

Extended Project Qualification

Student Guide 2025-26

This guide is to help you to understand the process of the Extended Project, to give you advice and to enable you to use your production log effectively.

Introduction

The Extended Project is a substantial, skills-based qualification, graded A* to E. It aims to 'stretch and challenge'. As such, it has particular demands in terms of teaching and learning: learner-centred and independent learning, with teachers acting as facilitators/supervisors. Your supervisor is NOT there to tell you what to do.

Assessment of the AQA Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is based upon the **supervised** completion by candidates of an **evidenced** process in which they have had the opportunity to:

- Identify, design, plan and complete an individual project applying organisational skills and strategies to meet stated objectives;
- Obtain and select information from a range of sources, analyse data, apply relevantly and demonstrate understanding of any appropriate linkages, connections and complexities of the topic;
- Select and use a range of skills to solve problems, to take decisions critically, creatively and flexibly, and to achieve planned outcomes;
- Evaluate outcomes including own learning and performance and select and use a range of communication skills to convey and present evidenced outcomes and conclusions.

You must complete each stage of the process in order to gain the qualification, and you are assessed overall on evidence completed in your log, the product you complete and your presentation.

Over the next few pages you will find an explanation of each stage of the EPQ process.

1. Record of Initial Ideas

As this qualification focuses on independent learning and is learner-centred, your supervisor will guide your process and offer feedback, but it will be up to you to come up with the ideas. It is your Extended Project.

In order to make the progress required, you need to think about what topic you wish to do your EPQ on.

You may want to think about:

- Possible career paths.
- An aspect of a subject area which you might like to study at University.
- Development of work from your A-Level courses – your EPQ must however **not in any way** duplicate work you will do for your A-Level subjects. It can, however, build on something you did at GCSE. (For example, you cannot do an EPQ on the Tudors if you are doing A-Level History, as we do that as part of the A-Level course. But you can do an EPQ on an element of Russian History even if you did that topic at GCSE.)
- A current issue of interest.

You should think about the steps you should take to refine your general area of interest. **These must be noted in your log**, and should also form part of your **Record of Initial Planning**. The more work you put in to deciding on your topic area, the better your EPQ will be.

Steps to an excellent EPQ

- Decide on a **general** topic area or title
- What issues do you wish to examine within your topic area?
- Where might you find research sources for this?
- How have your thoughts developed as you have found more out about the EPQ and your research?
- Complete your EPQ Record of Initial Planning
- Complete Future Learn Course –How to succeed in your EPQ : The Nuts and Bolts of completing your Project.

2. Project Approval and Initial Planning – Part A

Project approval is a required formal process which will involve you as student, your supervisor and the centre coordinator. There are three stages, each of which is recorded in your production log (Part A, B and C)

Part A – Project Proposal by the student

You complete a project proposal (Part A) based upon the thinking that you have started in the previous stage and further discussion and negotiation with your supervisor as necessary. It is not expected that this will necessarily be a fully formed description — if you have an absolutely clear picture of their intended outcome it is likely that your proposal is insufficiently challenging as you are not aiming to discover anything you do not already know — but it must be clear enough for the supervisor to confirm that the proposed project is suitably demanding for the EPQ.

The **working title** is exactly that. It could be worded as a question or a statement to explore (Hypothesis) and it very well may change over the coming months. But you must have a working title. This **MUST** be completed by October half-term but don't panic, you will change and adapt your title later.

Part B – Acceptance of the Project Proposal by the supervisor

Your supervisor receives the project proposal (Part A) and they complete Part B to confirm that the proposal is appropriate for an extended project. An important part of this form is a declaration by the supervisor that no part of the work is to be submitted for another accredited award. Your supervisor forwards their acceptance of the proposal to the centre coordinator.

Part C – Approval of the Project Proposal by the centre coordinator

Final approval of the project proposal lies with the centre coordinator following guidance from AQA. They may make comments or suggestions that are recorded and become part of the student's production log. They may require re-submission if any part of the proposal or the supervisor's acceptance is unclear or unsuitable or they may add additional requirements. If this happens it is the responsibility of the candidate to read, and act upon the comments given by the supervisor and/or co-ordinator.

These are the criteria which should be met for the supervisor to pass Project Approval stage:

	Criteria for Acceptance	Met?
1.	Is the topic to be researched, or the activity or task to be carried out, suitable for the Extended Project?	
2.	Does the title of the project and proposed action allow the learner to investigate and to access the higher-level concepts and skills in the learning outcomes and assessment objectives, ie plan, research, analyse, evaluate and explain, rather than simply describe and narrate?	
3.	Are the title and proposed action clear and focused on an issue which can be managed within the timescale, available resources and word total?	
4.	Do the title and proposed action indicate that the learner will be capable of investigating and researching the topic or carrying out the activity or task independently?	
5.	Is there a danger that the learner will be unable to approach the project impartially and in a balanced way?	
6.	Is the learner likely to face difficulties understanding the themes and issues associated with the project topic?	

Steps to an excellent EPQ

Question

- From your Record of Initial Planning, what EPQ title is emerging?
- For an excellent EPQ you need a good title so:
 - Does it invite evaluation not description?
 - Is it a question?
- What form is your final project likely to take? Will it be a 5 000 word essay, or is there likely to be an artefact (performance, book, etc)?

Sources

- What sources can you use?
- Can you evaluate these sources critically?
- Have you read the guide for the use of sources at the end of this document?
- Are there any experts in the area who you could contact?
- Are you planning to make use of a University library or similar over the holidays?

3. Planning Review

With discussion and guidance from your supervisor where necessary, you will start the foundation work for your project. The nature of this work will vary depending upon the particular project but it is highly likely to include background research in the area that you are working on, and it will include the use and development of necessary (new) skills — academic library research, particular laboratory or technical techniques, research techniques or methodology in your chosen area etc.

You are expected to spend **two to three hours a week** researching your project.

You **MUST** record what you are doing in your production log in the Planning Review section.

Use your production log to set out a PLAN of what you intend to do and a PLAN (as it develops) of how your essay/answer will be structured and how it alters/changes as you make progress. You must set out aims and objectives for your EPQ and how you will meet these over time. Constantly refer to this and adapt it to show AO1 – Management and AO3 - Developing and Realising your project, A04 - Reviewing your work. Also include a source analysis to show the examiner that you are selecting and evaluating quality research.

Your supervisor will expect to see clear evidence of the progress you have made in terms of the work you have done, and how your thinking has developed about your project. If you wish, you may start writing sections of your project – your supervisor will still have a significant input in your Mid-Project Review, and this can be useful in helping you to refine and improve the project overall.

4. Mid-Project Review

Having thoroughly explored your chosen area and perhaps begun to shape your final product, you will spend most lessons in the Spring Term working on your project. At this stage the aims and objectives that may have been relatively open at the start should have increased focus. For example, a fairly general possible essay title will be focused to a more detailed research question; an intended performance will have timing/structure/content detailed. It is permissible at this point to make even quite large changes to the initially proposed and approved project, as long as these changes demonstrably grow and develop from the initial work that you have completed.

If you want to substantially change your title you need to discuss this with your supervisor **as soon as possible**. It is getting too late now to change your topic.

If things are not going as planned, do not panic - this is your opportunity to put them right. You will certainly get more credit in assessment for changing your plan, and adjusting to where you find yourself at the Mid-Project Review stage, than you would for continuing with a flawed plan. As long as you give evidence of this in your production log. (AO4 Review)

Steps to an excellent EPQ:

Progress

- What has gone well in your EPQ so far?
- What has gone less well?
- What will you change in your project as a result of your experiences up to this point? Why will you make these changes?
- What use have you made of your sources?
- Have you referenced sources appropriately?
- Are you evaluating your sources critically?
- What does your supervisor think of the work you have completed so far?
- What does your supervisor advise?

Planning

- How will you adjust your plan, if at all, to ensure you complete your EPQ project?
- What form will your final project take?
- By what date are you planning to let your supervisor see completed drafts of sections?
- How long will the written section be if you are also producing an artefact (performance, DVD, CD etc)?

Now complete your Mid-Project Review.

5. Project Product Review

With clear aims and objectives negotiated and agreed with your supervisor, you will proceed to complete your project product. This will certainly include a written report of about 5,000 words*. It is important to make sure that your material is carefully selected to ensure that all of it is relevant. Use your production log to explain your choices. If your written report does not meet the word count then you will find it hard to gain the highest marks as your project will not be tightly focused on the question.

*2,000 word minimum if you have chosen to complete an artefact

The final product - or evidence in the case of an artefact– will be handed in to your supervisor in mid-March.

You will need to hand in the Essay, Reference/Bibliography and Source Evaluation.

Steps to an excellent EPQ:

- How will you present your EPQ written element?
- How can you check your written work is free of spelling and grammatical mistakes?
- Have you included references, footnotes and a bibliography (check the guide at the end of this booklet for how to do this)?
- Have you evaluated your sources?
- Have you used a range of sources?
- Have you reached a clear conclusion of your own based on the evidence available to you?
- Have you linked your EPQ, where appropriate, to other theories or ideas which you might have studied or come across?

6. Presentation

On completion of their project you are required to give a presentation. This will take place during one of the EPQ lessons. You will present to your supervisor and to other candidates who have worked with that supervisor.

The AQA Extended Project specification lays out the following conditions for the Presentation:

“The presentation should be for a **non-specialist audience** and use media appropriate to the type of project. The presentation could take the form of a verbal or written presentation or may involve the use of flipcharts, posters, OHP transparencies, PowerPoint or short excerpts of video material. The presentation should be supported by answers to any questions from supervisors.” Specification 2.4.1

The essential elements that must be present in whatever form the presentation takes are:

‘Non specialist audience’ — this requirement directs you to give a presentation that explains the researched background of your project and your thinking. It is not to encourage ‘dumbing down’ or avoidance of newly learnt technical language, but to demand that you demonstrate depth of understanding by explaining such language rather than just using it.

‘Questions from supervisors’ — your supervisor will be part of the audience and the presentation must include ‘live’ individual response to question(s). These may come from other members of the audience but your supervisor must ensure that you are given the opportunity to respond in depth and demonstrate your grasp of the work that you have done. It is important to recognise that this is an opportunity for you to demonstrate a range of understanding, reasoning and communication skills. You will be given the opportunity to push your skills to the limit in order to achieve the highest possible marks. ‘Soft’ questioning will therefore do you no favours. We want to make sure you achieve the best possible mark for your work, but we will need the evidence to allow us to award you those marks.

You should plan your presentation and complete **Presentation record part A of the production log**

Form of the presentation

Your presentation will be 20 minutes long. We would expect most to be accompanied by presentation slides and maybe handouts, although other visual aids might be more appropriate for some projects, and are relatively easy to arrange. Speak to your supervisor about the most appropriate form presentation for your project.

During the presentation, your supervisor will record your responses to questions (**Presentation record part B of production log**). This is so marks can be awarded for the depth of your understanding of your project, and the project process. It would be wise to give your supervisor a copy of the power point slides you are going to use, as evidence of what you have done.

Steps to an excellent EPQ

Issues to consider in preparing the presentation:

- To whom will you be presenting?
- What visual aids will you use?
- How much will you write on your visual aids?
- With whom will you practise your presentation?
- How could you gather information from your audience on how your presentation went and their suggestions for improvements?
- What does your supervisor advise?

Within your presentation do not forget to include:

- What were your aims in completing this project?
- How close did you come to achieving your aims?
- Why did you succeed?
- Why did you alter your plan in certain areas?
- What have you learnt about your project?
- What have you learnt about completing a piece of work like your Extended Project?
- What would you do differently next time?
- How could you get feedback from the audience to help you complete your Reflection exercise?

Now complete Presentation Record A

7. Summary and Reflection

For the final exercise, you stand back and reflect upon the whole process, and what you have learned. In this exercise you will look back at the project as a whole, and consider what the process has taught you. Even at this stage you can still gain credit for noting what you would have done if you were to start the project again, so be honest!

You may well have done part or even most of this before you do your Presentation, but you have until May half term to complete this.

Steps to an excellent EPQ

- How successful were you in completing your EPQ? Why?
- How effective was your planning?
- When did you have to change aspects of your plan and why?
- What did the feedback you received on your presentation tell you?
- How might you have improved your presentation?
- What skills have you learnt? How did you learn them? How will they be useful?
- What would you do differently if you were to undertake this EPQ again?
- What advice would you offer to a student who is about to start their EPQ?
- What self-knowledge has this process developed?

Now complete your Reflection in your EPQ log.

After May half term your production log will be 'locked' and you have finished!

Congratulations! Completing an EPQ is a huge achievement. Well done, you should feel proud of what you have accomplished.

Assessment

Your EPQ is only assessed at the end of the process. Your production log, presentation records, and product (essay and source evaluation) form the three elements for assessment. All three of the elements for assessment could be used to provide evidence for the award of marks. In the best examples, there is likely to be evidence of each of the criteria in the production log, the presentation and the product.

The assessment grids are as follows:

	Assessment Objectives	Marks
AO1 Manage	Identify, design, plan, and carry out a project, applying a range of skills, strategies and methods to achieve objectives. Meet deadlines, be pro-active. Evidence of problem solving and decision making skills	10
AO2 Use Resources	Research, critically select, organise and use information, and select and use a range of resources. Analyse data, apply relevantly and demonstrate understanding of any links, connections and complexities of the topic. Accurate and consistent referencing.	10
AO3 Develop and Realise	Select and use a range of skills, including, where appropriate, new technologies and problem-solving, to take decisions critically and achieve planned outcomes. Research inform product. Question answered.	20
AO4 Review	Evaluate all aspects of the extended project, including outcomes in relation to stated objectives and own learning and performance. Select and use a range of communication skills to present evidenced project outcomes and conclusions in an appropriate format.	10

AO1 – Manage

	Marks	Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the topic • identify project aims and objectives • produce a project plan • complete the work applying organisational skills and strategies to meet stated objectives. 	7 – 10	<p>Clear identification of the topic to be investigated or researched and clear evidence of appropriate aims and objectives for the proposed project title.</p> <p>Detailed project plan, with clear evidence of monitoring progress of project work against the agreed project plan.</p>
	4 – 6	<p>Some identification of the topic to be investigated or researched and some evidence of appropriate aims and objectives for the proposed project title.</p> <p>Project plan, with some evidence of monitoring progress of project work against the agreed project plan.</p>
	1 – 3	<p>Limited identification of the topic to be investigated or researched and limited evidence of appropriate aims and objectives for the proposed project title.</p> <p>Brief project plan, with little evidence of monitoring progress of project work against the agreed project plan.</p>
	0	No relevant response.

To achieve well you need to show evidence of the following:

- Is it clear what this project is about?
- Have you planned appropriately? Have you shown this plan and how it has developed in your production log?
- Have clear objectives for the project been laid out?
- Is there evidence of adjustment of planning or objectives if these have proved to be unrealistic?
- Have appropriate contingency measures been put into place to ensure the project is completed?
- Have you kept to the timetable laid out on Project Q? Have you been pro-active in your independent learning?
- Have you attended meetings with your supervisor when these have been organised?
- Have you sort out advice and help from subject teachers?

A02 - Use Resources

	Marks	Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • obtain and select information from a variety of sources • analyse data • apply information relevantly • demonstrate understanding of appropriate links 	7 – 10	<p>Evidence of detailed research involving the selection and evaluation of a wide range of relevant sources.</p> <p>Critical analysis and application of the research, with clear links made to appropriate theories and concepts.</p>
	4 – 6	<p>Evidence of some research involving the selection and evaluation of a range of relevant sources.</p> <p>Some analysis and application of the research, with links made to appropriate theories and concepts.</p>
	1 – 3	<p>Evidence of limited research involving limited selection and evaluation of sources.</p> <p>Little or no analysis and application of the research, with few links made to appropriate theories and concepts.</p>
	0	No relevant response.

To achieve well you need to show evidence of the following:

- Have you used several sources?
- Have you clearly laid out which sources you used?
- Have the sources been referenced appropriately?
- Have the sources or resources been examined critically?
- Are there clear links between the research you have done and the conclusions you have reached?
- Does your research inform your learning?
- Are there links to the theories or concepts which go beyond your EPQ?

A03 - Develop and Realise

	Marks	Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • problem-solving • decision-making • creative thinking to achieve planned outcomes 	14 – 20	<p>Candidates take appropriate decisions and appropriate data is collected and thoroughly analysed. The project plan is fully implemented and the outcome is fully realised to a high standard and consistent with a candidate’s finally agreed plan.</p> <p>There is clear evidence of appropriate changes to, or development of, the initial project plan or title or aims and objectives, with clear and appropriate reasons for any changes.</p> <p>Candidates communicate their findings fluently in an appropriate format, synthesising information from a variety of sources and present them within a logical and coherent structure which addresses closely the nature of the task.</p>
	7 – 13	<p>Candidates take decisions and some appropriate data is collected and adequately analysed. The project plan is implemented and the outcome is sufficiently realised to an acceptable standard and consistent with a candidate’s finally agreed plan.</p> <p>There is some evidence of appropriate changes to, or development of, the initial project plan or title or aims and objectives, with reasons for any changes.</p> <p>Candidates communicate clearly their findings, showing some ability to synthesise information from different sources and present them in a structured manner appropriate for the task.</p>
	1 - 6	<p>Candidates take few decisions and a little data is insufficiently analysed. The project plan is implemented in a limited way and the outcome is realised in a limited manner and not always consistent with a candidate’s finally agreed plan.</p> <p>There is little or no evidence of appropriate changes to, or development of, the initial project plan or title or aims and objectives, with only limited reasons for any changes.</p> <p>Candidates communicate their findings by drawing on a limited number of sources and present them in a manner not always appropriate for the task.</p>
	0	No relevant response.

To achieve well you need to show evidence of the following:

- Do you develop your project and realise your outcomes?
- Have you completed your project fully?
- Does your completed project match your adjusted plan?
- Have you shown evidence of adapting your plan to overcome the problems you faced in completing your EPQ?
- Have you clearly explained why you have changed your plan?
- Have you shown that you have analysed the information you have gathered appropriately?
- Have you presented your findings in the clearest way possible?
- Have you communicated your findings (production log, essay and presentation) in a fluent, coherent and cogent way.

AO4 – Review

	Marks	Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate own learning and performance • communication skills • convey and present evidenced outcomes and conclusions 	7 – 10	<p>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.</p> <p>Material is consistently relevant, well-structured and appropriately presented. Candidates clearly communicate their findings and conclusions which are based on sound evidence and judgement.</p>
	4 – 6	<p>Some 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.</p> <p>Material is sometimes relevant, well-structured and appropriately presented. Candidates communicate their findings and conclusions which are based on some evidence and judgement.</p>
	1 – 3	<p>Limited 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.</p> <p>Material is not always relevant, well-structured or appropriately presented. Candidates communicate some of their findings and conclusions which are based on little or no evidence and judgement.</p>
	0	No relevant response.

To achieve well you need to show evidence of the following:

- Have you evaluated your learning throughout your production log, not just at the end?
- Have you clearly identified what went well in your EPQ?
- Have you clearly identified what you have learnt in completing your EPQ?
- Have you clearly identified what you would do differently if you were to complete your EPQ again?
- Have you chosen the material you included in your EPQ carefully?
- Have you always chosen the best possible medium to present your findings (presentation and project)?
- Have you always considered the best possible order in which to present your findings?
- Have you sufficient evidence for the conclusions you have drawn about your EPQ?

Useful Research

Google Scholar

Core

ScienceOpen

Jstor (Username – stmarysnewcastle password-library21)

DOAJ

ERIC

SSRN

Paperity

JURN

eTHOS

pubmed

JURN

Feedly app

Useful University EPQ Resources

Oxford Bodleian Library

University of Southampton

University of Manchester

University of Warwick

University of Birmingham

University Sheffield

Future Learn Nuts and Bolts of your EPQ Course