

# Edexcel Extended Project: Case Study

Edexcel's Level 3 Extended Project is an exciting new qualification that builds the problem-solving and independent learning skills of students through the planning, research and evaluation of an in-depth piece of work. Also available at Level 1 (Foundation) and 2 (Higher), students choose the focus and title of their Project in consultation with their teachers. The Extended Project can be delivered as a dissertation, performance, investigation or artefact and is worth half a GCE and up to 70 UCAS points.

This case study illustrates how the Extended Project was introduced successfully by a school, which piloted the new qualification before it was launched nationwide. As a flexible approach to learning, Extended Project can be taught and delivered in a variety of different ways; this is an example of just one way that it worked.

## Approach and Delivery

A group of sixth form students was energised by the chance to do a Project based on the *Perspectives on Science* GCE. These high achievers were hooked in Year 12 by the prospect of studying the philosophy, history and ethics of science. Each student researched and wrote a dissertation, which was submitted in the autumn term of Year 13, so the results were out before university entrance interviews. The students were motivated to earn an extra qualification, which enhanced their AS and A level studies and developed skills that are valued by Higher Education.

Schools and colleges timetable Project in many different ways; in this case it was delivered through General Studies' classes, with additional lunchtime and after school sessions.



## Skills Development

Skills development is a key phase in all Extended Projects and in this case the students learned how to develop and defend a line of argument based on evidence through activities, which included:

**Paired Arguments** – students were given a topic, such as 'should the NHS have to pay for cancer treatment caused by smoking' and had to adopt a position and debate it with an opponent. One person would listen as the other set out to defend their perspective and this would continue through three rounds of argument and counter-argument. Students learnt to judge and debate the strength of their opponent's point of view.

**Defending the indefensible** – students were given an absurd indefensible point of view, such as 'bare knuckle fighting should be compulsory at Year 11', and asked to defend this position during a one minute presentation to the group.

**Major events in science** – students were taught about some of the most iconic moments in the history of science, such as the arrival of Darwinism, to increase their knowledge and understanding of the subject. They then made presentations to illustrate why these discoveries were so far reaching and important.

**Ethics and philosophy** – teachers gave lectures to set out arguments within their subject areas using major philosophical movements, such as utilitarianism, divine command and logical positivism.

**Agony Aunt** – newspaper columns were used as the basis for debates and arguments, by encouraging individuals or groups to respond to the questions and advice raised in articles.

Throughout this period of skills development, students learnt to analyse and critically evaluate sources. The teachers, supported by Edexcel's materials, taught them to structure and reference their work and set regular milestones, ensuring that work logs were kept up to date.

## Choosing the Project title

Following this scene-setting and skills development phase, students were encouraged to focus on the key themes of their in-depth study, which they were passionate about, or had a personal or academic interest in. This was used as a basis for a title for their Project. When selecting the titles, they were expected to take a point of view, and argue a case based on their research. Students' final Project titles included:

- Should we ban China from building more power stations to reduce global warming?
- Will Artificial Intelligence ever be reliable enough to take the place of fallible politicians and judges?
- Should creationism be banned in schools?

## Supporting the Writing of the Project

Students were supported in the writing through a structured approach, which encouraged them to include:

- An Abstract, providing an overview of the project
- An Introduction, summarising the reason for the project
- A Research Review – the meat of the ideas on which the work was based
- A Discussion - defending their point of view and outlining opposing views
- A Conclusion, summarising the final position.
- An Evaluation, showing how they developed their skills and viewpoint throughout the period of work

Students were advised to complete the research review first, with teachers setting regular milestones to ensure they were organising their time and meeting deadlines.

Using the resources and information collected, students had to improve their position by providing several lines of argument to support their view whilst arguing against opposing ones.

Exemplar materials, illustrating the kind of written work students have produced, are available on our website.

## Assessment

At the end of the period of independent study and teacher mentoring, students had to summarise their work to their teachers and peers in a 10 minute presentation. Students reported that the experience helped to build confidence in conveying and defending a succinct summary of their findings – skills that are valued in Higher Education. The dissertations were then marked by their teachers, with external moderation by Edexcel.



## Feedback we've received

*"The best thing...is the way we can learn about and work at what interests us, rather than what a syllabus prescribes."* Student

*"Extended projects...are a powerful educational tool, which could transform the curriculum within schools by placing the emphasis on a pupil-centred, active learning approach in an academically rigorous context."* Headteacher

*"Universities were amazed at the amount of independent work that was needed."* Student

## The Edexcel edge

- The only Awarding Body with specialist moderators for the four possible projects: dissertation, investigation, performance and artefact
- A comprehensive Teacher's Guide, plus guides for students
- High quality resources available online and in print, including a dedicated website
- Exemplar materials and examiners' reports
- High quality and responsive support from *Ask the Expert*, putting you in direct email contact with senior subject experts for any questions you have relating to the specification.
- A national training programme for anyone teaching Project
- A great track record of developing portfolio-based qualifications

For further information visit [www.edexcel.com/Project](http://www.edexcel.com/Project)