

# Teachers' Briefing 2: The Extended Project

**This should provide you with all the information you need to know about the Extended Project Qualification and how Queen Mary can support you and your students. For more information, please contact Roisin Hurst at [r.m.hurst@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:r.m.hurst@qmul.ac.uk)**

## What is the Extended Project?

The Extended Project is a qualification which requires students to produce a single piece of work of their own choosing. It is designed to stretch young people at advanced level and test a wider range of skills such as planning, preparation, research and autonomous working – in fact many of the skills that students will find useful when they get to university.

Although the Extended Project is an integral part of the 14-19 Diplomas, it is a stand-alone qualification in its own right, so it can be taken as an additional qualification by students taking AS/A2s as a way of developing their independent research skills. The Project looks likely to become more popular with schools as a means of preparing their students for the academic challenges of university study – and to stand out in the competitive world of university applications.

## How does it work?

Students choose their own topic with some guidance from their teachers. If students



are struggling for inspiration, the exam board websites give examples of subjects which have been tackled in the past. [www.thestudentroom.co.uk](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk) offers advice and an EPQ forum.

The student will be expected to carry out the relevant research for their particular topic by selecting and using a range of resources and information. Once they have done this, they then use a range of communication skills and media to present their Project outcomes and conclusions. The Project outcome can take a variety of forms, depending on the subject matter and what works best for the student. It could be a report of an investigation; a design; a dissertation; an artefact; or even a performance. The Extended Project can also take the form of a group project but if students choose this option the individual's role needs to be clearly defined.

What's great about the Extended Project is that it gives students a lot of flexibility and choice over the topic. The student doesn't necessarily have to select something related to their current programme of study, although they may find it easier to do this. So they really do have the freedom to choose whatever they like, as long as they are confident that they can cover all the research required.

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## Why should students undertake an Extended Project?

The Extended Project encourages students to use many of the skills they will need to excel at university: planning, self-motivation, decision-making, problem-solving and independent thought. Being encouraged to research and investigate a topic they have chosen themselves mirrors the kind of learning to which they will have to apply

themselves as an undergraduate. Admissions tutors are impressed by students who have already started to develop these kinds of skills at school and who can write about them in their personal statement.

## When should students undertake the Extended Project?

This will be decided by the school. There are several options, for example students can take it towards the end of their first (year 12) or second year (year 13) of a two-year programme of study, or over the summer period in-between.

## What is the teacher's role in the EPQ?

Teachers are expected to teach and assess students on the taught element of the Extended Project. They will deliver sessions on research skills (although they may want



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to ask a university to support them with this) and advise students on how to manage their project. They will also help students to decide their topic for research as students often struggle with this and choose something far too broad and ambitious (for example, The Chinese Economy: this has been attempted!). Teachers need to monitor students' progress so that they keep on track to meet the project deadline; they need to ensure that students meet the assessment criteria and will be responsible for marking the students' work.

#### What kinds of topics have been covered?

The subjects already selected by students range far and wide – here are some examples:

- A cultural comparison of Japanese Manga and American superhero comics
- Anti-bullying – what is bullying and what are its factors?
- Can science explain the nature of happiness?
- Are ASBOs an effective method of solving antisocial behaviour?
- What is the best solution to the quantum mechanical measurement problem?
- An investigation of the changes in architecture that took place over the years at Lilleshall Abbey
- An investigation into the policy & practice of hospitals with regard to MRSA
- Can science explain the nature of happiness?
- Choreography based on slavery
- Creating a database with automatic ordering facility when stocks reach a certain level
- How has English affected the German language?
- Is graffiti art or vandalism?
- Is the media to blame for negative body image?
- Origins of animal life – God or Science?
- The evolution of women's fashion and changing views of the female figure

#### How does the Extended Project fit into the UCAS Tariff?

The Extended Project is equivalent in points to about half an A-level. It is graded A\* to E, with A\* worth 70 points, an A 60 points and so on.

**N.B.:** students and teachers are strongly recommended to check universities' policies on including the Extended Project in offers; not all will do this but they will appreciate the benefits to the student – if s/he has 'sold' it effectively in the personal statement.

#### How can universities support schools with the Extended Project?

Universities are likely to be keen to work with and support students who are doing the Extended Project because the skills they develop while completing their project will be very attractive to admissions tutors – who will, after all, teach them. The level and type of support on offer will vary from university to university, so schools should check what is available by contacting their local universities' Education Liaison Offices or equivalent.

At Queen Mary, we may be able to provide support for schools in the following ways:

##### • Library visits

Queen Mary library staff will be happy to run introductory sessions on how to use a university library, research methods for students and introducing students to resources. Students will be provided with guest log-ins so that they can search online for resources to help with their project. Due to the pressure on library resources during term-time, these sessions will only be available during the summer vacation (June and July) and bookings will be kept to a maximum of 20 per session. Students need to be accompanied by teachers. Bookings will be taken on a first come first served basis and teachers interested in reserving a library session should contact Roisin Hurst at [r.m.hurst@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:r.m.hurst@qmul.ac.uk)

##### • Study skills/writing support

Thinking Writing at QMUL has been working with local schools to develop approaches and materials that can help students increase their awareness of their own writing, enable them to make critical choices about how they write, and give them a sense of qualities that are valued in university level writing. These materials and guidelines for use are now available on the website: <http://www.thinkingwriting.qmul.ac.uk/srb.ht>



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m. Please feel free to adapt these to your own subject area and to your students' needs. Your feedback is welcomed; please contact Sally Mitchell: [s.mitchell@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:s.mitchell@qmul.ac.uk)

