	Type of source <i>Book/website etc</i>	How useful is this source? What will you be able to use from it?	How reliable is this source? How can you tell?
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Harvard Style Referencing for Sources of Information

By far the easiest way to Harvard reference is to use Microsoft Word or an equivalent. Word has a referencing function that allows you to create a log for each source. Word will then automatically create references and a bibliography for you in an accurate way.

Below are step by step instructions on how to use Word on a PC to do this. On a Mac it will be similar but you may need to search on Word as the tabs may be in a different place.

- 1) Click on the References tab on Microsoft Word
- 2) Click 'Insert Citation' in the Citations and Bibliography section
- 3) Click 'Add new Source'
- 4) Select which type of source it is in the drop down box and fill in the relevant information. Click 'OK' when finished.
- 5) You have now created a log in your sources. Do this for all the sources you have.
- 6) When writing in the body of your essay and you want to include an in-text citation, go back to the 'references' tab and click 'insert citation'. Your source will now be listed. Click on it and Word will create a citation for you. Make sure your style of referencing is selected to Harvard.
- 7) When you have finished writing your essay and you want to create a bibliography, go back to the References tab and select 'bibliography'. Click on the first item in the drop down list and Word will create an alphabetical bibliography for you.

Alternatively, you can write out your references by hand. Read the information below to learn how to do this.

A useful tool that explains how to complete Harvard style referencing can be found at:

<http://www.neilstoolbox.com/bibliography-creator/index.htm>

To understand the format, here some examples of the Harvard style reference for different sources.

A book

Ross, I. (2012), *Oscar Wilde and Ancient Greece*, Cambridge University Press

A journal article

Lovell, A., Saw, R., Stimson, J., (2005) 'Product value-density: managing diversity through supply chain segmentation', *The International Journal of Logistics Management*, Vol. 16 Iss: 1, pp.142 - 158

A news article

Newnham, D. (2003), 'Behind the barricades', *The Guardian*, 23 September 2003, P.12

AO3 Develop and Realise – (20 marks)

Assessment Criteria	Evidence to support
---------------------	---------------------

Data Analysis and Collection

Implementation of Project Plan

Creative Thinking

Decision-Making

To achieve planned outcomes

- Appropriate data is collected and thoroughly analysed. If you are using a questionnaire – ensure this is well designed. Make sure you have carried out an ethical review or risk assessment if your research warrants it. Make sure your analysis carries a significant portion of your research dissertation or written report.

- Project is fully completed. No sections of the Log should be left incomplete and your essay, artefact and report should be finished to a high standard. Checking, re-drafting and clarity of communication are very important in this.

- Have you achieved your aim?

- Have you achieved your objectives?

- You should have shown, through your log, how you have problem-solved and approached your project in a reasoned way to complete it.

- You should have clear evidence of how you have made changes to your project plan as you have progressed, with clear reasons given as to why you have made these changes. Document this in your log.

- Your final outcome should be well-organised, clear and of a high written quality. If you are writing a dissertation, it should be beautifully written, with a title page, abstract, contents, and accurately referenced with or without footnotes.

- Your presentation should be well-organised, clear and of a high spoken quality.

AO4 Review – (10 marks)

Assessment Criteria	Evidence to support
<p>Communication skills</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Photos of your artefact if you chose this option - Print out of a high quality PowerPoint presentation - Any cue cards - Detailed evidence that you have planned your Presentation in your log <p>Essay or Written Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Well-written, accurately referenced - Clear and analytical - Academic in tone - Beautifully formatted - Communicates your findings and conclusions
<p>Evaluation of own learning and performance</p> <p>Sophisticated evaluation of their own work, learning and performance. Excellent identification of issues, areas for improvement and transferable skills</p>	<p>Written Evaluation – Summary and Reflection section of your Production Log</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A formal, detailed (usually the equivalent of 2+ sides of A4) evaluation of the project against the four AOs. - Communicates your findings and conclusions

Evidencing Evaluation and Reflection

One mistake students can make in their EPQ is to avoid talking about things which went wrong or were obstacles. In fact, the opposite is true: you should use opportunities to talk about these factors as they help you gain marks for your evaluative skills.

You should use the Summary and Reflection section of your Log to provide a very detailed piece of writing evaluation the strengths and weakness of your project as well as your own learning. This is a good opportunity to gain clear marks for A04.

This evaluation should be a minimum of 2-3 pages and include evaluation of how the project has influenced your personal learning, as well as evaluating the relative problems or successes of the work undertaken. The

following questions will help you address the different areas of the mark scheme. Do not be afraid to use the subheadings in your evaluation.

Managing the Project

- How good a research question did you develop? Did you have to change the working title?
- Did you need to limit the scope of the project?
- Did the question allow you to maintain interest?
- How effective was your time-management?
- Did creating Gantt charts help you manage your project?
- Did using SMART targets help you to manage your project?
- Did you split up the project into manageable chunks?
- Did you manage to keep to interim and school deadlines?
- Did you have any difficult decisions to make in the management of the project?

Using References

- Did you use a wide range of sources?
- Was it difficult to obtain reliable sources? If so how did you overcome this problem?
- Did you find too many sources and have trouble narrowing down a selection?
- Did you employ any particular techniques that allowed you to identify sources on the Internet?
- E.g. advanced search techniques?
- Did you go to any museums, galleries or archives?
- Did you go to any specific libraries?
- Did you travel to obtain particular information for your EPQ?
- Evaluating the reliability of the sources
- How did you organise/categorise your sources?
- How did you make links?
- Did you learn how to reference using Harvard style? Did it take you longer than expected to format references in this style?
- Did you show creativity in finding sources of information?
- E.g. interviewing an expert?
- Undertaking an original piece of research such as an experiment or survey?

Realising the Project

- Did you learn any new skills in order to realise the project?
- Creating Gantt charts?
- Adding footnotes to Word documents?
- Using Harvard referencing
- Adding table of contents?
- Adding pictures or graphs to documents?
- Did you complete the project on time, meeting all or virtually all intermediate goals?
- If you were to back to the beginning of the project, would you change anything about your approach?
- Did you analyse data?
- How effective was the storyline of your project? Did it follow a logical and well balanced series of arguments?
- Did you develop a solution to a problem?
- Did you have to overcome a problem when considering how to present certain information?
- How did you plan and realise your presentation to ensure that you were able to describe the findings of your project in a short talk?
- Did you practise your presentation?
- Did you consider the type of language you were using for the type of people (mostly non-experts) that you would be talking to?
- How effective was your use of new technology?

Reflection and Evaluation

- Did you reflect on your work as it progressed?
- Did you review the title of your project?
- Did you self review and correct your written work?
- Did you ask for feedback and respond to advice where appropriate?
- Did you revisit your Gantt chart or interim deadlines?
- In your presentation, were your audience engaged and interested?
- Has the project advanced your career in any way?
- Is it linked to your planned university course and/or job?

- Did you write about your project on your personal statement?
- Did you get asked about your project at an interview?
- How might your project prove a valuable experience in the future in terms of creating useful contacts, gaining work experience or employment, or getting accepted at university in the future?

EPQ Production Log

Your Log is worth as much in terms of marks as the final outcome and should be very detailed. A few lines for each box is not enough to score more than a U or an E. As a general guide, you should be aiming for at least two paragraphs for most of the boxes in your ProjectQ. Every section must be completed or your coursework will be incomplete and you risk failing. Be as detailed and as clear as you can in your log – this is A-Level standard. In order to hit the mark scheme, make sure you have included the following:

- Describe the tasks that you undertake. This can include simple entries, for example reading a relevant news article.
- A clear set of aim(s) and objectives
- Detailed evidence of project planning
- Detailed evidence of changes you have made to your plan, with clear and sound reasons
- Evaluation of your sources – are they reliable? Why/why not? Are they useful to you?
- Evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of your project
- Highlight problems that were faced and overcome, however minor. e.g. If you found it difficult to get a particular article because you don't have an ATHENS password to access academic journals, you might have emailed the author to get a copy
- Highlight any aspects of scheduling etc/organising work
- Upload extra files, like GANTT charts, SMART targets and images to the 'Student Files' section of your ProjectQ profile.
- High level of written communication – this is A-Level coursework. Often students fall down for lazy writing in their log. Make sure you use accurate punctuation, grammar and concise, high-level vocabulary to articulate your ideas; this will support your demonstration that you deserve a top grade.

The EPQ Presentation

In addition to your written submission, AQA requires that you show evidence that you have given a live presentation of your research to an audience. You will have the opportunity to do this at the end of Year 12, in front of your supervisor and at least one other person.

You will not need to be recorded, but you will need to collate evidence of the presentation (usually a PowerPoint presentation print-out as well as cue cards and your plan) as part of your evidence for submission.

To achieve the top grade, the assessment criteria suggest:

“Detailed and careful evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the completed project in relation to the planning, implementation and outcomes, and the candidate’s own learning during the project. Material is consistently relevant, well-structured and appropriately presented. Candidates clearly communicate their findings and conclusions which are based on sound evidence and judgement.”

In Year 13, you will have the opportunity to present your project. You will need to develop presentation materials to summarise your project to an audience of the following:

- Teachers
- Students

Want to impress? In addition to the formal EPQ presentation, students have often gained additional evidence that they have “engaged and entertained” audiences by presenting to school societies or their tutor groups. Each time students have asked for audience members to complete feedback. Some of the very best students have also sought opportunities to present outside of school, for example presenting their findings to experts in the field for example to gain additional feedback. Each time the student has asked for some written feedback so they can include in their portfolio.