

EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION

THE LEARNER JOURNEY



ocr.org.uk/extendedproject

WHAT IS THE OCR EXTENDED PROJECT?

The OCR Extended Project is a stand-alone qualification that is equivalent to an AS Level, but with an A* also achievable. It aims to develop students beyond their existing study programme by giving them the freedom to complete a project on an area of personal interest or benefit, while developing project management skills along the way.

WHY SHOULD MY STUDENTS COMPLETE AN EXTENDED PROJECT?

The Extended Project has enormous benefits to the students that complete one:

- It encourages students to think and perform independently, allowing them to manage a longer-scale project from start to finish.
- It gets them ready for university or employment, being designed to develop skills in decision making, problem solving, planning, researching and evaluating.
- It can give them a competitive edge with university and employer applications.
- It can increase confidence and time management.



“I think of all the work that I have ever completed at school, my Extended Project is the piece of which I am the most proud.”

WHAT DO STUDENTS HAVE TO DO?

Students produce an outcome that can take a variety of formats. They can:

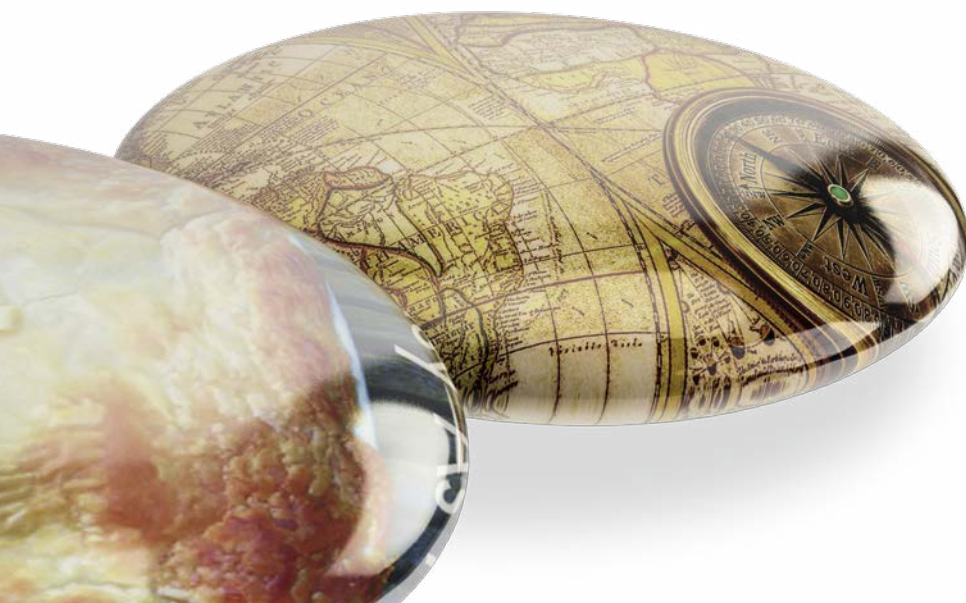
- Write a dissertation/investigation/report
- Create an artefact or design
- Organise an event
- Put on a performance of some kind.

Alongside these outcomes, students need to keep a documented record of their project management process. They are assessed on their ability to manage their project so these appendices are an extremely important part of their submission.

HOW CAN MY CENTRE SUPPORT STUDENTS?

Students should be assigned a supervisor who should offer support and guidance throughout the process. The supervisor does not need to be a specialist in the area that the student is planning to research as they are there to advise on the project management rather than the content.

The students should also be able to access a 'taught element' for the qualification that should help them to develop the skills needed to complete their EPQ successfully.



“I’m interested in maths, and I’ve also baked from a young age, so I decided to produce a book that was all about living on a budget. My idea was to produce a book about pies that cost less than the value of ‘pi’.”

Jonah Balmford – “Easy as Pi”, EPQ Project, 2014
Hills Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge

WHAT SHOULD THE TAUGHT ELEMENT COVER?

The taught element should aim to cover some of the areas in which students will be assessed. For example, you should aim to give them guidance on how to choose a topic, how to manage a long-term project, how to manage their time effectively, how to conduct effective research, and how to evaluate both their research and their project management process. OCR can provide guidance with these skills.

IF I AM NOT AN EXPERT IN THE SUBJECT, HOW DO I GO ABOUT MARKING IT?

Projects are assessed in four areas:

- Project planning and time management (12 marks max)
- Conducting and using research (12 marks max)
- Developing and realising a project (24 marks max)
- Reviewing and evaluating a project (12 marks max)

Students are given a total mark out of 60 and supervisors assess how well they have performed in the above four categories, based on the evidence that the student provides.

As the project is marked predominantly on the management process, it can be easier to mark if the supervisor is not a specialist in the subject area as they will be less likely to critique it on the content.

If more than one supervisor is delivering the EPQ, an element of internal moderation will need to take place before a sample is sent for external moderation.

University of Southampton:

“Students could use their project at interview stage and/or in their UCAS personal statement. Certain courses at the university will count ‘A’ grades achieved in the Extended Project towards their entry criteria.”

HOW LONG SHOULD THE PROJECT TAKE?

OCR guidelines stipulate an approximate total of 120 guided learning hours for the project, with this being a mix of one-to-one supervision, taught skills elements and student study. The recommended split would be for approximately 50 hours to be dedicated to taught sessions and supervision, with the expectation that the remainder would be used by the student independently. Fewer hours than this are more likely to lead to a poor outcome.

Many centres set a deadline for the project that allows the students to make use of their summer break to aid completion.



“One of the things I really liked about the EPQ was the freedom to learn. It was difficult to get started, but once I was into it I found it really inspiring and quite scary at the same time!”

Beth Hart, “My Mum has Bipolar Disorder”, EPQ Project, 2014
Hills Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge

HOW DO I MAKE THIS FIT INTO THE TIMETABLE?

This varies widely from centre to centre, and may be largely dependent on the size of your cohort. Many centres choose to allocate a period on the timetable in which the students will meet with their supervisor, both within a group and on a one-to-one basis. The supervisor will then also deliver the taught element of the course. Other centres opt for twilight/ lunchtime sessions in which the taught element is delivered and the students meet with their supervisor on a more informal basis.

The beauty of the Extended Project is that it is flexible enough to fit in with a centre's existing programme in a variety of ways. The added bonus is that it can be achieved in fewer guided learning hours than a traditional AS Level, yet attracts a maximum of 70 UCAS points for the students, and up to 90 points in the Key Stage 5 performance tables.



“One of my universities asks for points so I can include my EPQ, meaning that I only need CCC for that place.”

WHY CHOOSE OCR FOR THE EXTENDED PROJECT?

The official paperwork requirements for the OCR Extended Project have been kept to a minimal level to ensure that centres are not weighed down with form filling. The emphasis is very much on the student providing the evidence of their project management process rather than the supervisor. At the end of the process the supervisor will assess the student's work using a Unit Recording Sheet, while the student will complete a Project Progress Record detailing their initial ideas, their progress and where the evidence required can be found.

Learning resources are an important part of any qualification and the Extended Project is no exception. To make sure that you and your students feel confident, we've developed a suite of support and learning resources. They're designed to save you time while you're preparing to teach the Extended Project, and to support you while you're teaching it.

You'll find resources, including INSET materials, lesson plans, Teacher Guides to delivering the taught skills elements, and sample portfolios on our website at ocr.org.uk/extendedproject

Additionally, we also have an Extended Project forum where you can chat to co-ordinators from other centres and learn from their experiences of completing an Extended Project with OCR.

TO FIND OUT MORE... visit ocr.org.uk/extendedproject



“My EPQ was talked about at interview. It led to a lower offer (one grade was reduced from an A to a B) from Southampton and Sheffield universities.”

Giving your students the edge

Our Extended Project Qualification can provide your students with skills that universities look for, to help them stand out from the crowd.

Four steps to success



With its skills-based assessed assignment, the qualification is ideal for helping students improve transferable skills such as planning, research, analysis and evaluation, and they can take it as part of an academic or vocational curriculum.

Contact us

If you have any queries about the Extended Project Qualification, please contact us on 01223 553 998 or email epq@ocr.org.uk

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