

Year 9 students study Black History through a bespoke HPQ programme

Samuel Whitbread Academy are paving the way for other likeminded schools to bring Black History to life through the Higher Project Qualification with Pearson Edexcel. Students who felt that they could not see themselves represented in the content covered in the history curriculum or who have a keen interest in history, called for a greater opportunity to study and learn about British BAME history, politics and wider societal issues, and through a collaboration between the academy staff and Pearson, the HPQ Black History programme was created.

The Higher Project Qualification provides opportunity for students to develop the skills of planning, research, investigation, extended writing, reviewing and evaluation, and is loved by schools looking for a structured assessment approach to any bespoke programme of study they offer, whether it is alternative content, or a course designed to provide access to students. When a HPQ is used in conjunction with a purposeful area of focus that students are calling out for, it is a perfect marriage of freedom of content and structured project, which students at Samuel Whitbread have thrived upon through this programme.

Dr Julia Haynes, the teacher in charge of delivering the Black History HPQ programme, reflected upon why it was so important for students at her school to move away from their traditional KS3 history offer.

“It [Black History] is something that in our location is often missed. We are in a very rural, white area, and a number of the broad aspects of our history go missing. We have a school value of Equality, which really does fit the bill for this [programme].”

“Black history is really important within the Key Stage Three curriculum, as it’s part of our history, and given you are not bound by an exam focus, it allows you [the teacher] more options to use your imagination.”

“The HPQ provides you with the structure and rigor of what you need students to produce, which helps them to become focused, but they still have the open opportunity to be creative. After we created a migration unit as a department, this programme allowed us to go further, and students responded really well with projects about the Windrush generation, but also delving into politics and sport.”

“On the back of this programme we have seen a dramatic increase in the uptake of students to GCSE History, and it has meant that we are now offering this HPQ programme every year to our Year 9 students, and considering how we can expand it to Years 8 and 7 too.”

Charlotte Linehan, Vice Principal at Samuel Whitbread Academy, was really impressed with how impactful the HPQ Black History programme was on the school's culture and approach to curriculum.

“My initial role was to support the history department to establish the programme, by ensuring there was enough time, staffing, funding and other administrative support to deliver the HPQ. We were thrilled with how many students put themselves forward for the pilot, which came with an abundance of support from parents and carers too.”

“What I have noticed is that students have the freedom to explore a topic that really interests them, and of the 26 who completed the project, 20 chose GCSE History in their options. That is definitely a positive impact for our school. The project also raises the profile of the history department and has enabled our history teachers to develop themselves as historians and invest in their own professional development.”

“I was really taken aback by the passion and enthusiasm of the students, who showed a real vulnerability when they disclosed stories from their personal histories and family backgrounds. We also saw students developing their research and extended writing skills, and with their ability to appropriately reference their coursework, we know this will prepare them well for future assessments and develop their sense of independence.”

“If a senior leader asked me the question, “Should we run this project?”, I would say incredibly confidently and proudly, “Absolutely!” Give your students this opportunity. Give them a dedicated time to explore, research and have some fun with their history. We see this programme as an inclusive qualification for all students, and see it being an important part of how we embed our schools' values into our curriculum.”

Of the 26 students who completed the HPQ, all of the students achieved a grade A* to C, equivalent to a half-sized GCSE grade 9 to 6, which reflects the 60 guided learning hours completed. Over 50% of students achieved a grade A* to A, showing how well they both developed and applied the skills of project-based learning, despite being younger by 2 years of the typical HPQ candidate.



Samuel Whitbread Academy are going to continue to grow and expand their use of the HPQ Black History programme, which is boosting GCSE history numbers, and developing students' essential skills for life. For any school interested in launching this programme, they can find all the materials used to launch the programme on [our website](#).

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