

Original Research

Evaluation
summary

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

About the project

Original research empowers students to become confident, independent thinkers. By engaging in their own research, students develop confidence and independence, learning to investigate their ideas practically. This process also encourages curiosity and builds advanced thinking skills like creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and evaluation.

Students interested in starting their own research projects receive feedback on their ideas and signposting to helpful resources. They can also make use of our Original Research Guide. Many students who complete Original Research do so as part of working towards project-based qualifications such as the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), BTEC and the CREST Awards.

IRIS's extensive network often enables us to request expert input on projects and sometimes additional practical help.

Students gather and process data to answer a STEM question.

- in a different area/to a different level than the curriculum content
- work must go beyond a literature review and summarising others' findings
- can be experimental or use open source/secondary data

Student registrations

Original Research is a popular project and consistently attracts a large number of students.

	22-23	23-24	24-25
Number	288	444	237
Post-16	50%	51%	75%
Female	55%	59%	60%

Methodology

Data on the running and impact of the project has been gathered from the pre and post IRIS evaluation survey data since the inception of the project; with the following showing the most recent data.

Item	24-25
IRIS pre-participation survey	45 students
IRIS post-participation survey	152 students 53 teachers

Impact on students

Students overwhelmingly describe Original Research as rewarding, enjoyable, and inspiring and as a unique opportunity to engage in real research beyond the school curriculum.

Students value having the freedom to choose topics and explore areas of personal interest while using advanced techniques and doing “real science” is highly motivating.

“Really interesting and it's cool to do cutting edge research.”

Year 12, male student

“Very enjoyable and allowed us to feel like we were making a difference.”

Year 12, female student

“It was lots of fun and we gained lots of skills and were able to research topics we were interested in.”

Year 12, female student

“I got to learn new things and use research methods that I hadn't used before. I also got to design all the research myself which was ace.”

Year 12, female student

95% of students rated their experience as good or very good

Original Research

“Allowing students to follow their own research projects has allowed them to explore subjects in depth.”

Teacher

“A great way to work beyond curriculum and with students who aren't studying my A-level subject.”

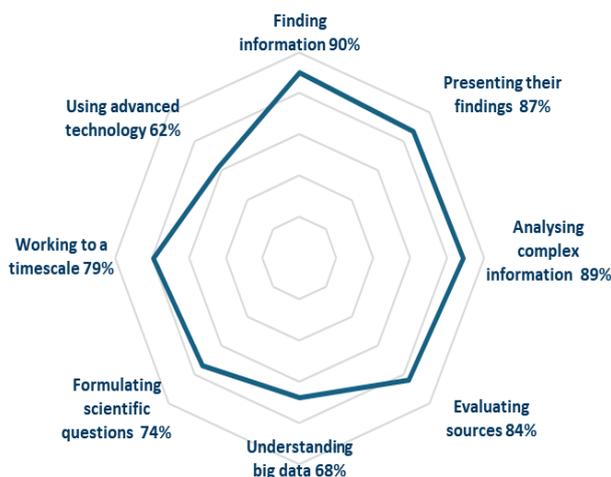
Teacher

Impact on students' skills development

Undertaking an Original Research project enabled students to develop a wide range of skills, equipping them with valuable abilities for future academic and personal success.

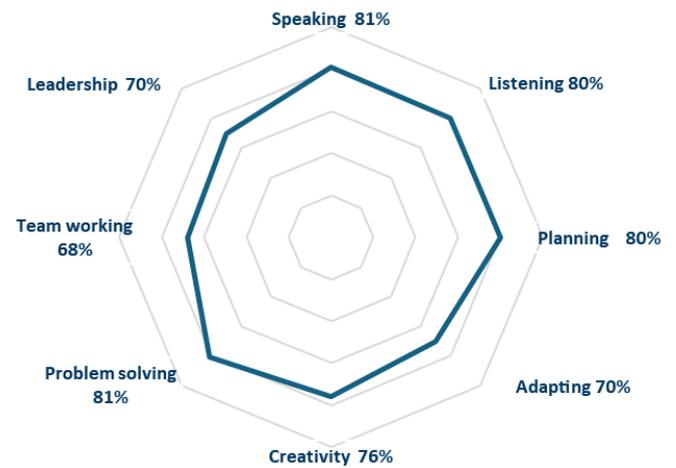
87% of students agreed that they developed important skills that will help them in the future.

Through the project, students agreed that they had improved their research skills...



Evaluation Summary

...and their transferable skills



“I learnt about valuable life skills like time management, selective data manipulation, reading and understanding complex articles and research.”

Year 10, female student

“It was hard work but taught us key skills like teamwork and time management.”

Year 9, female student

“I feel like I have developed many skills which I can use in the future, as well as teaching me a lot about teamwork.”

Year 10, female student

“It was really insightful, it didn't just teach me about science, it also taught me about teamwork and how to pose and create my own research questions.”

Year 12, female student

Original Research

Understanding of STEM and research

The project helps students to feel more positive about research and STEM. Students...

86% ...can make a valuable contribution to research

87% ...understand research can be hard work but is rewarding

“I gained insights on fields that I had never expected to explore. It was a great opportunity to develop my interest in physics further.”

Year 12, female student

“Research is unlike school practicals, there are continuous fails. You have to learn from the mistakes and move on.”

Year 12, male student

The project helped students to explore areas of STEM beyond the classroom. Students...

87% ...know how STEM can make a difference in the real world

92% ...know about STEM beyond the school curriculum

“Good fun. Feels like I'm contributing to the world. Discovering something is an amazing feeling.”

Year 12, female student

“It has been a very rewarding experience that has taught me a lot about the importance of STEM subjects in every area of life.”

Year 12, female student

Evaluation Summary

Future career impact

Students reflect that the experience helped them to discover new interests and broaden understanding of STEM and other fields. The experience is viewed as beneficial for university and job applications and career preparation.

After taking part in an Original Research project, students...

86% ...have a better understanding what it might be like to study STEM at a higher level

78% ...agree that being a researcher would be an interesting career

72% ...know about a range of different STEM careers

“Even if what you research is not related to what you want to do/study in the future, it is still a valuable experience that is 100% worth taking part in.”

Year 12, female student

“It is extremely rewarding. It gives you valuable skills in research and presenting that can definitely be used in the future. You get involved with other students and learn new things.”

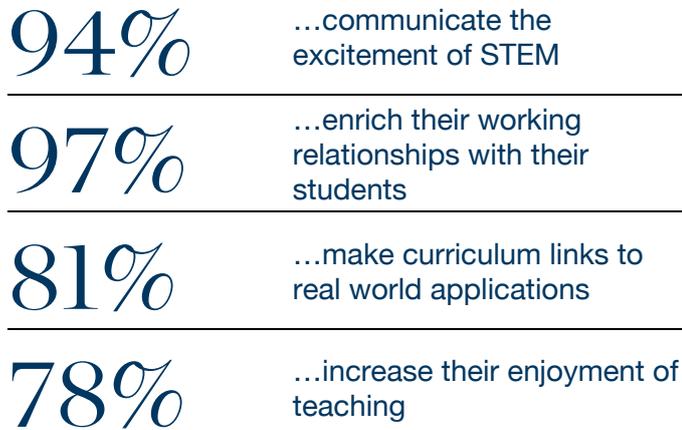
Year 12, female student

“You can learn many transferable skills and doing a project on a topic you find interesting can give you new perspectives and may help you find what you want to do.”

Year 12, female student

Impact on teachers

Teachers found that running the project helped them to...



“Presenting their work really crystalises students thinking by acting as a focal point to summarise their findings.”

Teacher

“It really enriches the experience of the students & myself as a teacher. It affirms what I do for the students involved in their research projects.”

Teacher