

LEVEL 3 / AQA / 1 YEAR

EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION

The EPQ is unlike all other A-levels in that it allows you to set the direction of research: you decide on your own question; you do the research: you decide whether you blend existing knowledge with new or choose a new direction.

The EPQ by Dissertation is an opportunity to pursue an area of interest in tremendous depth. It is not constrained by the school syllabus and past studies have pursued topics as diverse as medical ethics, Roman sexuality, graffiti as art, the nature vs nurture debate in crime and *The Lord of the Rings* as a potentially racist text. The dissertation combines researching in Durham University Library, drafting a five thousand word essay, critically assessing the sources, evaluating successes and finally carrying out a small group interview in which students are supportively interrogated on their findings. The taught element of the course focuses upon how to research the essay, how to reference the sources, how to write the text and how to report your findings in prose and orally. It does not include any attempt to teach students the actual content of their dissertation.

TEACHING & LEARNING METHODS

Students will have weekly sessions to meet an advisor, report progress, assess quality of prose, etc. Students will also be given access to Durham University Library. The core emphasis is on this as a self-driven programme of study and exploration, and it will suit those with such self-discipline and enthusiasm. The course begins in the latter part of Year 12 once students have established their key subject interests, university choices, and career aspirations. A summer of study is then followed by some months of drafting and submission during Year 13.

ASSESSMENT

The assessment is by dissertation and by the small-group interview. Grades as high as A*, which is given 28 UCAS points (exactly half an A* at A-Level), can be achieved.

SUBJECT COMBINATIONS

The EPQ can be taken with any subject at all. We do not allow students to merely repeat work from another subject in the dissertation, but students can extend it into new domains, for instance studying Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in Classical Civilisation and Shakespeare in English and then applying their new knowledge of Classical Mythology to an in-depth study of Shakespeare's use of Classical Antiquity. Similarly, students may study glaciation in Geography and geographies of gender in the EPQ before applying for Geography at a university. Alternatively, students can look at a topic relevant to a career such as 'end-of-life care' for medics.

CAREERS/HE INFORMATION

The proportion of students studying subjects at elite universities who have used the EPQ as an opportunity to prove their enthusiasm and ability for that area is astounding (more than 35,000 in 2015). Oxford, for instance, notes, "[we] recognise that the EPQ will provide an applicant with the opportunity to develop research and academic skills relevant for study at Oxford."