



DOWNSIDE SCHOOL

*EPQs – the stepping stone to independent learning
at a top university*

Recently, some of our motivated Lower Sixth Formers completed and presented their Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). And some of the titles chosen were quite arresting!

Motivated pupils can complete an EPQ in their Lower Sixth year to show prospective universities how well they work independently and to boost their UCAS points.

An EPQ is an independent learning project undertaken by pupils, the aim of which is to develop in pupils the skills required to study at university. All Downside pupils have the opportunity to produce an EPQ. They choose their own topic in which they are interested, research the subject and then produce a dissertation of 5,000-8,000 words. This must be fully referenced, with critical analysis and a bibliography. They receive some light guidance in lessons and have the support of a tutor but, to develop independent skills, pupils mainly work on their own. Once their research is complete, they present their findings for ten minutes and are then questioned in detail.

Downside pupils worked on a great variety of projects and produced an exceptionally high quality standard of work. This year topics areas included terrorism and human rights, music after the October revolution, music in film, responses to the financial crash, the land supply in Hong Kong, music and brain development, in-vitro genetic engineering, OCD, Margaret of Anjou, reincarnation, substance abuse and the goddess Atargatis.

The projects are completed in the Lower Sixth to develop useful skills and so that the qualification, which is well regarded by Russell Group universities, can form part of a UCAS application. Indeed, the EPQ is equivalent to an AS level worth up to 28 UCAS points, so by undertaking an EPQ, pupils show that they are strongly committed to working hard to gain their university places.

All EPQs are moderated by the exam board. The national average of EPQs awarded an A* grade is 17.7%. Last year the moderator thought that the research done by Downside pupils was outstanding and they all achieved 100% A* grades.