University of Southampton

HANDBOOK FOR EPQ SUPERVISORS

A guide to supervising the Extended Project Qualification

Allerton Grange Sixth Form

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Learn with US Transition
Widening Participation and Social Mobility
Southampton
SO17 1BJ

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About this handbook

This handbook was established through collaboration between EPQ practitioners at the universities of Leeds and Southampton, and at Allerton Grange School. It is designed to guide EPQ supervisors of all levels of confidence and prior experience, through the process of supervising students undertaking an EPQ. We hope you will find the resources in this booklet useful as you embark on the supervision of students undertaking this rewarding qualification.

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Terminology

This guide is designed to support supervisors from all four EPQ exam boards. At times throughout this guide, we will therefore use vocabulary which is not exam-board specific. For example, “project log”, “dual accreditation”, etc. A full glossary of terms can be seen here.

Contents

1. Introducing the **EPQ**

Overview

The Extended Project Qualification (hereafter EPQ) is an independent, level 3, research-based qualification. Students undertaking an EPQ will conduct a research project of their own design, which will culminate in a product and a presentation. Depending on the exam board and the type of project the student produces, their product may take any of the following forms:

- an essay/dissertation
- an artefact product e.g. a piece of engineering / computer programme / work of art / performance
- a research report e.g. for a scientific study

To this end, the EPQ is an opportunity for students to develop knowledge of something completely outside of the curriculum, and simultaneously develop valuable skills including, but not limited to, project-management, communication, resilience, academic writing, self-reflection and critical thinking. Note the prevalence of critical skills within the assessment objectives.

Quick facts

- EPQ is worth up to 28 UCAS points (half an A-level)
- It is graded A*-E
- Expected study time varies by exam board, but are always predominantly independent, with a minority of time spent in "taught skills" sessions and supervisor meetings.

Professional development

- Effective EPQ supervision can demonstrate that a teacher is meeting:
  - standards 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the English Teachers' Standards;
  - all five of the Welsh Professional Standards for Teaching;
  - all three of the Scottish Professional Standards for teachers;
- Many of the ETF's Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers, but especially standards 4, 6, 13, 14, 17, 19, and 20.

Governance

- An EPQ curriculum, if well-implemented, can help your school, college, or sixth form to demonstrate that it meets standards set out by Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework. In particular, an EPQ curriculum will demonstrate that students are receiving outstanding quality of education, personal development, and behaviour & attitudes.
  - **Case study:** EPQ provision is cited within this outstanding-graded inspection of Hills Road Sixth From in Cambridge: "EPQ as a vehicle to develop students' ambitions and wider skills. Students pursue their personal interests and flourish in doing so… [students] develop high levels of time management, self-discipline and skills in research, academic writing and communication."
- Collaborating with HE providers when delivering an EPQ curriculum meets Gatsby Benchmark #7

1. Introducing the **EPQ**

Assessment Objectives

Objectives vary slightly by exam board. All exam board specifications can be accessed here.

Objective	***Assessment Criteria***	***Weighting** by Exam Board*	
		Pearson Edexcel	*All other exam boards*
AO1 Manage	• Identify, design, plan, and carry out a project, applying a range of skills, strategies and methods to achieve objectives.	17%	20%
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.	22%	20%
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.	44%	40%
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 and media to present evidenced project outcomes and conclusions in an appropriate format.	17%	20%

2. Benefits of the **EPQ**

What the research says

Compared with their peers, students with an EPQ are:

- 29% more likely to achieve an A*-B at A-level (Jones, 2015)
- 22% more likely to progress to higher education (Gill, 2022b)
- 50% less likely to drop out of University in years 1 or 2 (Gill, 2022b)
- 6% more likely to achieve a 1st class degree outcome (Gill, 2022b)
- 8% more likely to achieve a 2:1 degree outcome (Gill, 2022b)

Widening Participation through the EPQ

Since EPQ study supports the development of academic and research skills, it is proposed that there is a greater effect of EPQ on progression to and outcomes at HE, for students with characteristics of deprivation (Thompson, Yuskaitis and Lueddeke, 2024). A conference report from the University of Southampton (2024) cites evidence that "the association between taking the EPQ and progression is larger for students who were otherwise less likely to progress to HE" (Lueddeke, Yuskaitis and Naylor-Teece, 2024, pp. 5).

For instance, the positive effect of EPQ study on progression to HE is larger for students from comprehensive schools than from independent or selective schools (Gill, 2022b). Gill (2024) suggested "this may be because teachers were aware that EPQ could be useful in preparing students for HE and therefore encouraged some of the less able students who wanted to progress to HE to take the qualification... [therefore] EPQ may be a useful qualification in terms of widening participation in HE for socio-economically disadvantaged students" (Gill, 2024, pp. 19).

Despite this, at present, EPQ students: experience lower-than-average deprivation; are disproportionately more likely to attend independent (17%) and grammar (13%) schools; and are more likely to be white (75%) (Gill, 2022a). Therefore, there is work to be done to promote the uptake and completion of the EPQ by students from disadvantaged backgrounds, with even greater benefits expected for these students.

Access to higher education

The University of Southampton is proud to have been the first to introduce an alternative offer scheme for students who excel at EPQ due to the clear link between completing a high-scoring EPQ and performing well at university. Many other UK universities, including other Russell Group institutions, now recognise the value of EPQ.

3. Delivering the **EPQ**

Supervisors are expected to meet with students regularly throughout the EPQ process. Guidance for conducting these meetings can be seen here.

1. Launch

The EPQ programme is launched to students. A supervisor is allocated to each student / group of students*

**The supervisor may not be an expert in the student's proposed field! This is explained further in our FAQs section.*

2. Proposal

Students submit a project proposal. The supervisor must check and sign off on any proposal before the student can continue with their research.

The proposals section of this handbook goes into more detail on this stage.

3. Mid-project reflections

Approximately halfway through the project, students must reflect on their progress and finalise their project title. Any decisions they have made so far should be logged, along with any relevant justification. Here is some more information.

4. Presentation

Students deliver a presentation on their project to a non-specialist audience which includes the coordinator and supervisor. Here is some more information about EPQ presentations.

5. Assessment

Projects are submitted for marking and moderation.

3. Delivering the **EPQ**

Example scheme of work:

Weeks	Taught skills sessions	**Support available** (subject to University of Southampton support
1 to 2	**What is an EPQ?** • Launch programme to students (following successful application if applicable)	**EPQ Launch** workshop
3 to 4	**Research skills** • Question refinement • Source selection • Critical analysis • Primary vs. secondary sources • Record-keeping e.g. through source analysis tables	**Developing the Question** workshop **Hartley Library** visit day**
5 to 6	**Project management** • Goal-setting e.g. SMART targets • Staying on track e.g. time management **Research methodology** • Primary vs. secondary sources • Primary research ethics where relevant • Data analysis where relevant • How to be a reflective practitioner	**Research Methodology** workshop **1-1** coaching with your students
7 to 8	**Writing the EPQ** • Essay structure • Content of essay sections • Writing skills, especially for dissertation students • Referencing	**Writing the EPQ** workshop
9 to 10	**Writing the EPQ** • Formulating a strong argument including critical analysis	
11 to 12	**Presentations** • Presentation skills • Content of the presentation	**Presentation Skills** workshop
13	**Submission** • Reminders about required paperwork	

3. Delivering the **EPQ**

**many other University libraries also offer research days

eligibility criteria) University of Leeds workshops	**Proposed content of supervisor meetings**	**Independent student activities**
• Why do the EPQ? • Starting to research • Artificial intelligence	**Review of initial ideas** • Suitability • Viability - considering time frame and resources • Ethics and safeguarding	**First steps** • Idea generation & initial research • Choosing a project type e.g. essay vs. artefact
• Choosing a topic & writing a research question • Research ethics & methodologies • Academic reading	**Project approval** • Approval of project proposal / rejection and advice	**Project proposal** • Research-based title selection • Complete and submit project proposal form
• Critical thinking	**Regular check-ins** • Support with primary research where relevant including checks of safeguarding and ethics	**Further research** • Continued reading • Continued idea development e.g. prototype development for an artefact • Primary research where relevant • Continuous reflective practice and inclusion of this in the project log
• Time & project management	**Mid-project reviews** • Approval of mid-project review	**Planning** • Written report planning • Continuous reflective practice and inclusion of this in the project log
• Academic Writing • Referencing & plagiarism	**Review of first draft** (without giving specific feedback)	**Redrafting** of original report
• Presentation skills	**Presentation** • Presentation content • Explanation of Q&A	**Presentations** • Presentation record form for some exam boards • Presentation planning • Delivery of the presentation
	Marking and moderation	**Submission**

3. Delivering the EPQ

What are the "taught skills"?

A list of skills which students will be introduced to, during their course of their EPQ. This could be in a timetabled, or more ad-hoc, way. Centre coordinators are responsible for delivering taught skills, however in some centres, supervisors may be asked to contribute to the teaching of these skills. Centres may also find it beneficial to invite subject specialists from across the centre, to be involved in the delivery of taught skills.

The table below outlines approximately when during the EPQ process is the most important time for each skill to be taught. Most skills need to be delivered early, before students begin working on their projects, but some are delivered closer to the moment they are likely to be needed. Taught skills delivery is most effective, when carefully and strategically embedded into a wider EPQ scheme of work. Many of the skills* should also be revisited throughout the programme. This might include during supervisor meetings, for example.

Timing of first teaching	**Skill / knowledge**	**Useful resources for supervisors** (Please note: access to workshops is subject to eligibility criteria)
Prior to beginning the project	What is an EPQ? Why do an EPQ?	• Our "EPQ Launch" workshop • Exam board specifications • Our YouTube video on the benefits of an EPQ • These student FAQs
	Roles of the student, supervisor, and coordinator	• This guide to student and supervisor expectations • FAQs for supervisors
Idea generation / project proposal stage	How to choose a focus: developing a research question	• Our "Developing the Question" workshop • Our "What makes a good research question?" guide • Our YouTube video on narrowing your focus
	Goal-setting Identifying aims and objectives SMART targets	• Our "Research Methodology" workshop • This supervisor guide to GROW coaching • This GROW self-coaching resource for students • This guide to conducting supervisor meetings
	Reflecting on your research*	• This resource on Gibbs' Reflective Cycle • Our YouTube video on the importance of reflective practice in the EPQ
	Conducting primary research: practicalities and ethics	• Our YouTube video on primary research

*access to workshops is subject to eligibility criteria

3. Delivering the EPQ

Timing of first teaching	**Skill / knowledge**	**Useful resources for supervisors** (Please note: access to workshops is subject to eligibility criteria)
Early stages of research	Types of source (primary and secondary)	• This student guide to ethical considerations in the EPQ (including primary research ethics and risk assessments) • Our "Developing the Question" workshop
	Using a search strategy	• Our YouTube video on search strategies
	Record-keeping: the value of source analysis tables	• Our YouTube video on source analysis tables
	Record-keeping: keeping a log of activities	• Our YouTube video on record-keeping • This guide to the project log
	Time management*	• This student guide to time management • This Gantt chart activity • Our YouTube video on time and project management
	Critical analysis*	• Our workshops on "Developing the Question" and "Writing the EPQ" • This handy critical analysis tool for students
Later stages of research / for artefact projects, during artefact development	Importance of referencing, how to avoid plagiarism	• This academic responsibility and conduct student guide • Citethisforme, a referencing tool • Our "Writing the EPQ" workshop • Our YouTube video on referencing • This handy directory for Harvard referencing, from the University of Leeds

*access to workshops is subject to eligibility criteria

3. Delivering the EPQ

Timing of first teaching	**Skill / knowledge**	**Useful resources for supervisors** (Please note: access to workshops is subject to eligibility criteria)
For field investigations: After data collection, and before analysis	Data analysis: • Processing qualitative data • Methods of statistical analysis	• Our 5-minute guides to some methods of statistical analysis
Writing stage	Planning and writing a research report, including: • Structure and content of an academic report • How to formulate a strong argument • Practicalities of referencing • Tips for proofreading and editing	• This critical writing student guide • Our "Writing the EPQ" workshop • Our YouTube video on writing the EPQ • Our YouTube video on referencing
Presentation stage	Presentation skills, including: • What the EPQ presentation should include • How to deliver an academic presentation • What to expect from the Q&A	• Our "Presentation Skills" workshop • Our YouTube video on presenting the EPQ

Remember, supervisors are not responsible for coordinating the taught skills programme, but you will need to use your supervisor meetings to check that your students are applying the taught skills to their projects.

Future Learn

All of these skills are also covered by our "Developing Your Research Project" MOOC

The University of Leeds has developed a MOOC about the "Skills to Succeed at University"

4. **Effective** supervision

Responsibilities

Your four key responsibilities are:

Meetings

Regularly meet with your student(s) to guide them through the project. Use these meetings to keep them on track.

Record-keeping

Complete key sections of the project log, to endorse students' skills development

Presentations

Attend students' presentations, contribute to the Q&A, and provide a record of the session

Marking and Moderation

Assess students' work against the assessment objectives, following standardisation and moderation procedures as directed by your centre coordinator

4. **Effective** supervision

Frequently Asked Questions

Many new (and experienced!) EPQ supervisors have a lot of questions before they begin. If yours isn't listed below, check out the glossary and index of this handbook.

What if I'm not a specialist in my student's chosen topic?

Don't worry: you're not supposed to be!

The EPQ is designed so that students can complete and document the process in the the same way, regardless of the topic. Your role is to support them with this process and, eventually, assess to what extent they have developed certain skills. See the assessment objectives for more information. When it comes to marking the final product, a non-specialist should be able to identify the extent to which they have met these objectives.

Equally, the students' job is to be able to explain, justify, evaluate and analyse the information they gather: if they can help you (a non-specialist) to understand, they are practising an essential skill.

What if I *am* a specialist in my student's chosen topic?

You will have to put all of it to one side.

You are simply there as a point of support and guidance for your candidate on their independent journey of discovery. You cannot pass opinion, or recommend research materials or resources. You can, if appropriate, ask students if they have made full use of other brilliant academic minds who happen to inhabit their school / college! If so, you could also guide them to consider appropriate approaches to conducting an academic interview.

I've never supervised an EPQ before - will I be OK?

Yes!

The role of supervisor is a really exciting one, with lots to look forward to. Whilst it may seem daunting at first, remember there is a wealth of resources available to support you in this role, ranging from your colleagues, to exam board resources, to this booklet, and more.

There are many reasons to be excited about being a supervisor. Here are just a few: Firstly, it is a unique opportunity to work closely with a student on something they are truly passionate about. You will find that you learn a lot along the way! Secondly, you will develop your own skills as a practitioner. Finally, you will be supporting students to develop skills they will benefit from, for the rest of their lives!

4. **Effective** supervision

What will the time commitment be?

Expectations vary from one centre to the next

For example, in some centres, supervisor meetings will be timetabled; in others, it will be the supervisor's responsibility to set a schedule of meetings. In general, it is expected that students will meet their supervisors more frequently during the early stages, and less often later on. Best practice, where possible, would be to meet your student(s) approximately once per week, especially during the early stages of research.*

**If supervising more than one student, it is worth remembering that some students will need more support than others, to stay on track.*

Do I have to teach research skills?

Supervisors are not responsible for coordinating the taught skills programme, but they may be asked to contribute to it.

You **will** need to use your supervisor meetings to check that your students are applying the taught skills to their projects.

Further, when it comes to marking students' work, you will need to be able to comment confidently on whether they have achieved the assessment objectives.

How do I guide my student without being too directive?

Supervising the EPQ involves striking a delicate balance between coaching students gently in the right direction, and telling them what to do next.

Remember, this is an independent qualification and students should be responsible for their own progress. With that said, part of your role as supervisor is to keep your student(s) on track and hold them to account against targets they set for themselves. Here is a handy guide to supervisor meetings.

What do I do if I am worried about a student's progress?

Use your professional judgement

While the EPQ is an independent qualification, a supervisor's role is to support their students to make a success of it. It is your job to get to know your student(s) and recognise when they are struggling more than is normal.

If students are struggling to meet deadlines, manage workload, or find resources, effective coaching and target-setting may do the trick. However, if you have more serious concerns about your student's ability to manage their own project, the best person to speak to is your **EPQ Centre Coordinator**. There may be extenuating circumstances your student just isn't opening up about, or they may need additional support.

4. **Effective** supervision

What sort of feedback **can** I give?

Most of your meetings will involve some form of verbal feedback

Conversations should be led by the student as they report on what they've found and where they're going next. The feedback you give might centre on time management, engagement with resources, the quality of the written communication in the project log, questions relating to their specific topic, or reminders about upcoming events (e.g. deadlines) on the EPQ timeline.

When providing feedback to students, you **cannot:**

- give any written comments on their work
- give any specific feedback, e.g. "your introduction is too..."

But you **can** give general advice, e.g. "you may wish to consider..." Page 2 of the JCQ Instructions for Conducting Non-Examination Assessments has more detail on this.

Can I mark my students' drafts?

No, but you can give general feedback

In terms of feedback on their product (e.g. their final essay), when a student submits their first draft you should read it thoroughly, possibly making your own notes about areas that are impressive and areas for improvement. However, you **cannot give them specific feedback** (e.g. by way of written comments), only general feedback e.g. "you may wish to consider the linking of your paragraphs". See page 2 of the JCQ Instructions for Conducting Non-Examination Assessments.

Can we give predicted grades for EPQ?

Centres are advised against issuing predicted grades for EPQ

However, students should be encouraged to discuss their project, especially the academic skills they are developing, in their personal statements and, if applicable, at interview: universities really value the EPQ.

4. **Effective** supervision

With an independent qualification such as the EPQ, it is easy for lines to become blurred between the responsibilities of the supervisor and the student. Hopefully this guide helps to clarify who is responsible for what.

The supervisor should...	The student should...
Meet regularly with their student, at a time when they can give their full attention and support.	Attend supervisor meetings on time, and fully prepared to report on their progress. Take the lead in the discussion.
Coach the student to set their own goals and SMART objectives; avoid being too directive.	Set their own goals and SMART objectives (with the guidance of their supervisor), and stick to them!
Use meetings to provide regular, verbal feedback, but not written feedback.	Seek, note down, and act upon their supervisor's feedback.
Be a source of advice, guidance, suggestions and reminders about deadlines and best practice.	Proactively and independently work towards their own project aims and objectives.
Keep a log of meetings - what was discussed and what was decided? What skills did the student demonstrate?	Attend taught skills sessions, and use these skills towards their project. Keep a detailed log of all activities.
Encourage students to reflect regularly on their progress. Provide guidance on how to do so.	Reflect regularly and systematically on their progress; be honest about hurdles. All reflections should be logged.

4. **Effective** supervision

Supporting project management

For some students, the EPQ might be the first time they have ever been truly responsible for managing their own workload. Throughout the EPQ, students may therefore need your support and guidance to stay on track.

Goal-setting

...is an important part of staying on course with a project. Students may already be familiar with **SMART target-setting**, but a reminder from you might be the thing they need to break down the seemingly enormous task ahead.

Study tools

Students may benefit from an introduction to techniques for focus such as the Pomodoro technique, or note-taking techniques such as the Cornell method.

Coaching

A natural and important part of the EPQ is overcoming hurdles. While this should be an independent activity, there are many ways of **coaching** students through sticking points. One example is the GROW model. This model allows you to support students to reach their own conclusions about what to do next, whilst avoiding being too directive.

Project management tools

There are many different ways to **manage a project**, ranging from paper calendars, to Gantt charts, to software such as Project Q. As a supervisor, you should encourage students to try different methods and find one which works for them. There are links to various project management tools on the "useful links" page of this handbook.

4. **Effective** supervision

Record-keeping

This section of the handbook contains guidance for supporting your student with their record-keeping, including the types of documentation they will be required to produce and submit. However, you should also keep a record of your own, including details of what was discussed in each of your meetings. You will find this useful when it comes to assessing your students against the assessment objectives.

Proposals

The first document your student will submit, is their project proposal. This document will set out what the student hopes to research and what methods they expect to employ. As such, it should be submitted before the student undertakes any substantive research. Your role in the proposal stage is incredibly important because you will judge to what extent your student's research title is achievable within the constraints of an EPQ project. Further details on how to make this judgement, can be seen here.

Reading logs and source analysis tables

Students should be **strongly encouraged** to keep a detailed record of their research, including evaluation of the sources they have read / watched / heard, etc. This record can be submitted as evidence of the assessment objectives. There are various ways to keep a log of research, including a source analysis table.

The project log

Probably the most important document your student(s) will submit, the project log details the story of the entire project. As such, it is a golden opportunity for a student to demonstrate the assessment objectives.

Your responsibility as supervisor is to ensure your student is completing every section of the project log, in sufficient detail to demonstrate their progress against the assessment objectives. You can only credit the student for evidence they submit, so any decision they make must be included and explained in the log. More information on the project log can be seen here.

4. **Effective** supervision

Supervisory meetings are a key responsibility of an EPQ supervisor

But they are also a golden opportunity for everyone involved! This section of the handbook outlines expectations of supervisors and students when it comes to meetings, as well as some tips to make sure everyone gets something out of them.

Logistics

Some centres will place the onus for arranging meetings, on students, and some will expect supervisors to do this. In some cases, meetings will be timetabled.

Remember to keep a record of your meetings, as evidence of the quality of support you have offered your student(s).

Supervisory meetings should:

- Allow you as a supervisor to gain a **clear understanding** of the student, their research, their project, and the progress of all of these things. Meetings are therefore essential to achieving effective support.
- Offer you an opportunity to **regularly take stock of students' progress against the assessment objectives**, making life easier when it comes to vouching for them during the marking stage.
- Be **more frequent in the initial stages** of research, and slow down towards the end. Most of your input as a supervisor will be focused around supporting your student(s) with their initial ideas, research, and project management. Guidance on navigating the proposal stage can be seen here.
- **Keep the student accountable** for their progress. Knowing they will need to explain their progress since your last meeting, will help to keep a student on track. Meetings are also an opportunity to get the student back on track if you feel they have strayed from their objectives. GROW coaching, and SMART target setting, can be useful tools to support you with this.
- Allow the student to **flag any difficulties** and ask for your support with navigating these. You will need to use your professional judgement when deciding the degree of support which is needed, and when to ask your centre coordinator for help.

Questioning

It may sound obvious, but the more you ask a student to explain their logic and the information they have gathered between meetings, the clearer their logic and progress will be to them, too. Students are responsible for leading supervisory meetings, but the questions you ask will help to focus their thinking and progress. This page contains some useful questions for supervisory meetings. Remember, you can also use the GROW method to coach students in the right direction.

Remember: the EPQ is an independent qualification, so your role is to coach the student to their own conclusions without being too directive.

4. **Effective** supervision

GROW Coaching

The GROW model of coaching can be used to guide conversations with students. It is designed to guide someone to their own conclusions as opposed to being too directive, therefore it is a suitable model for an independent qualification such as the EPQ. You should start at the top left and work your way around the cycle in a clockwise direction. Students should be gently guided to their own conclusions. You can offer guidance, e.g. on how realistic their goals are, but they should ultimately do this independently.

Questions to help your student with setting a goal:

What would you like to achieve?

Is your goal SMART?

How will you know if you have achieved your goal?

What's the difference between where you are now, and where you want to be?

Questions to help your student with describing their reality:

What have you tried before? What has worked / hasn't worked, and why?

What is stopping you from achieving your goal, at the moment?

What resources are available to you (including people)?

Questions to help your student describe their will to succeed:

What are you going to commit to doing?

When will you do it by?

Why is this the best course of action?

Questions to help your student to identify some options:

What's the obvious option?

If you knew you couldn't fail, what else would you try?

What might you need to change in order to reach your goal?

4. **Effective** supervision

Questioning

Through thoughtful questioning, a supervisor can guide their student through the EPQ, without taking responsibility away from the student.

Proposal stage

- Will this title encourage critical analysis? Or is it descriptive?
- Does this title seek a research-based conclusion?
- Are there any ethical considerations which may arise from this title?
- With the time and resources available to you, is it possible to answer the question posed in this title?
- Do you know whether suitable research material is available to answer this question?
- How do you intend to remain objective when researching this topic?
- Does this title pose any risk of dual accreditation?

Staying on track

- How are you feeling about your project?
- How are you balancing the workloads of your A-levels, and your EPQ?
- Do you need any additional support from me or the coordinator?
- Do you know what your next steps need to be?
- Tell me about the research / planning / writing you have completed since we last met
- Have you been keeping a log of your reading / research? When did you last add to it?
- Have you been keeping a log of your actions and decisions, and your reasoning? When did you last add to it?
- What targets will you set for yourself to achieve between now and our next meeting?
- What steps are you putting in place to ensure you meet the next deadline?
- Have you chosen a system for managing your project?

Supporting their research

- How has the research you have already completed, helped you to progress your project?
- Have you discovered anything particularly interesting or detrimental to the focus of your project? How are you going to adapt your focus to acknowledge / incorporate this new knowledge?
- What are going to be your next steps with the research? Why?
- Has your new research brought any new demands with it? E.g. might you now need to consider primary data as well as secondary?

4. **Effective** supervision

Supporting artefact projects

Artefact projects can be some of the most interesting ones to supervise, but it can be difficult to get your head around how to best support your student with their artefact. This page outlines some questions to consider:

Supporting the proposal stage

- **Is the idea viable?** Artefacts are almost always far too big when they first begin! Students should be talked through how they can complete a sample size of a larger concept piece e.g. a chapter of a Young Adult novel rather than the full novel. Ask yourself: how feasible is this artefact, in terms of common parameters such as finances, resources and physical space?
- **Is a question, the most appropriate title format?** An artefact project doesn't always lend itself to a question. A description of the intended product, can yield great work too. Title development should also be grounded in research. This page gives an example of how an area of focus can develop into various different project types.
- **How will they realise their idea through research?** What will the research look like? Is it available to them? It is important that the artefact is grounded solidly in detailed academic research. Does the project log demonstrate the connection between the research and the artefact, i.e., how the student put their research into practice in their particular context?
- **Does the title make clear what is going to be made / created?** E.g. "Effective interior design for small living spaces." This artefact was a CAD design but this isn't clear from the title.

Aims and objectives

- **What is the intention of the project?** Students should consider the intentions (aims) of the project, before deciding on the format: it's easy to say "I want to make a documentary about X" but have they considered whether that's the most appropriate medium for their audience? Asking the student who their audience is, can prompt them to think carefully about the project's intention.
- **Have they set concrete aims and objectives?** How will they measure their progress? It is likely that the student will need to conduct primary research in the middle of their project to evaluate the progress of their project in relation to their aims and objectives: this is all part of the testing process and evaluating whether they are achieving their intentions. Have they considered the practicalities of primary research?

Primary research in artefact projects

- **What will their primary research look like?** It may look very different to the primary research which would be appropriate for a report-style project - but should be no less academically rigorous. For example, a student writing a novel as an artefact could actively engage with other novels in the same genre, making notes and evaluating specific components. All components of the final product, should be rooted in research. In the novel example, this could range from font size, to any illustrations, to the creative writing process.

Documenting skills development

- **What are they learning along the way?** The student's focus should be on developing a new skill and/or learning something new about a topic: they should not just be re-creating something that they already know loads or about or how to do it. All of the creative decisions which go into an artefact product, must be rooted in research.

5. EPQ **documentation**

What students must submit

For all four exam boards, students will need to submit a complete and detailed log of activities they have undertaken throughout their project. We will refer to this as the project log. In addition, students will need to submit a candidate declaration, a copy of their presentation, and, of course, their final product (e.g. their dissertation / artefact and report / field investigation, etc.)

This page outlines some things to be aware of, when it comes to documenting the EPQ process.

In addition, supervisors must:

- Complete a **submission checklist**: after the student has submitted their full project log, product, and presentation. This is a direct communication between the supervisor and the moderator, and is a record of how the student's title has developed from "working" title to "final" title. It is the first thing a lot of moderators look at;
- Sign and date the **record of marks**.

Reflective practice

An important skill which students are expected to develop through their EPQ projects, reflection should feature heavily in the project log.

Page 9 of the University of Southampton 2024 EPQ Excellence Conference report describes Dr Monica Esslin-Peard's research on the benefits of regular, reflective practice, for the EPQ.

Students should be encouraged to reflect regularly and systematically on their progress. There are many models of reflection, but one simple tool which students could be introduced to, is Gibbs' reflective cycle.

5. EPQ **documentation**

The project log is a student's record of their full thought process from origin to completion.

It includes everything from a record of their initial ideas for research topics, to a log of their reading, to their mid-project reflections, to a summary and reflection on their final product.

In the project log, students should:

- write as precisely and specifically as possible: it is not about quantity but quality
- describe and explain ways in which their project has developed following meetings with their supervisor
- record how their thinking has developed through research
- demonstrate that they are both detailed and reflective.

Record of initial ideas

This is evidence of the candidate's first thoughts: ideally they would have a range of ideas that they are interested in and explain their rationale behind why they are interested in each one and then which one they ultimately choose to pursue and why. This document should not be signed off by a supervisor as completed until sufficient research and exploration of topics has happened – it is a working document at the beginning of the project and should read as such.

Project proposal

At this stage, students should have a firm, research-based idea of what they want to study. The project title is still a work in progress, but the general idea should be clear and based in research. Here is some guidance on what to look out for when reviewing proposals.

Mid-project reflections

This is completed roughly halfway through the project. Students should be bringing their research to an end, and formulating a plan for what to include in their final product. Their research title should have been refined through research, and is now final.

Students may reflect on the following:

- Is their project following their original plan? Why / why not?
- How has their research shaped the direction of their project?
- What are their next steps? Which objectives need to be actioned to complete the project?

Only after completing mid-project reflections should students actually begin realising their project.

5. EPQ **documentation**

The proposal is a student's record of what they intend to research

Students should submit their proposals to you for approval, before they properly begin their research. Whilst they should have done some reading to shape their initial ideas, students should not spend lots of time researching a niche topic area, until their proposal has been approved. As supervisor, you must decide whether a proposal is suitable, and ensure your student(s) are embarking on feasible, appropriate projects. This page details some considerations to bear in mind.

1. Appropriateness

Students may have a natural interest in topics which are not appropriate to investigate without significant research experience and safeguards. As an experienced teacher, you are well-placed to look out for any potential risks which may result from your student's research. This includes risks to the student as a researcher, as well as, in the case of primary research, risks to their participants. **You** are responsible for safeguarding the student against potential harms which may arise through their proposed research topic, or methods. **Any safeguarding concerns which arise through your interactions with your students, should be flagged with your DSL and centre coordinator.**

Primary research ethics and risk assessments
Whilst it is the student's responsibility to carry out any primary research, they may not think to consider ethics, without your guidance. You can help them by suggesting appropriate ways to conduct their research; this may include ethics applications and risk assessments. Guidance will vary between centres, and all four exam boards provide specific guidance on ethics, safeguarding, risk assessments, and primary research.

2. Feasibility

Students are naturally ambitious, but it is important that their proposal is achievable. As supervisor, you can use the proposal stage to guide them towards research which can be achieved within the time-frame and resources at their disposal. A key part of this is to ensure that their research question is one which can be answered within the time constraints of an EPQ. Guidance on developing a good research question can be seen here.

Primary research is **not** a requirement of most EPQ projects*, but many students include significant primary research in their project proposal. As supervisor, you may wish to invite your student(s) to consider whether the benefits of primary research, outweigh the significant time commitment required to conduct it. They may stand to benefit more from in-depth, secondary research.

*Artefact projects **should** include an element of primary research in order to test the product.

"Moderators continued to find centres where little to no consideration was given to the ethics of primary research ... [it] added very little value to the project... Students should consider... whether the time and energy expended on primary research might be better spent on in-depth secondary research"
AQA Examiner's Report, November 2022

5. EPQ **documentation**

3. Dual accreditation

It is strongly recommended that you make yourself aware of the JCQ Instructions for Conducting Non-Examination Assessments. Different exam boards have slightly different interpretations of "dual accreditation", however the basic idea is the same: students should not research something which is, or could be considered to be, covered by one of their other Level 3 studies.

As supervisor, you should **be vigilant with regards to what your students are proposing to focus on**, and reach out to the appropriate curriculum leader within your centre, to confirm whether any element of the proposed EPQ topic might **overlap** with the content of another A-level. If it does, **students should be strongly advised against researching that topic**.

Naturally, students may have areas of interest which are closely **associated** with an A-level subject. If the student can definitively demonstrate that there is no overlap between their EPQ and the contents of the A-level curriculum they are studying, this may not constitute dual accreditation. **If in doubt, ask your centre coordinator or exam board point of contact**.

4. Project types

In reviewing a proposal, it may be worth asking yourself, and the student, whether a different project type might be more appropriate to their area of focus. For example, if they are interested in researching the ways in which embroidery techniques have changed over time, could an artefact project be more appropriate? More guidance on supervising artefact projects can be seen here.

5. Bias

In reading a student's proposal, you should identify, and point out to the student, any risks of potential bias, e.g. biases arising from their experiences, or predetermined ideas of the outcome.

5. EPQ **documentation**

Title approval

Possibly one of the most important roles of the supervisor, is to approve the student's working title in the proposal stage, and their final title approximately halfway through the topic. Below is some guidance on supporting your students in developing an effective EPQ title.

Overview: effective research questions...

are underpinned by research and purpose

lead to critical analysis

avoid 'future gazing'

do not lead to a simple yes/no answer

are achievable within the constraints of an EPQ

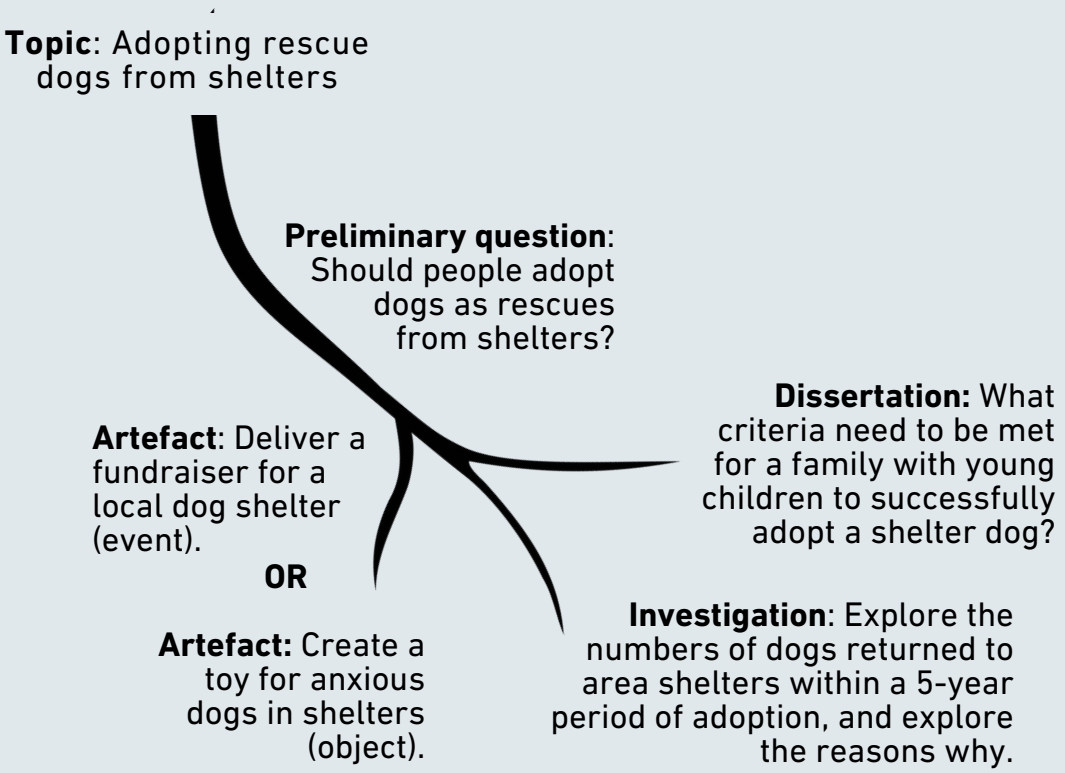
are not too specific, or too vague to answer conclusively

are developed over time

are objective and unbiased

Title development

EPQ titles <u>should</u> develop over time, in response to research. As always, it is important that these changes are documented and justified. The student may set out with one project type in mind, but this may change as they read more about their topic. Below is an example of how the same area of interest could develop into various different project types.



6. The EPQ **Presentation**

Supporting the EPQ presentation

The presentation is an exciting moment in the EPQ because it is the culmination of months of research. It is also a fantastic opportunity for students to demonstrate their progress against the assessment objectives. This page details your role.

Requirements for the presentation

Exam boards vary slightly in their expectations of the EPQ presentation, but all exam boards require the following:

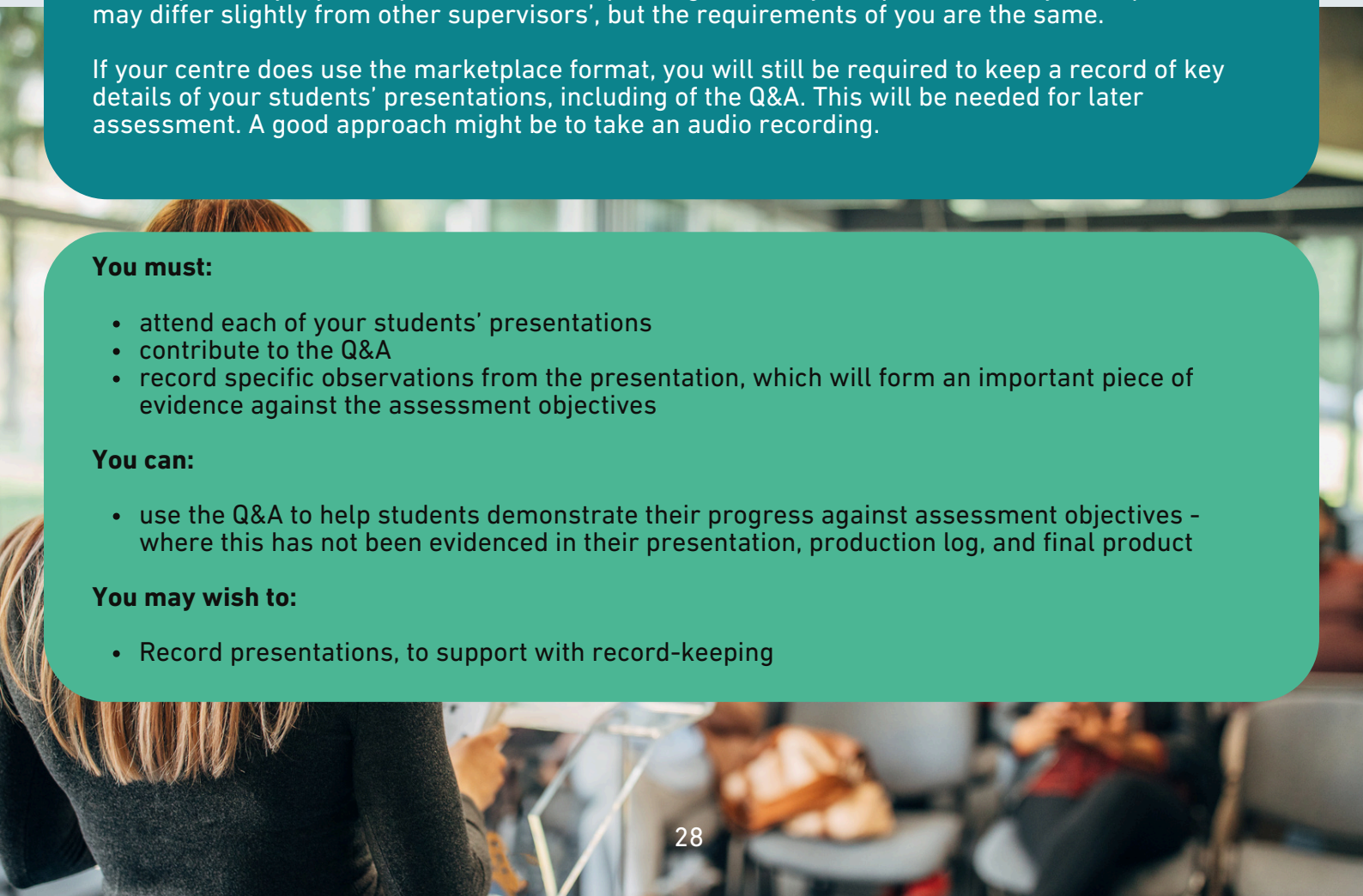
- The presentation is planned ahead of time
- The presentation is performed live
- The audience includes non-specialists
- The supervisor attends the presentation
- The presentation includes a Q&A, which is led by the supervisor

The presentation **can** be rehearsed, but can only be **presented for assessment**, once.

Different ways of running EPQ presentations

Centres may choose how to conduct presentations, with styles ranging from slide shows, to marketplace-style poster presentations. Depending on the style of presentation, your experience may differ slightly from other supervisors', but the requirements of you are the same.

If your centre does use the marketplace format, you will still be required to keep a record of key details of your students' presentations, including of the Q&A. This will be needed for later assessment. A good approach might be to take an audio recording.



You must:

- attend each of your students' presentations
- contribute to the Q&A
- record specific observations from the presentation, which will form an important piece of evidence against the assessment objectives

You can:

- use the Q&A to help students demonstrate their progress against assessment objectives - where this has not been evidenced in their presentation, production log, and final product

You may wish to:

- Record presentations, to support with record-keeping

7. Feedback & Moderation

Supporting your students through feedback

Feedback on drafts

When a student submits their first draft you should read it thoroughly, possibly making your own notes about areas that are impressive and areas for improvement. As is outline by JCQ however, you **cannot** give students specific feedback (e.g. by way of written comments). **If in doubt, always ask your centre coordinator.**

Here's what JCQ say about feedback on drafts: "Teachers may review candidates' work… provide oral and written advice at a general level [and] allow candidates to revise and re-draft work]. General advice of this nature does not need to be recorded or taken into account when the work is marked." (JCQ Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments, 2024, p 5).

Grading students against the assessment objectives

As supervisor, you are responsible for deciding to what extent your students have achieved the assessment objectives. Grading guidance can be found in each of the exam boards' specifications. In addition, all four exam boards offer specific training to support supervisors in reaching these all-important decisions. The key thing to remember, is that there must be clear logic and **evidence** for each grading decision: it is good practice to pull out key words from each mark band, then look for evidence from your student's submissions, to corroborate each one. **TOP TIP**: Start at the bottom of a band and the more comprehensive and clear the evidence, the higher up the band you can move the candidate.

What to do if a student requires a lot of guidance

Your assessment of the student against the assessment objectives must take into consideration, the degree of support which they required. JCQ say: "If teachers give any assistance which goes beyond general advice, [including] detailed specific advice on how to improve drafts, detailed feedback on errors and omissions… then they must record this assistance and either take it into account when marking the work or submit it to the external examiner." (JCQ Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments, 2024, p 5).

Each centre will have its own practices for internal moderation and standardisation.

Centres are required to engage in in-centre moderation, to make the awarding of grades as robust as possible. Your centre coordinator will explain how your centre does this and the extent of your role within the process. Remember, the exam boards also offer standardisation training.

Predicted grades

Finally, remember that you are advised not to make grade predictions for the EPQ. However, you can encourage your student(s) to mention their EPQ topic and, even more importantly, the skills they have learned, in their Personal Statement as well as at interview, where applicable.

8. Useful **resources**

For students

- Zotero: a free, reference management software
- Trello: a free, project management software
- Guidance on using the Pomodoro Technique
- Our FutureLearn MOOC: "Developing your Research Project"
- Our YouTube playlist
- Our Instagram channel
- Our website, full of academic skills guidance
- Details on how to visit the Hartley Library at the University of Southampton

For supervisors

Tools to help you keep track of your students' work:

- Project Q, AQA's own EPQ management software
- MS Teams for the classroom
- Google Classroom
- OneNote for education

Important documentation

- JCQ Instructions for Conducting Non-Examination Assessments
- Exam board resources:

Resource	**Exam board links**			
Specification	AQA	OCR	Pearson Edexcel	WJEC
Examiner reports	AQA	OCR	Pearson Edexcel	WJEC
Training for supervisors	AQA	OCR	Pearson Edexcel	WJEC
Documentation	AQA	OCR	Pearson Edexcel	WJEC

You could also consider:

- ...other universities which offer targeted EPQ support - reach out to your local HE provider
- ...collaborating with other centres, e.g. for taught skills delivery, shadowing, or resource sharing (we can support you in facilitating this, just ask!)
- ...joining the Facebook communities dedicated to EPQ teachers (these are called "AQA EPQ Teachers" (1.4k members) and "EPQ Teachers" (2k members)

9. Glossary & index

Term	Meaning
Assessment objectives	What students will be measured against. These vary slightly by exam board.
Candidate declaration	A declaration your student(s) must submit alongside their project, to confirm that the submission is their own work.
Critical analysis	The skill of weighing up the relative strengths and weaknesses of sources.
Dual accreditation	An overlap in content between EPQ and another A level - not permitted under the JCQ Instructions for Conducting Non-Examination Assessments.
Ethics approval	A process students must go through before carrying out primary research.
Gibbs' reflective cycle	A simple model of reflection which students may choose to use throughout their project.
GROW coaching	A model of coaching which you may choose to use in supervisor meetings.
JCQ	Joint Council for Qualifications. A membership organisation of which the four EPQ exam boards are members.
Marketplace presentations	All students simultaneously present their research. Guests (e.g. supervisors, coordinators, governors) visit stands to find out about students' research.
Mid-project reflections	Approximately halfway through the project; the point at which the title is finalised.
Moderation	The process of checking the marking of another marker. Completed by exam boards but centres may also have their own standardisation processes.
Primary research	Research conducted by the student, using participants. Requires ethical considerations. Not necessary for all EPQ projects.
Primary source	Created at the time of an event, e.g. a photograph. Most students will include a mixture of primary and secondary sources.
Product	The type of submission the student chooses to produce, e.g. an artefact, dissertation, field investigation, performance, etc.
Project log	A log of all of the activities the student has undertaken during the course of their EPQ. Different exam boards have different names for this.
Proposal	The student submits this to their supervisor for approval before they begin their research properly. Here are some considerations for supervisors.
Qualitative	A form of data which is not numerical e.g. an interview transcript.
Quantitative	A form of data which is numerical e.g. results from a survey made up of closed questions. Should be statistically analysed to be useful for an EPQ.
Record of marks	A log of the marks awarded by the supervisor, against each assessment objective. Different exam boards have different names for this.
Reflection	A skill of looking back at events and critically analysing them. E.g. using Gibbs' reflective cycle.
Reliability	The extent to which research can be consistently seen to demonstrate the same results, e.g. when replicated by another researcher / across a large sample.
Secondary source	Comments on / critically analyses preexisting primary or secondary research. Most students will include a mixture of primary and secondary sources.
Source analysis table	Students can use one to keep a log of sources they have read. It should include critical analysis of each source. Useful for inclusion in the project log.
SMART targets	Targets which are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound. A good framework for students to use when setting goals between meetings.
Validity	Degree to which research measures what it intends to measure, e.g. a survey on impulsiveness is valid if it truly measures impulsiveness.

10. **References**

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