

Information for higher education

# Extended project

*Challenging level 3 students*

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Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority

# Information for higher education

**The extended project is a new qualification which requires students to produce a single piece of work of their own choosing, showing evidence of planning, preparation, research and autonomous working. It will be offered from September 2008. The aim of the project is to strengthen programmes of study for 16- to 19-year-olds while testing a wide range of skills.**

The extended project will be available as a stand-alone qualification. It is a compulsory part of the Diploma programme but can also be taken as an optional part of an A level study programme, and so will provide a link between A levels and Advanced Diplomas.

An extended project is equivalent in size to half an A level and equivalent in standard to a full A level. Most awarding bodies will make their first awards in summer 2009 but some may make their first awards in winter 2008/09. It will be up to individual centres to decide whether to offer it to their students. However, the government is currently considering whether to introduce an entitlement to the extended project in the future.

This leaflet explains the main features of the extended project and gives guidance to higher education on the impact that this qualification will have on students taking it.

## **What does an extended project involve?**

The extended project will require students to:

- devise, design and plan the project
- research, critically select, organise and use information
- select and use a range of resources
- analyse data, apply findings and demonstrate understanding of any links, connections and complexities of the topic
- select and use a range of skills to carry out the project and achieve planned outcomes

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Examples of possible outcomes for the extended project are:

- a design
- a report with findings from an investigation or study
- a dissertation presenting an argument
- an artefact
- a performance.

## Benefits for students

The extended project offers opportunities for students to:

- make a significant contribution to the choice and design of an extended piece of work
- develop and apply decision-making and problem-solving skills, initiative and enterprise
- extend their planning, research, critical thinking, analytical, synthesis, evaluation and presentation skills
- use their learning experiences to support their personal aspirations for higher education and/or career development.

The extended project will help students to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding that they will need when tackling similar projects in the future.

- evaluate all aspects of the project, including outcomes in relation to stated objectives and their own learning and performance
- select and use a range of communication skills and media to present project outcomes and conclusions.

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The project will attract UCAS points equivalent to half an A level. Students might use the project at interview stage for higher education and/or in their personal statement on their UCAS form. The project will develop important independent learning and study skills that will improve the chances of success when progressing to higher education or employment.

### **Extended project and A levels**

A level students may add the extended project to their study programme. Students will be able to carry out a project on a topic of their own choosing, which may or may not be linked to their A level subjects.

Although it is optional for A level students, higher education

institutions may wish to encourage potential applicants to take the extended project since it will develop research and independent learning skills. They may also wish to support students in carrying out their project by, for example, making resources available to them.

### Extended project and Advanced Diplomas

The extended project is a compulsory constituent part of the Advanced Diploma. Advanced Diploma students' project topics must be relevant to principal learning in either or both of the following ways:

- the project topic complements and develops the themes and topics for learners' principal learning set out in the relevant line of learning criteria
- the project supports learner progression.

### Extended project timings

There is flexibility as to when students take the extended project. For example, it may be positioned:

- as a culminating activity at the end of a course
- in the middle of a study programme for a one-year course
- towards the end of the first year of a two-year programme
- running over the end of the first year and the start of the second year of a two-year programme, encouraging learners to continue work during the summer break
- linked to timetabled sessions, and other learning activities, throughout a programme.

However, it may be advisable for students to complete the project in their second year, since they are more likely to achieve good results at this stage in the course due to their increased maturity and more highly developed skills. It will also be helpful for them to aim to complete the project away from submission dates/examinations for other assessments. This will allow them to include information about the project in their UCAS application, as well as avoiding conflicting pressures.

## Teaching and assessment

Teachers will:

- deliver the taught element, including the teaching of research skills and advising on project management
- support students in scoping the project to ensure that they meet the assessment criteria
- monitor student progress to ensure that they remain on target to complete the project by the deadline
- mark the project.

The following aspects will be assessed:

- designing and planning the project
- selecting, organising and using a range of resources
- analysing data, applying findings and demonstrating understanding of any links, connections and complexities of the topic
- selecting and using a range of skills to take decisions critically and to achieve planned outcomes
- evaluating all aspects of the project
- using a range of communication skills and media to present the outcomes of the project.

Students will need to provide appropriate evidence that they have met the criteria for these aspects of the project. Some of this will be written evidence.

The extended project will be marked by teachers. By monitoring students throughout the process and questioning them on their presentation of outcomes, assessors will be able to authenticate the project as the work of the student. Schools and colleges will have internal standardisation processes in place to ensure consistency of marking within the centre. The project will also be externally moderated by the awarding bodies, who will check a sample of marked projects in each centre to confirm that the marking is accurate and consistent across all schools and colleges.

### Grading

The extended project is graded, like A levels and Advanced Diplomas, from A\* to E, where A\* is the highest. Achievement that is insufficient to lead to the award of a certificate is reported as unclassified (or U).

### Ensuring quality

Protocols will be established for the provision of advice, guidance, interim reviews and redrafting opportunities. Centres will use the Joint Council for Qualifications document *Instructions for completing coursework/ portfolios* (JCQ 2008) as a guide. Awarding bodies will provide training sessions for teachers to ensure that they have the appropriate skills and are aware of requirements.

If you would like to know more about the extended project, please visit the QCA website at [www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk). QCA has produced the following guidance documents on the extended project:

### **For managers in schools and colleges**

*Guidance on managing project delivery (QCA/08/3670)*

### **For teachers**

*Guidance on delivering the extended project (QCA/08/3673)*

All the above documents are also available in a pack: *Guidance on the foundation, higher and extended projects (QCA/08/3669)*.

You could also visit the websites of the awarding bodies offering the extended project to obtain information on their specifications.

From September 2008 these are:

AQA [www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk)  
Edexcel [www.edexcel.org.uk](http://www.edexcel.org.uk)  
EDI [www.ediplc.com](http://www.ediplc.com)  
OCR [www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk)

From September 2009 these will also include:

VTCT [www.vtct.org.uk](http://www.vtct.org.uk)  
WJEC [www.wjec.co.uk](http://www.wjec.co.uk)

You may find the JCQ website helpful: [www.jcq.org.uk](http://www.jcq.org.uk).

A QCA leaflet on changes to A levels (QCA/08/3738) is also available.



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