

Time management

To achieve well you will need to put in 120 hours of independent reading – it is painfully obvious if you haven't done this – you will also need to write your project on top of this.

You will need to prioritise the EPQ over summer to avoid clashes. **The deadline for the EPQ will be Friday 12th February 2021** but for organisation this is how you should approach it;

1. Step one – find a topic/title to research (should be complete by **Mid-July 2020**)
2. Find 3 or 4 academic works that give you a perspective on what you are researching
3. Follow up sources (use their bibliographies or use a library search to find more relevant articles). Some EPQ students have read over 50 pieces of academic work. The top EPQs will look at around 30. Remember, you don't have to read the whole thing – but you do have to read the sections that are relevant. Also articles are shorter and much more up to date. It is also ok to use journalist sources but this should not be the majority of your sources.
4. If you are going to do your own primary research then you should be starting this over summer. In the next session I will go into this in more detail.
5. When you come back in September you should have a fairly clear idea about how your EPQ will look. You will be given a supervisor who can help you structure your thoughts. At this point (Sept/Oct) you should establish a final question that will be your EPQ title. You may also have sub-questions that help answer the main question and allow you to write shorter essays to finish your EPQ.
6. After you have your main question and sections/chapters (you may reject this as well) you may need to look at a few more sources to verify what you are writing or to introduce new arguments. **You should be charting your progress in your log book.**
7. By Sept/Oct you should start writing your final copy (You may already have 2000/3000 words written at this point).
8. **You should aim to finish your EPQ 2 weeks before the deadline** as this will give you chance to redraft any parts of it. It's useful to do this because it gives you time to think through what you have said – you may completely disagree with what you have written a week later – give yourself time for editing.
9. After **Feb 12th** you will be given a date for your presentations – these normally start in the second week after half term (so from 8th March). Your presentation should be about 15 minutes long where you explain your findings to a non-specialist audience. You will also have to face 15 minutes of questioning. There will be at least 2 staff in the room. There will be an EPQ meeting about the presentation nearer the time.
10. After your presentation you will be given a week to finish your log book. This will be the final hand in – you'll send me by email a finished log book, presentation slides, finished EPQ and other evidence like some pages of a research diary. There will be nothing left but to sign the front page after this. You will **finish this project by March 2021.**

Time management is critical – over summer it is an urgent priority to find and read academic sources. It is useful to write briefly about your experiences with time management in the planning in your log book. It is useful to look at what others say about this;

<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/time-management.html>

<https://www.thebalance.com/time-management-skills-2063776>

On page 5 of your log book one of the questions asks about supervisor's advice – right now – I am saying your project will require serious consideration of time management – how do you plan to go about it? What books are you going to prioritise? When are you going to read them? Do not write 'I will manage my time better' write how (and why if possible). In short, what is your plan?

Examples (Do's and Don'ts)

Don't

"Using the sources I find I will gather facts and more importantly statistics about the policies. Using the information gained I will then start to write the essay comparing the German policies to the Soviet policies and come to a conclusion as to which were more effective. I plan to have this done by the February half term." A bit late?

Do

"I have decided to split my research into five main areas:

- 1. The NIPT test – Why was it developed (inc. brief history of prenatal testing)? What is it/how does it work? What does it test for? What is its current stage of introduction and how far has this evolved since the start of my project?*
- 2. Down syndrome and the other genetic conditions tested for – Causes? Features? Related medical complications? Prevalence in UK?*
- 3. Medical Ethics – 4 pillars and current UK law*
- 4. Ethical implications – the main section of my essay, using the context of the above areas to tackle the overall title question*
- 5. Format of a science/ethical academic essay – use of abstract? Preferred referencing styles? Bibliography? Footnotes?*

I believe that by doing this, I will be able to carry out more focused research on the necessary topics I plan to explore in my final product." Focused planning – splitting up tasks - easier to research – ideal.

Do

For the research and development of my project to be successful I have decided to format a plan for the various sections that I believe will be important aspects of my project, these sections include:

- The CMA (2007) in action- cases where people are charged/not, number of convictions, what sentences usually involve e.g. prison time, fines etc*
- The impact of the CMA- implications of sentences on employers/employees, the views of claimants, the necessity of the act, how it has changed over years*
- Criticisms of the CMA- academics and those working in the field, the views of the act, critical analysis of the legislation*
- Previous legislation- Prior cases and sentences, implications for companies then, alternative sentences and how they were not/more effective*
- Suggested amendments- any previous added regulations, compatibility with other laws e.g. Health and safety, number of multiple sentences*

By organising my research in this way, it should allow me to develop the project further due to the clarity of what my research will be paced upon.

Don't

"Good time management is a necessity for ensuring that the research and writing are completed in sufficient time." Obviously! **How did you manage your time?**

Do – Plan – write it in your log book

For my project to be successful it is important that I manage my time in order to achieve all the necessary aspects of the research, particularly when balancing demands of my A Level subjects.

- *September 30th - Complete all research and attempt to collect all the relevant articles needed, this includes visiting the library to collect the relevant materials and ordering them to form my argument along with other sources.*
- *October 15th – Begin the overall plan for my essay including how I will use the sources I have collected and assess how useful each source in framing my argument as a whole.*
- *October 20th – Confirm that my plan is coherent and make sure that all the research I have done is relevant to my argument and is useful for my essay*
- *November 1st – Start writing my essay, covering the sources I have collected and incorporate them into the argument along with the context and information I have accessed*
- *December 1st – Attempt to have written the introduction and have an idea of my argument and the information and evidence to support it.*
- *January 15th – Finish the essay and edit to make sure the argument is sustained throughout and that the referencing is correct*
- *February 9th - Submit the essay and the logbook to my supervisor.*
- *Week starting February 26th – Presentation needs to be complete in order to present the research to the group and explain why I have done the research and the conclusion this has led me to find.*

Throughout this time, I shall continue research and meetings with my supervisor to make sure my research and essay remains on track with the deadlines I have set. This will also help me to enforce time management and avoid running out time when writing and researching the project. Some of my research has also taken place during the Summer holidays (July-August) at my local library which has allowed me to access academic resources to further my understanding of the topic.

The deadline I have set for finishing my essay also allows me enough time to review it and edit anything that perhaps does not make sense or does not follow the overall argument. This plan also allows me to research the best way in which my essay should be written, such as the style of referencing and bibliographies which will be important when

Don't

Stick to your question – if it isn't what you are reading about – change your question but chart the question changes (and why) in your log.

Research diary

Keep an organized file of what you read and make notes – there are plenty of ways to do this. A way that worked for me was simply to buy a hardback A4 lined exercise book and write in it every time I was reading something. The title should be what you would use for your bibliography (i.e. Author, title etc.) and you should record any interesting quotes and ideas as you are reading. At the end of reading think about the author and what he is trying to say – put follow up points, your own interpretation and points to check up on, maybe even find out about the author – check for

credibility . Possibly also write about new concepts that you've come across. The diary records your thoughts as you are reading.

Good example – I've enjoyed Tom Holland's history books;

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Persian-Fire-First-Empire-Battle/dp/0349117179>¹

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Rubicon-Triumph-Tragedy-Roman-Republic/dp/034911563X/ref=pd_lpo_sbs_14_t_0?encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=WZKW9298COYXHHVKY7SD²

They are easy to read and although non-fiction, he does write a slightly fictionalized account. So I picked up his most recent book;

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Shadow-Sword-Battle-Global-Ancient/dp/0349122350/ref=pd_lpo_sbs_14_t_1?encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=4FZ5NZN0MK9215SHHGYG

And I'll be honest it intrigued me. There are sections in it which depict the pagan nature of the Kaaba and he also talks about the lack of reference to Mecca in early Islamic texts, no references to Muhammed in the early Caliphate and shows how Mosques didn't originally point to Mecca. He also writes about the Caliph Uthman essentially destroying all other forms of the Koran to put forward one singular text (to avoid splitting the religion) – so essentially a highly political dimension to Islam. So, before I start spouting off about the illegitimacy of Islam (because that's what the book seems to suggest), I used the internet to see what others have said;

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/may/04/in-shadow-of-sword-tom-holland>³

<https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/culture/2012/04/shadow-sword-tom-holland-review>⁴

<https://muslims4uk.com/2012/10/07/book-review-tom-hollands-in-the-shadow-of-the-sword/>⁵

But Holland does respond;

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/may/07/tom-holland-responds-glen-bowersock>⁶

In short, I'm not certain that Holland's book is trustworthy. I'm no expert on the field. I do know that I'd have to be very careful about using Holland's material. I might look at the other works that are mentioned i.e. Patricia Crone's works or looking at the Sanaa' palimpsest that seems to be talked about. Anyway – you can see the above is research, and if it's all in one place it's much easier to refer to.

You can photocopy pages of a research diary alongside a log book and you will get super credit for it (surprisingly few EPQ students do this so it will stand out). This is also a good place to show

¹ Accessed 21/06/18

² Accessed 21/06/18

³ Accessed 21/06/18

⁴ Accessed 21/06/18

⁵ Accessed 21/06/18

⁶ Accessed 21/06/18 (Before you start thinking that I've just looked all this up in one day – I've been reading these texts during 2017/18 simply for learning and have read them over the past year – I've simply checked to see that the articles are still there today – this problem is due to not making a research journal!)

evaluation of sources – if you answer/think about the question of motive in your diary you also get major credit. **All academic sources are biased**, all academic sources have been funded by some institution or other and all academic sources have a purpose. **Sitting on the fence is bias, as is supporting the status quo, as is being an anarchist.** Don't take academic sources at face value.

Real example – from a presentation transcript – the student here takes Bede at face value;

What did you make of Bede as a reliable historian? “He was a first hand witness and he was writing for scholars who would help spread Christianity. Bede wants us to adopt Oswald’s view which is for a Celtic Christianity. He is instrumental to our understanding. He helps people move away from Pagan beliefs.”

But Bede could be (probably was) inventing his material for his own ends;

“The traditional version comes from the Venerable Bede, the eighth-century monk whose “Church History of the English People” tells of the invasion of the island by Germanic tribes (the Angles, Saxons and Jutes), who displaced the people they found there and set the foundations of English language and culture. “But what if there never was an invasion?” Pye asks. He is looking at archaeological evidence that shows a much more gradual takeover, involving centuries of peaceable trade and commingling. Bede’s compact and serviceable creation myth obscures a history in which those tribes, along with others in present-day Scandinavia, Belgium and the Netherlands, pushed European civilization onward, inventing or reinventing concepts, coining new terms and new ways of seeing.”⁷

Do not;

“Did you find bias in your sources? “The authors I used were to be respected and trusted and unlikely to be biased” (Referring to only consulting American sources during the cold war in an essay on Communist Russia)

Do;

“The British Empire acted as an agency for imposing free markets, the rule of law, investor protection and relatively incorrupt government on roughly a quarter of the world. The empire also did a good deal to encourage those things in countries which were outside its formal imperial domain but under its economic influence through the “imperialism of free trade.” Prima facie, therefore, there seems a plausible case that the empire enhanced global welfare—in other words, was a Good Thing.” (Niall Ferguson, 2003)⁸

After reading Ferguson’s work I was wary that his opinions on Colonialism were extreme and so I decided to look at some criticisms. I found that Ferguson largely ignores blemishes like ‘genocide’ to paint an ideological defence of colonialism. That Ferguson could only be accepted as a serious scholar could only be accepted in a society which has benefitted hugely from colonialism...

⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/books/review/the-edge-of-the-world-by-michael-pye.html> accessed 25/6/2019

⁸ *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power*, by Niall Ferguson (Basic Books, 2003)

*"In short, Britain traded and exploited slaves, practiced systematic racial discrimination, brutally repressed all opposition to its rule and was "positively culpable" in the famine deaths of tens of millions of people. But it did all these awful things to spread "free trade" and "Western norms," so on balance it was a "Good Thing." It could just as easily be turned around: Free trade and Western norms were imposed and enforced by means of famine, repression, racism and slavery."*⁹

Hidden Bonus;

Also, you will find reading that you do useful for any degree (imagine – you get to university and the lecturer demands you read on the topic you've studied for EPQ – bonus free time – you've already done it!)

Use of the university library and the internet

Document what happens in your log book – show how you chose and found the sources you use. You don't need to write about all of them. It is likely that you will need to use this facility. If you have problems with finding something, ask at the desk.

Always record the date you accessed something on the internet.

Citations

You must cite sources in your work – if you do you get credit, if you don't it is plagiarism. Don't just copy chunks from texts – you are going to get more credit for looking at the context of writing, examining bias.

When choosing a citation style have a look here;

<http://libguides.gwu.edu/styleguide>

This might help you decide – how did I find this site? I googled "what citation style to use". If in doubt cite the work in a bibliography. No-one is expecting independent thought in an EPQ. What is being looked for is that you have engaged with the research material and tried to put some sort of framework around it (i.e. appropriate questions).

Another good place is to use Microsoft Word – references menu above – insert citation – it even asks you what source style you want to use.

Final thoughts

You have spring/summer to get reading and thinking. You have a supervisor allocated in September (up till then it is me – so please email). Supervisors are strictly told not to get in touch with their students. You must make regular arrangements to see them (at least every 2-3 weeks is advisable) – email them when you know who they are (you'll find out in September) – meet them, tell them about your project. Frequency and what you talk about is up to you, not the supervisor. This is your project. Do not come to me in February and say that you haven't had enough support – you have plenty, but it is up to you to access it.

Remember a key part of this is communication – this is your responsibility.

⁹ <http://www.isreview.org/issues/32/ferguson.shtml> accessed 11/07/17