

EE – FIRST REFLECTION

Preparation for the first reflection session

As preparation for their first reflection session, students should do the following.

1. Think about subjects and areas of particular personal interest and do some initial background reading into a subject and topic of their choice.
2. Using this as a starting point, explore a variety of possible research topics.
3. Read the subject-specific section of the Extended essay guide for the subject they are interested in, paying particular attention to the nature of the subject and the treatment of the topic.
4. Undertake further background reading and begin to gather information around their area of interest. This exploration should give rise to a variety of topics and questions that students can consider for further research. At this stage it is important that students consider the availability of reliable and valid sources for the topic under consideration. All of this should be recorded in their Researcher's reflection space.
5. Begin developing a research proposal which might include a Mind Map of ideas, an annotated article or preliminary bibliography. Additionally, students must already be thinking in terms of the following questions.
 - Is my topic appropriate for the subject I am considering?
 - Why am I interested in this area and why is it important?
 - What possible questions have emerged from my initial reading?
 - Are there any ethical issues that I need to consider?
 - What possible methods or approaches might be used for research in this area and why?

It is recommended at this point that the student-supervisor relationship is formalized, and the student can consider himself or herself prepared for the first formal reflection session.

First formal reflection session

This initial reflection session should be a dialogue between the student and the supervisor based on the student's initial explorations. It is recommended that the student sends their supervisor an outline of their research proposal ahead of the meeting in order to give the supervisor the opportunity to review their work. This will ensure that the reflection session is focused and productive.

Topics of discussion that should arise during this session include:

- a review of the requirements and assessment criteria for the subject
- a review of ethical and legal implications, if applicable
- a dialogue about possible approaches and any potential problems that might arise
- a discussion of strategies for developing the student's ideas for the essay and expanding the research so that the essay starts to take form
- probing and challenging questions that will help the student focus their thinking; this should lead to the development of the student's working research question
- an outline of the next steps that the student should undertake in order to refine their question; this should take the form of a research and writing timeline.

Initial: Planning stage

- What am I interested in researching and why?
- What are my motivations for undertaking research in this area?
- How will I begin the research process?
- Is my chosen topic appropriate for the subject I have chosen to complete it in?
- Do I have sufficient knowledge of the subject area to fulfill the criteria of an EE?
- What possible question(s) might I research?
- How might I go about undertaking this research?
- Do I have access to appropriate sources?

- Are my chosen research methods appropriate for the subject I have chosen to complete it in?
- Are there any ethical issues I need to consider before pursuing this area of research?
- Is there sufficient focus to my research area?

Background reading stage

- What have I learned about my subject area so far?
- What questions are emerging? Are these similar or different to my initial questions?
- Given the initial reading I have undertaken on the subject, is my research question appropriate for the subject I am submitting my EE in?
- Is my research question manageable within the word limit of the EE?
- Will my research question allow me to think critically about the topic I am researching? If it suggests a descriptive response, how might I need to change it to allow for more critical thinking?
- Are there any challenges that I need to overcome in order to achieve my desired outcomes?

FOUR SAMPLES OF THE FIRST REFLECTION

IB SAMPLE 1: I knew from the outset that I definitely wanted to research Lebanese history, because I am from Lebanon and I think having a personal connection is unique. In our first meeting I wanted to know how to approach the civil war - I asked my supervisor what aspects to focus on, and what the time frame should be (1975 - ?). We decided on discussing the causes of the war, because there is the most room for analysis here. Also, if only the causes are discussed, the essay does not need to go into an in-depth investigation of the actual war. The discussion gave me a better sense of direction for my research. *(113 words)*

IB SAMPLE 2: I find it very interesting to look into why wars and conflicts occur from a political point of view. I am not so interested in the detailed accounts of battles, but I really enjoy learning about the motivations of political actors in a war or a conflict. So I've decided that this would be an interesting topic for my extended essay. I've made a mind map about the topic and started filling it out based on results from my initial research. I find this a very useful strategy because it makes me more aware of the bigger picture, and it makes it easier to see and make connections between relevant ideas and concepts. I'm starting to get a little nervous about how I'm going to find the time to do all the research and write the essay, because my hobbies outside of school take a lot of time in the evenings. I discussed this with my supervisor who suggested that I make a timetable for myself and then follow it strictly. *(171 words)*

HVG SAMPLE 1: The nationalist mind of Japan in the early twentieth century leading up to WW2 is of great interest to me, which immediately got narrowed my scope down to Pearl Harbor, or rather why it happened. I, however, knew that I needed to form a narrow and specific research question and chose to do so whilst focusing on the advanced knowledge theory associated with the attack on Pearl Harbor. I initially caught an eye for this specific area of research when I heard a rumor that the absence of US carriers during the attack was intentional. I have constructed a table that shows what days to spend working doing research over the summer as well as started to find interesting sources crucial to my research, both online and in the form of hard copies. I chose to do a Gantt chart as I will be rather busy in the summer. This will make sure that I get work done when needed. *(160 words)*

HVG SAMPLE 2: The killing of the Romanov was the first historical subject to catch my eyes as a child and the tumultuous period which followed inevitably became a part of it. Therefore, when I felt that couldn't explore the assassination of Kirov thoroughly enough in my mock IA, it was obvious for me to choose this subject for my EE. For meeting, I wanted to confirm that the question would be appropriate and discuss the focus of it, since I was not sure whether I should focus on Stalin or the aftermath of the assassination. I was able to do that and additionally pinpoint certain resources I could use for my research. In writing this EE, I will use my mock IA on the topic as a framework then deepen each argument in order to place more focus on the Great Purges which will be the main argument for Stalin's guilt. *(149 words)*