

Student bridging work

Please take some time to read through the information in this document. At the end are a series of tasks that must be typed up into a separate Word document and emailed through to Mr Self (tself@stj.kent.sch.uk) prior to joining the course. These tasks are included and submitted with the final project as they help to show how your topic develops over the course.

What makes a successful EPQ?

There are lots of reasons why students choose to take the EPQ alongside their A-levels. For some students it is because they are passionate about a particular topic area but they do not get to study that in their course. For others it is the enjoyment of learning how to explore a topic in considerable depth to a high level, or just appreciating the freedom to do their own thing. In some cases, it is because the university they wish to attend actively encourages students to study the EPQ where possible.

Most students connect their EPQ to their 'priority subject pathway', i.e. the course they plan to study at university. This then strengthens their applications for those courses.

A successful EPQ is a project that does not have a clear answer – it should be something that is open for debate/argument, and which therefore requires you to argue and justify your point of view. If you have chosen a good topic area, 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 is not really suitable.

An EPQ is a lot of work, so it needs to be a topic that you are genuinely interested in and can focus on for an entire year. There is a lot of research to complete, and the dissertation averages 5-6,000 words.

A successful topic is usually connected to the 'priority pathway' and something that you find interesting. It should also be wide enough to allow you to explore it in detail but narrow enough to be focused on key areas.

When you are thinking about which topic to study for the 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.

In many projects, the actual title emerges as a result of thinking and researching. You do not need to fix a title immediately. Choose a title which you think will work for now.

2. A good topic will lead you into research.

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 topic is not suitable.

3. A good topic 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. Do not 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, analyzing them, and arguing about which answer you think is best. This will mean looking at arguments and counter-arguments.

4. A good topic 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:

- 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.

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Now you have some information to help you think about the EPQ in a broader sense, it is time to reflect on what you *might* like to explore. Your responses here do not lock you into this topic area, but they are incredibly helpful in showing whether you have viable ideas to build from.

Please complete all tasks in a new Word document.

- 1) Write a couple of paragraphs explaining why you would like to study the EPQ and what you would like to gain from this course.
- 2) What topic area would you like to explore, and what is it about this area that makes it appealing and viable as a topic?

This question should be a sustained response detailing your initial thoughts and ideas for the EPQ – around three quarters of a page typed.

You may wish to:

- Highlight relevant A-level course links
- Highlight areas of personal knowledge
- Highlight anything you already know as a foundation to the project
- Explain why you want to study the topic
- Explain what you hope to gain from exploring this specific topic area

You are welcome to add multiple ideas at this stage if you wish.

- 3) As mentioned, the EPQ requires considerable research. Please explain where you think you might find the information needed to write your project.

This can be a paragraph or in bullet-point format.