Perspectives on Science - Extended Project Qualification

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Fact File
• First year Extended Project Qualification Course (Edexcel)
• Equivalent in size, status and UCAS points to half an A level
• Assessed via a 6000 word report and accompanying presentation
• Part of the QMC programme for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary science students
• Input from both the Science & Philosophy departments

Course Summary
An Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is an independent project of your choice, about a subject or topic you are interested in, providing you with a unique opportunity to explore something that you’re passionate about. The Perspectives on Science EPQ explores the history, philosophy and ethics of science, and looks critically at the nature of science and its contribution to current world views. Taking this course will develop your research, thinking and presentation skills in the exploration of fundamental questions such as the origins of the universe or the beginning and ending of life. The course includes mentoring from both Science and Philosophy specialists, and will be accompanied by specialist talks and personal statement preparation from our dedicated Medicine & Veterinary Science programme.

Specific entry requirements
The EPQ is available to students who are likely to achieve seven or more GCSEs at grade 6 or above, including English and Maths. For the Perspectives on Science course we also ask that students have grade 6 or higher at GCSE in Double or Triple Science.

Progression skills and opportunities
The emphasis throughout is on the development of skills, rather than the learning of factual content. As the skills required are quite complex and sophisticated (and novel for students at this stage in education), they are explicitly taught in PoS rather than their development being left to chance. An EPQ is worth half a full A Level, with up to 28 UCAS points for an A*, and could be part of a university offer. More importantly, if interviewed by one of the most selective universities, you will have the advantage of being ‘an expert’ in your project area, and be able to talk about it with confidence.
Perspectives on Science has been designed specifically to be beneficial for those students applying for competitive science courses at university, such as Medicine or Veterinary Science. Universities such as Oxford, Cambridge and the medical schools will look for evidence that applicants can think, read, argue and discuss with confidence: this EPQ is a way of proving this to admissions tutors.

How is the course assessed?
Perspectives on Science is a highly unusual qualification in that assessment is entirely by an individual research project in which you develop and demonstrate skills of research, analysis and argument. You will write a 6000-word report of your project and make a ten-minute oral presentation to your peers and a teacher-assessor.

- 6,000 word research essay = 80%
- 10 minute presentation about your research = 20%

What topics will I be studying?
In the first term you will learn about some of the ethical and philosophical questions which relate to scientific and medical issues. You will also be shown how to research these ideas for yourself using a range of sources. The whole of the second term will be given over to researching and writing a 6,000 word essay in which you look at one of these issues in great detail. Previous topics have included: stem cell research, time travel, the existence of a creator of God, abortion legislation and animal rights. However, there are few constraints on project topics other than that they must be rooted in a science ‘story’.

Will I need any specialist materials or equipment?
You will need a number of skills booklets but everything you require will be provided. Your teacher will recommend other books for study that are relevant to your chosen project but it is up to you whether you buy these or access them in the College Library.