

Educating EMANUEL

Robert Milne, Headmaster of Emanuel School, on how the EPQ helps Sixth Form students to thrive

Since its introduction by exam boards in 2008, the number of students taking the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) has risen to over 33,000. At Emanuel, we have been advocating the broad benefits of this supplement to the A-level course since 2016 and have been delighted by the way that our students have benefited from it.

For many, the EPQ focuses on an area that contrasts to their A-levels. Last year, some of the titles included 'Is protest redundant? Looking at resistance in a capitalist society' and 'To what extent can we consider video games an art form?' Students usually pursue an area of personal interest and many students enjoy the EPQ because it allows them to gain in-depth knowledge on a specific area.

The EPQ has also allowed them to test whether they would be truly happy to read a given subject at university. One of our architecture applicants is now sure that the seven-year course is right for him due to his EPQ on 'The extent to which happiness is enhanced by the built environment'.

At Emanuel, there is a lot of support from teachers and every student follows a foundation course before selecting their topic which ensures they can research effectively, cite work correctly and deliver presentations. The student's tutor helps with project development and meets with them twice a week. The research can

"The research can provide some significant challenges"



ABOVE
Emanuel
performers
on stage

provide some significant challenges but the need to grapple with problems means the students also develop resilience along the way. As one student said, "I had no idea how challenging it would be... but I am so glad that I completed it."

According to Tim Gill's Cambridge Assessment paper in 2016, well-managed EPQs can produce higher A-level results.

Coursework-orientated subjects such as Geography and History receive upper sixth students well-versed in creating impressive dissertations. Researching and citing methodology in the science faculty becomes straightforward for students who have pursued an EPQ.

Academic challenge, transferable skills,

development of a passion, and a genuine benefit to higher education and working life – surely this is what curriculum design should be about? We have seen so many benefits from adopting the EPQ that it is now shaping parts of our curriculum throughout the school. From this term, Year 7 will be studying a robotics and coding course, which sees every child take their

robot home at the end of term, while all pupils from Years 6 to 8 will be tackling philosophical arguments, learning the art of rhetoric and debating ethical issues in an 'Ethos' course. These exciting projects are driven by our belief in the value of independent thought and project management and how it creates confident and engaged young people. **EB**



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