

An exemplar piece of work by KH (Cohort 2019 2020)

Summary and reflection

To be completed by the candidate

This page records your summary, reflection and evaluation when you have completed your project product and given your presentation.

Some questions you may wish to answer in this section include, what have I learned from completing this project? What new knowledge or expertise have I enjoyed or found valuable? What are the strengths and weaknesses of my project (including planning and organisation)? What skills have I improved? What changes would I make if I undertook such work again? What advice would I give to others undertaking such a project?

I have gained a much deeper understanding of French culture from my EPQ which was a key objective. This has come from the articles I have read about this specific topic which have also touched on other broader issues I wasn't expecting, like secularism. I hadn't made the links between my studies of French heritage, youth culture in Paris and issues like the Burqa Ban. Having attended several University Open Days I have realised how valuable this will be in my studies in the future and is actually something I would be able to explore in even more depth. I also attended a sample lecture about the portrayal of French-Algerian women in the 1990's and could immediately make links with my EPQ which has given me great confidence going forward.

I think my EPQ was a really engaging subject and one which was relevant to young women like me. It was a very contemporary topic, frequently in the news, and lots of people were interested in it. This was reflected in the brilliant responses I got to my questionnaire. I haven't come across many studies that have looked at the views of young people and how the culture has affected their view of the Burqa Ban, so although limited, my EPQ is a contribution. Overall, I feel proud of the amount of work I have been able to carry out on my own to complete my EPQ and an important strength is the confidence it has given me in my abilities across a wide range of skills.

I have found the planning part of the process the most challenging and looking back I think this is where I could have been more organised and on top of things. This has created time pressure during Year 13 when I didn't need it! I also wish I had kept up-to-date with Project Q more frequently as this would have helped. Initially I just wanted to get on with the research part of the project and this distracted me from the planning. If I was doing the process again, I would set more specific deadlines to complete certain parts of the process. I also found it difficult to know how long tasks would take - often they took much longer than I thought - and this really affected my progress. Transcribing the interviews and writing the essay took me much longer than I thought.

With relation to a timeline, I did start with an initial idea of where I wanted to be at certain stages in the process. This was always subject to change and I was unable to stick to the timeline due to my survey results taking longer than I had planned for which pushed back when I could actually start writing the essay. I chose not to update the timeline while I was working as I found it easier to reflect on where I was and adjust when I would do things due to the constraints of being away on weekends or having to prioritise other work. This has been very manageable as I had meetings with my supervisor to make sure I was on track and I simply work better this way - I am adaptable and feel that I was able to set myself deadlines in terms of when I wanted to have tasks completed by - for example, writing the essay over the Christmas break. I wanted to get on and write the essay instead of trying to formulate a time-plan for how I was going to carry this out. While this approach was successful in my EPQ, in the future I will need to be much more vigilant with my time and plan better if I am tackling several pieces of research. I feel I would be capable of doing this as the EPQ has given me the skills I need to plan for how I will carry tasks out and when.

I realised quite early on that I didn't have many research skills and that this was something I needed to work on. The EPQ has really helped me develop these skills and I spent a lot of time thinking and learning about questionnaires and survey questions. This wasn't something I had

planned to develop, but I really enjoyed this part of the process and I think these skills will be really useful at University. I was directly challenged about one of my questions by a fellow student and this new understanding helped me to feel confident about what I was asking about in a culturally sensitive area.

I found some of the issues raised in research articles quite challenging and complex, which required me to do more background reading, for example the association with terrorism and different customs within Islam regarding the Burqa. This helped me to have a better overview of all the factors that contributed to the Burqa Ban and evaluate those which were most important and those which were not. It also enabled me to select the most relevant and important sources to use in my essay.

The EPQ has helped me develop a wide-range of communication skills, both written and verbal - in English and in French! I felt my nerves got the better of me in my final presentation and I would have appreciated the opportunity to practice in front of an audience beforehand - perhaps to other EPQ students. This would give us all the chance to modify our presentations and act on feedback. Carrying out the face-to-face interviews in France this summer was challenging but really improved my French. Looking back, I am really proud that I was able to communicate with my French colleagues about such a controversial topic in a second language. I really enjoyed this and it helped me get to know them and understand French culture much better.

In my presentation I was asked what my favourite part of doing the EPQ was and I answered that the most validating moment was when one of my French colleagues mentioned Jules Ferry when I was interviewing him. Suddenly, I realised that what I had been reading about was real - someone who grew up within France's secular school system connected Jules Ferry to the Burqa Ban which I had found in my research.

My EPQ has been extensive and there are many areas which I could have explored further given the time & resources. These may be suitable for me to develop in Higher Education or for others to consider for their EPQ. One area would be to look at the increase in Islamophobia as a result of the Burqa Ban, another would be the process and politics of legislating a Burqa Ban either as it happened in France or another country like the UK.