



BARNARD CASTLE SIXTH FORM

So, you're thinking of
doing an EPQ?

Here's everything you need to
know to allow you to make a
decision as to whether an EPQ
is right for you and how best to
prepare for a positive outcome



The key EPQ knowledge

The EPQ is a self directed project qualification, the subject of which you chose from anything in the world that interests you.

You can choose to produce an “artefact” and a shorter report rather than a long written report. This could be anything, such as a designed object, a dramatic production, a piece of music or a Scientific investigation.

It gets you UCAS points; a unique selling point in personal statements; a great topic to discuss at interview and a set of research skills that will be useful for rest of your life.

It takes one year to complete from **Jan 2020 to Dec 2020**.

You will be supported through the process by teaching staff. Before you finalise your topic we suggest you do the following things over the Michaelmas term:

1. Complete an EPQ focused Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). Note, these courses have an option for an official certificate at the end of them, but these do cost £35 - we will accept a screen shot of your completion statement. Choose either the longer course: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/research-project> or the shorter one: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/epq-success>;
2. You will need to learn how and why to use “citations” in your work – start by watching this short video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=99&v=IMhMuVvXCVw;
3. You will need to learn how to use Word to automatically generate a “Reference List” or “Bibliography”. Start by watching this short video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnVq_BpwP2E;
4. You will also need to learn to use Word to automatically generate Table of Contents. Start by watching this short video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmcYgziyskk>;
5. Over Michaelmas Term 2019 (before you are assigned a Supervisor at the beginning of Lent Term 2020) you will have access to Coordinator Drop-in clinics to discuss your initial preparations and to bounce around some of your ideas

If you are interested then speak to your tutor, Mr Cresswell or Mr Forsyth.

What is an EPQ?

The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is a standalone qualification designed to extend and develop your skills in independent research and project management.

The EPQ is an independent research project you carry out yourself. The output can be either a 5000 word research report, or an “artefact” backed up with a 1-2000 word research report detailing the academic research that went into making the artefact.

Research reports are a mini-version of the sort of dissertation you might be expected to produce at a university. Recent Barney research reports have included: An investigation into the treatment of chronic pain; “Should UK Farmers Vaccinate their cows against TB?”; The legacy of the events of “Bloody Sunday” and “The Tragic Hero in Classical Literature”.

Artefacts are objects or creative productions. Recent Barney EPQ artefacts have included: designing and making a dress for Scarlett O’Hara in *Gone with the Wind* (see abstract at end); four pieces of music composed for the Silver Swan at the Bowes Museum (see abstract at end); theatrical productions and workshops and a fully working wind tunnel for aerodynamics testing.

What help will be offered?

Your project is your own work, but you will be assigned to a “Supervisor”; a member of the teaching staff who will act as a guide and constructive critic for your work throughout your EPQ. Your relationship with your Supervisor is critical to your success, so make sure you keep them on your side! You will also have access to the Barney EPQ Coordinator Mr Forsyth. He will be running weekly drop-in support sessions for any concerns or just for a quick chat.

You will need to keep a record of your “research journey” through the use of Project Q, the online service Barney subscribes to. This “Production Log” will allow you to put together evidence of all the decisions you have made along the way and your reasoning behind them – basically self-reflection. The evidence for self-reflection in your Production Log will make up a majority of the marks awarded at the end of the project.

Is the EPQ recognised by universities or employers?

The EPQ is awarded UCAS points worth half an A-level and is recognised by universities and employers; some leading universities, such as Southampton University, make alternative offers to students undertaking an EPQ. It also gives you a unique selling point in your personal statement and at interview above and beyond the A-Level Syllabus – no-one else in the country will have carried out the research project that you have completed.

How does the EPQ relate to what I'm studying at A-Level?

The EPQ requires you to carry out research on a topic that you have chosen and is not covered by your other qualifications. You then use this research to produce a written report and, in the case of practical projects, an artefact or a production.

You can take inspiration from something studied in class or something completely unrelated to your studies. This is a chance to demonstrate a passion for what you plan to go on to do after school – whether that's at university, applying for a job or an apprenticeship.

Should I have an EPQ Supervisor in my EPQ subject area?

Not necessarily. The EPQ is overseen by a project supervisor, typically a teacher who is not a specialist in the chosen area. The supervisor guides you through the process; they do not guide the content or unduly influence the outcome of your research, so it is often preferable that a supervisor isn't a subject expert.

You can receive specific advice and support from a technical supervisor, for example to undertake a practical experiment in a lab. However, the work completed must be based on your own research and ideas.

What will I gain from an EPQ?

The EPQ is the perfect way to encourage you to extend and develop beyond the material being covered in class and explore your passion for a topic.

The EPQ allows you to embark on a self-directed project. By taking responsibility for the choice and design of an individual project (or an individual role in a group project) you will:

- Become a more critical, reflective and independent learner;
- Develop and apply decision-making and problem-solving skills;
- Increase your planning, research, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and presentation skills;
- Learn to apply new technologies confidently;
- Demonstrate creativity, initiative and enterprise;
- Increase your motivation in your other A-Levels by studying a related topic of personal interest;
- Be able to apply your new skills to other areas of study

When does the EPQ Start and Finish?

The Barney EPQ runs from the beginning of the Y12 Lent term (January) to the end of the Michaelmas term Y13 (December).

However, this does not mean that you cannot start planning an EPQ earlier than this – in fact carrying out the preparatory work (see below) to help you work up an idea over the Michaelmas Term will really help you hit the ground running in January. This may help prevent you having to switch ideas around as you hit dead ends.

How to prepare to succeed – Before you start

As highlighted in the 'Key EPQ Knowledge' of this resource, you will need to choose one of the MOOCs. **This must be completed before the end of Michaelmas Term 2019.**

You will also need to evaluate your ideas by thinking about the following:

- Will the title encourage independent research and analysis? i.e. not a creative product of your own imagination – unless this is an artefact and you have also planned the academic research that will SUPPORT your work (eg, a creative writing piece must be supported with your own academic research into How such a piece can be written successfully).
 - Is your proposed title ethically sound? (see Quick Guide to Ethics) eg, obviously you cannot plan to experiment on animals, but you also need to plan any questionnaire or other work which involves other people work very carefully - see the Quick Guides to find out more.
 - You need to access whether it is possible to answer the question posed in the title? (i.e. not speculative question) eg “What will school look like in the year 2200?” is not a question you could meaningfully answer using academic sources – any research material you find would be either Science Fiction or pure speculation.
 - Will suitable research material be available? eg, if you wanted to base your EPQ around your own family history, unless you come from a family that has books written about them, you will almost certainly not be able to find enough research material to write an academic report.
 - Is this a project suitable for a Level-3 project (i.e. Is this A-Level Standard)?
 - Will you be able to remain objective? (report must be balanced and academic in its conclusions). Eg one-sided political or religious views are not academic.
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Researching your project

Your EPQ project will probably be a mixture of “Primary” and “Secondary” research (as well as a bit of your own original thought – especially if you are creating an artefact).

Primary Research is information you gather directly - either through scientific experiments, writing questionnaires or interviewing experts. All your Primary research **MUST** be ethically approved by your Supervisor and Coordinator, you will need to plan how you are going to carry out this research ethically yourself (see Quick Guide to Ethics).

Secondary Research is any information you gather from reading other people’s work on your project area of interest. You will need to keep detailed records of where this information comes from and how reliable the source is. Eg. Getting some of your information from You Tube is acceptable as long as you are aware that this information might not be reliable and try to back it up with academic (peer reviewed) research.

Where can you find secondary research material?

- The Barney School Library – speak to Mrs Shovlin for advice
- Google Scholar – learn to use this academic search engine properly. Start with this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ydzerd9FT0>
- Durham University – We will visit Durham University during the Lent Term and Mrs Shovlin can help you order material through the University Lib at other times.
- JSTOR – This is probably going to be your most useful source of research and can be accessed at school through the Barney Library Portal: <http://bcs-sr-lib1:8180/oliver/home/news>

You can (and SHOULD) also access JSTOR from home/over holidays

Instructions for password access from home:

1. Enter JSTOR via the Individual Access Logon page at: <https://www.jstor.org/action/showLogin>
2. Enter the following JSTOR username and password under the MyJSTOR login:
Username: barnardcastle
Password: researcher

After the username and password have been accepted, users will see the authentication statement "Your access to JSTOR provided by BARNARD CASTLE SCHOOL" under the JSTOR logo. They will now be able to access JSTOR.

Guide to artefacts

All artefacts should be “fit for purpose”. AQA do not give sympathy vote for projects that have not worked due to lack of research. Eg. A student who set out to make drone with plywood propellers which could never fly due to the weight did not achieve a pass as AQA ruled that he should have been aware of this from the beginning.

It should be clear by the Mid-Project Review whether the artefact is going to be fit for purpose or not, and the focus changed if necessary.

Taught element

Up to 30 guided hours should be spent in guided learning (This can include completion of a MOOC)

Core Skills we will Teach You:

1. Time management skills
 2. Research skills and evaluation of sources
 3. Report writing skills
 4. Referencing and Bibliography creation
 5. How to avoid plagiarism
 6. Presentation skills – start by watching the following: Public Speaking with Confidence: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2MR5XbJtXU&t=7s> or slightly longer “How to Avoid Death by PowerPoint <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iwpi1Lm6dFo>)
 7. Reflection and Evaluation
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EPQ Case Study - Scarlett O'Hara's Dress



When starting my project, my inspiration was historical fashion. I wanted to create a garment for a certain era. So, I decided to choose a historically accurate fictional character.

I chose Scarlett O'Hara, as I have particular interest in the American Civil War. My aim was to produce a garment suitable for Scarlett O'Hara, and in my report I discuss my research and decisions made around my project and all the work that led me to complete a successful EPQ artefact.

My question was as follows: Can I design and make a garment fit for the character of Scarlett O'Hara from *Gone with the Wind*?

Having completed this project, I have learned how much I love historical fashion. I knew I had a strong interest, but since completing all the research I have found that not only my knowledge, but also my passion, has increased.

There were very few times when I found the research a chore; the most challenging times were when I found myself reading up on other periods of history that had nothing to do with my project, but that I just found so interesting! Nevertheless, I was able to keep myself on track.

Rebecca Collinson, U6th Marwood House (2019)

EPQ Case Study - Bowes' Silver Swan Song



The question was “Can I write five unique pieces for the Silver Swan?”

It seemed straight forward... but I did not achieve this goal. I produced four pieces, which were all unique. Preparation is everything especially when working out of one’s comfort zone. My preparation included speaking directly with representatives of the Bowes Museum - the current home of the Swan – and research into 18th century musical nuances and themes.

The inspiration to create my artefact as pieces of music came directly from the absence of music theory I discovered from no longer studying Music after finishing my GCSEs.

My EPQ project was refreshing, giving me a contrast to my everyday life of equations and formulae, with the only restraint being my keenness for research. I feel that the project has given me a very strong head start when it comes to future university studies.

I would recommend the EPQ to anyone who wishes to develop academic independence, or who just wants to dive into a topic that they are passionate about.

Matthew Shovlin, U6th Dale House (2019)



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