

## My FPQ journey, Year 8 student

I decided to do an FPQ project as my friend, in year 8 at the time, had done one the previous year, and had spoken highly of the experience. I was also interested in acquiring a qualification that would help my university application in a few years' time. I was excited to get started and began to think of ideas to base my project around. My teachers had told me that it was important to choose a topic that I would be interested in researching in greater depth, and to avoid any subjects I wasn't truly keen about. It was a very good opportunity to study an out-of-curriculum topic, and so I chose to base my project around something the school wouldn't necessarily teach. I explored the effects and benefits of social media and the internet. Originally, the title was *How has social media and the internet affected young people since its creation?*, although later I changed 'young people' to 'the X & Y generations' to allow for more focus. I chose to do my project on social media because, although not an avid user of it myself, I am still intrigued by some of the mental health issues it can give rise to.

There were many enjoyable aspects to this project: researching in greater depth topics I may never have thought about exploring before, attending weekly meetings when project-doers could discuss each other's work and ask any questions we had. My favourite part of the FPQ project was the opportunity to present my findings in the form of a presentation in front of an audience at presentation evening. This was not only a chance to show off my hard work and efforts but also to enhance my public speaking skills/confidence to speak in front of an audience. I was very nervous before my speech but as soon as I opened my mouth, I lost my prior nerves and just enjoyed the experience!

Each project requires a supervisor, a teacher (of your choice) to help and guide you through the journey – although the hard work is down to you! Your supervisor does not need to be someone specifically educated in the field you are basing your project in, unless you are making a tangible artefact (then it would be better to ask a teacher from the art/technology department). I asked Ms. Kincaid if she would be willing to help me and she was so helpful in guiding me through my project. I went to her with any questions I had regarding my topic, and she never failed to put me on the right path. I'm extremely grateful for all of the time she gave up to help me improve my project, and it's down to her that I was fully confident that my work was to the best standard it could be.

During the project, I learnt a variety of skills that I can now apply to my schoolwork and any future projects. These skills include time management, broadening my vocabulary, public speaking, Harvard referencing and so many more. I believe that doing a project has made me generally more inquisitive about things than beforehand, and I now ask more in-depth questions. It's a great opportunity to enrich your philosophical mindset and to not limit your research to a single aspect of your topic.

I am currently working on the HPQ and am exploring how Walt Disney has portrayed his female characters in his movies. I am hoping that with all the knowledge my FPQ has supplied me with, I'm able to go above and beyond anything I've ever done before. If I were to give any advice to students contemplating whether to take an FPQ project, I would strongly recommend it! Not only does it deepen your understanding of the specific topic you may choose to study, but it deepens your knowledge of many other related topics as well. It will also give you lifelong skills that can be used in the workplace when you leave school, and the qualification looks great on your university application. It may seem like hard work, however all the effort put in pays off in the end!

"As knowledge increases, wonder deepens"- Charles Morgan.

