

Dear Parent/carer,

As you may be aware, the Associated Sixth Form offers students the opportunity to undertake an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). This is an academic qualification taken alongside students' A Level or Level 3 Applied courses and it carries the same UCAS points tariff as half an A Level.

What is an EPQ?

The EPQ is an independent study into an area of interest for the student. This can be something related to their current A Level subjects or future education and career ambitions. It can also be something completely separate that the student is interested in but has not yet had chance to study elsewhere. The only stipulation is that the content of the EPQ cannot overlap the content of the syllabuses of their A Level subjects as this would be classed as dual accreditation by the exam board. For example, a History student undertaking the EPQ could not complete a study of Stalin's Russia but could examine another period of history not on the A Level curriculum.

The most successful EPQ titles identify an area of debate or contention and aim to offer an original insight into this debate built on academic research. Some examples of previous EPQ titles include:

- To what extent did music and the media influence anti-war sentiment in the USA during the Vietnam war?
- Which socioeconomic factors, between gender, neighbourhood, and bilingualism, affect second language acquisition within UK teenagers the most?
- Lifestyle changes or medication: Which is the more effective method of managing and preventing cases of type 2 diabetes in the UK?
- To what extent is it possible to prevent Alzheimer's disease through only modifying cardiovascular risk factors?

Projects can take the form of a 5,000 word dissertation or the creation of an artefact (e.g. a novel or play, a piece of technology e.g. computer, an event) with an accompanying written commentary explaining and evaluating their artefact.

How is EPQ taught at the Associated Sixth Form?

We will begin our programme at May half term, asking students to start considering their areas of research and conducting preliminary literature reviews to ascertain whether their proposed title is feasible. Students will be required to attend a number of tutorials before the summer holidays to introduce them to study skills and they will be expected to complete a workbook recording the start of their EPQ process over the summer holiday. These sessions will be delivered by the EPQ Centre Co-ordinator.

During Year 13, students will have one hour each week allocated on their timetable to EPQ where they will meet with their supervisor, discuss the progress of their project and develop their research skills through tutorials. Students are expected to commit a further 5 hours per week to their EPQ beyond this lesson. We aim to have the process completed by the end of February, with students meeting a final submission deadline the week after February half term 2021. Interim deadlines will be given throughout the year to ensure students remain in control of their research and record-keeping.

The role of the supervisor is to guide the student through the project; it is a different role from teaching students. This project is student led and directed with support from the supervisor, who acts in an advisory capacity.

How is EPQ assessed?

The EPQ is assessed holistically, with marks being gained from three key components. Students will complete their project (the dissertation or artefact), a product log book which tracks the progress of their project and a presentation; this is delivered at a presentation evening which family and friends are invited to attend. There are four Assessment Objectives which students will be measured against and marks can be gained for any of the Assessment Objectives from any of the three components. The total amount of marks available is 50.

- AO1 – Manage (10%) – this is where students can be credited for their project management skills
- AO2 – Use of resources (10%) – students can gain marks for critical use of resources such as books, journals, articles, websites as well as their primary research
- AO3 – Develop and realise (20%) – students are measured on their ability to problem-solve, think creatively and bring their project to fruition regardless of obstacles
- AO4 – Review (10%) – students are encouraged to evaluate their own learning and progress, identifying successes and failures

What are the benefits of undertaking an EPQ?

Universities and employers look for transferable skills that demonstrate independent, motivated and resilient students and workers. The EPQ is an excellent opportunity to develop skills such as project management, independent study, initiative, creativity, problem-solving, decision making, reflective learning and confident presentation skills. It is also a good way of demonstrating commitment to an area of study or employment that goes beyond curriculum learning, such as medicine, architecture, veterinary sciences etc.

Some universities also reduce grade requirements based on the completion of an EPQ but this varies between establishments; it is best to check on the university website or with administration officers to confirm each institution's approach.

In addition, the EPQ offers students the chance to study an area which interests and inspires them and can foster a love of learning to carry forward after the Sixth Form.

How does my student sign up to complete an EPQ?

Students need to complete a sign-up sheet indicating their intention to undertake the EPQ and suggesting some possible areas of research they are interested in. These sheets should be signed by the student, the parent/carer and the Senior Tutor. Sign-up sheets are available from your student's Senior Tutor and should be returned to the Centre Co-ordinator by Friday 3 April. For St. Aidan's-based students this is Ms Strickland and for St John Fisher-based students this is Dr Langstaff.

You may find the following link to the AQA EPQ specification useful; it provides further detail on the aims and process as well as detailing expectations: <https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/subjects/AQA-W-7993-SP-19.PDF> .

Please direct any queries to Ms Strickland (St. Aidan's) or Dr Langstaff (St. John Fisher).