



**History In-Service Team,
Supporting Leaving Certificate History.**
www.hist.ie

A Student Guide to the Research Study

This guide is intended to assist you in the preparation and presentation of your research study report. It offers advice and guidance on various aspects of the research study and also consists of a number of worksheets that you can use to help you organise your research effectively. You may find it useful to make copies of some of these worksheets. It is also recommended that you keep any worksheets that you fill in, as well as other notes and rough drafts, as evidence that you completed the research presented in your final report.

Contents

Leaving Certificate History:	
A student guide to developing research skills	pages 2, 3
Hints on planning your research study, finding and recording information.	
Choosing a subject for the research study	page 4
Advice on how to choose an appropriate subject.	
The Outline Plan	page 5
Guide to completing the Outline Plan.	
Finding resources for the research study subject in the local library	page 6
Overview of how to access your local library resources.	
Student worksheet for searching library catalogue	page 7
Guide to recording information from your library catalogue search.	
Evaluating sources for the research study	pages 8, 9
Guide to citing and evaluating a source. Use a separate copy for each source.	
Evaluating a website as a source for the research study	page 10
Guide to citing and evaluating a website source.	
The Extended Essay	page 11
Reminder of structure of Extended Essay and guidance on writing your review of the research process.	
Final checklist for the research study	page 12

Leaving Certificate History

A student guide to developing research skills

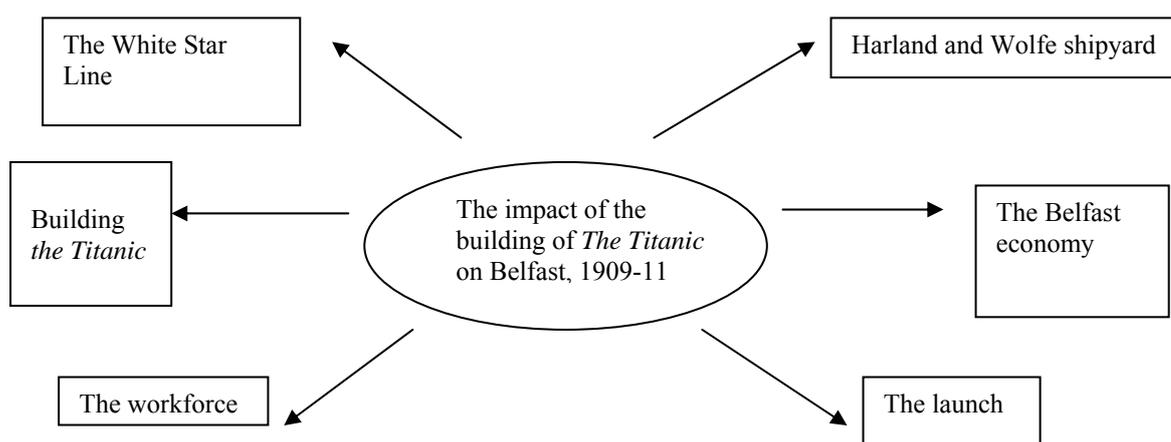
When undertaking your research study you will be expected to show that you have the ability to locate data from a number of sources, to evaluate the data, to collate relevant data and to present findings in a well-structured format.

Here are some hints that may help you along the way:



Step 1 - Planning

Your teacher will discuss with you the importance of choosing a title carefully. It should be narrowly defined and you should ensure that there are sources available. After you have chosen a title for your research study it is a good idea to brainstorm the likely headings you will use. This will help you when you are filling out your aims in your Outline Plan and will help you organise your Extended Essay under different paragraphs. When you find information in your sources you may find it useful to collate that information or data under those headings, e.g.,



Step 2 – Finding your information

A. Your first step should be your local or school library. You can check the public library catalogue beforehand on the Internet at www.library.ie/public/ and do a keyword search on your title to find if the library has any relevant sources. The books in your library are organised according to the Dewey decimal system. The history books are filed under the numbers 910 - 999. European history books can be found under the numbers 940 - 949. For example, the history of Ireland can be found at 941.5. Biographies are at number 921. The numbers are on the spines of the books. Your library may also have a number of very useful magazines and periodicals including local history periodicals.



B. You may wish to conduct Internet searches on the subject of your research study. Do not forget that your research findings are only as good as the websites you got your data from. Your teacher may give you guidance on the reliability of historical sites.

Searching the Internet for information can be frustrating because searches can often bring up thousands, sometimes millions of sites. It is worth learning how to do an advanced search to screen out many of these sites.

- Putting phrases in inverted commas, e.g., “Killing Home Rule with kindness”, will screen out many unwanted sites.
- By putting the plus symbol + [or the word AND] between two terms, you are telling the database, ‘I want to find pages that have both these terms’, e.g., “Killing Home Rule with kindness” + Balfour.



Step 3 –Recording your information

A. Note-making

A key part of your work in history is learning to identify the ‘significant detail’ and recording it in your own words. It is a fundamental part of the preparation for the research study, where you get the opportunity to show your competence as an independent learner. When you take notes you may find it useful to file them under the headings you used in your Outline Plan.

However, this skill does not start and end with the research study. It is useful from the beginning of your Leaving Certificate History course to learn how to draft notes that are relevant to issues raised. Try making notes in your own words: use a bullet point format; write down only the information you need; use a spider diagram to help organise your thoughts. This skill will also be very helpful when undertaking essays and other written assignments.

B. Using ICT

Many of you will use a computer to look up information, organise your information and write your drafts. Word processing can be very useful in essay preparation and writing. It can help you to organise your information around your different headings. Consider opening a Word file for each one of your headings that you identified in the planning stage. Take down short notes from your sources under these headings. The secret of taking good notes is to know in advance what you are looking for. Do not forget to take down the source details at the end of each page as you will need these when citing your sources in the Outline Plan.

You can then consult these Word files when drafting your Extended Essay under the different headings. This makes it easy to draft and re-draft work until you are totally satisfied with the outcome.

Step 4 - Presenting your information

When you have collected and organised all of your source material, it is time to start writing the first draft of your Extended Essay. You will be expected to have an introduction and conclusion, and in between a line of logical development. Try to organise your essay under the different headings you identified in the planning stages. You can then consult with your notes or Word files when drafting your Extended Essay. Make sure your information is accurate and relevant to the title. Strive for a fair and balanced treatment of issues; watch your spelling and layout.

As part of your Extended Essay you should review the research process you went through while undertaking the research study and indicate how useful the research process was in achieving the aims laid down in the Outline Plan. You will also be expected to evaluate your sources under a separate heading. Consult your teacher and the *Guidelines for Candidates* at the back of the research study report booklet for further advice.



Choosing a subject for the research study

1. Choose a subject from an area of history that you understand well. This will enable you to provide an historical context for your research study. This is particularly important at Higher level.
2. Choose a subject that interests you, so that you may enjoy the research.
3. Define your subject clearly and make sure that its focus is narrow to allow you to investigate the subject in depth.
4. Choose a subject that has historical significance. An end date up to and including 1993 applies in the case of Ireland, and 1992 for Europe and the wider world.
5. Choose a subject for which there are good sources of information. At least three sources of information are required for Higher level, and a minimum of two for Ordinary level. In selecting sources ensure that they are not standard school textbooks. Sources should be either primary or specialist secondary and, where available, at least one source should be by an historian.
6. Make sure that you can find these sources without too much difficulty. Access to good evidence is vital to the success of your work.
7. Choose a subject with a very clear title that includes a date or dates. Phrase your title carefully. Ensure that the title chosen will allow you to analyse evidence, debate viewpoints and issues and draw conclusions. In doing so you can use and display your level of historical skills.
8. It is very important to be clear about what exactly you are researching and writing. It will make the task of selecting and noting relevant information easier. You are less likely to waste time on irrelevant data if you have a clear question or a clear focus in mind. It is important to keep the precise subject of your research study in mind constantly so that you organise your Extended Essay in a sensible and structured order.
9. Be sure that the subject you choose to work on is a manageable one and that you have the practical resources necessary to achieve your aims.
10. Your teacher will advise whether your subject is suitable. Do not proceed until your teacher has approved your Outline Plan.
11. Remember that you will have to sign a declaration that this is your own work, and that it was completed under the supervision of your teacher.

The Outline Plan

The Outline Plan requires you to perform a number of specified tasks:

1. Define the proposed subject of study.
2. Justify the proposed subject of study.
3. Identify the aims of the study.
4. Identify the intended approach.
5. Identify the sources to be consulted.
6. In order to help you to complete the above tasks, a check-list of questions such as the following may be useful:
 - a. Is the subject I have chosen historically significant?
 - b. Is the focus of my proposed study a narrow one or is it too broad to allow in-depth investigation?
 - c. Is my proposed title clearly defined?
 - d. Are the aims that I have outlined sufficiently focused on the subject of my study?
 - e. Are my proposed sources primary or specialist secondary (i.e. not a standard school textbook)?
 - f. Have I explained clearly how I intend carrying out my research?
 - g. Have I given enough information to establish the authenticity of my sources and/or the evidence drawn from them?

NB: Your Outline Plan must be completed on one page of the research study report booklet

Finding resources for the research study subject in the local library

One of the most useful providers of resources for the research study, including primary and specialist secondary sources, is the public library service. As well as their own stocks of books and other resources, the inter-library loan service, local history collections and Internet facilities are other services that libraries provide. A useful resource for students who may not live near a library branch is the mobile library service, which regularly visits many villages. You should consult your county library to find out when it visits your area.

Most county libraries have online catalogues, allowing you to search for books before you even visit the library. The online catalogues can be accessed at www.library.ie/public/. You can conduct such searches by typing the subject or theme on which you are working in the catalogue search facility to see if any relevant books are available. You can also type the name of a particular book or author. This is similar to how you might use a search engine on the Internet. However, you may need to be a member of the library in some cases before you can access on-line information.

- Students working on a research study at Higher level will need three sources or more. Two sources are sufficient at Ordinary level.
- You should always try to find at least one source dealing with your subject that has been written by a historian, where available.
- Your local library may have different types of sources besides books which you can use. For example, you may find articles written in historical journals, maps, photographs, census records or newspapers. These sources may not always be recorded in the catalogue of the county library, but may be available in the central research branch or headquarters of your local library service. Ask the librarian.
- Many local libraries also allow members to use the Internet to conduct research, often free of charge. Websites can be excellent sources of information on a subject. You may have to book a computer in your local library in advance, though.
- Many libraries also offer a photocopying service, so that you can copy articles or essays relating to your subject.
- Always remember to record details of any book which you have used as you will need to write such details in your research study report booklet. You should make sure to note down the name of the book, the author's name, the publisher, the year of publication and the place in which the book was published, as this information will provide authentication for your source.
- Try to note also strengths or weaknesses that you noticed in any source you used, e.g., evidence of bias or propaganda. Some sources may be more helpful to you than others. Try to note down why. It is a good idea to keep a notebook or journal with you in which to record such comments, as you may have forgotten them by the time it comes to filling in your booklet.
- Remember that bibliographies and footnotes can provide you with leads to other sources.
- Students should keep notes and rough drafts which were prepared as part of the research process. Tapes and/or transcripts of oral history interviews, where undertaken, should also be kept. Students should keep this material until the Leaving Certificate appeals process has finished.

Student worksheet for searching library catalogue

The following sheet may be useful for recording information as you go through the steps of using the online catalogue of your county library service. Keep these notes, as they will be useful records when you are filling in your report booklet. You may wish to recall using this catalogue when writing your **review of the research process** in the Extended Essay.

Title of my research study	
Details of local library branch e.g. address, opening hours, contact person	
URL of county library website, if checked; URL of library online catalogue, if different to above	
Library catalogue accessed	In library / from school / from home
Type of catalogue search used, e.g., author, title, subject. If subject, state which keyword was used in search	
Number of books found in my search	
Examples of books found in my search, e.g., title, author, publisher, date	
Other locations where relevant books are held, e.g., other branches of library	
Did I order a book from another branch?	
Details of other searches which yielded relevant information, e.g. <i>item information</i>	
Details of other relevant holdings in the library, e.g., maps, illustrations, local history journals, local studies holdings etc.	

Evaluating sources for the research study

You can evaluate any type of source (e.g. website, documentary, article, census records) by using a modified version of this worksheet. Remember that a minimum of **two** sources are required at Ordinary level and at least **three** at Higher level. You should use a separate worksheet for each source consulted.

1. Title of source consulted, including name of author, name of publisher, place and date of publication.

Title:

Author:

Publisher:

Place and date of publication:

2. What type of source is it? Is it a primary or secondary source? Is the author a participant, an eye-witness or an historian? Should I keep a photocopy of part of this source?

3. How relevant is this source to the subject of my study? Is there detailed/comprehensive information here on the subject of my study? Does it deal with only some aspect(s) of the subject? Does the evidence acquired here support or contradict prior knowledge acquired from other sources? What other sources could be used to fill in gaps in the evidence or to counter-check the account and/or interpretation?

4. Comments on the strengths and weaknesses of this source. Is this source well written? Do we know how the writer got the information contained in the source? Is it easy to understand? Are there useful maps/graphs/tables/illustrations? Is there a good bibliography suggesting other relevant sources? Are any quotes used referenced in footnotes? Are there any gaps in the evidence that make it difficult to come to conclusions? Does the writer appear to have an ulterior motive? Is the writer biased in any way?

Strengths

Weaknesses

5. Is there any other point that I should note about this source?

NB: Your finalised Evaluation of the Sources must be completed on one page of the research study report booklet.

Evaluating a website as a source for the research study

The Internet is a useful resource when working on your research study. It contains many websites of academic or historical interest that may provide you with information relevant to your subject.

However, it is important to remember that the World Wide Web allows people to put forward their views with no restrictions, no matter how inappropriate or offensive those views might be. In addition, some websites that may seem to be historical are actually biased and engage in propaganda, using evidence selectively to support a political viewpoint. If in doubt about the suitability of a web-based source, you should consult your teacher.

Remember that you need a minimum of two sources at OL and at least three at HL. One of these should be a historian's work, where available. A website may be an appropriate source.

It is also important that you are able to evaluate your website sources. You should be able to judge their relevance to your subject and be aware of any strengths or weaknesses. The worksheet entitled *Evaluating sources for the research study* on pages 8 and 9 may also be helpful in this regard.

The following points in relation to website sources are useful to bear in mind:

Name of author:	
Title of page or article:	
Date written (if available):	
URL (address) of website:	
Date accessed or downloaded:	
What is the purpose of the website?	
Can I be clear on the author's credentials to present the information?	
Is the website current or outdated? When was the website last updated?	
Can I see where the author got the information presented in the source? [Look for footnotes or other references]	
Does the website consist mainly of opinions? Are facts presented as well?	
Are any useful links to other relevant sites provided?	
Is there original information here that I did not obtain in other sources that I used?	
Is there evidence of political or ideological bias?	
Have I printed, or downloaded, the data accessed to prove that I used this source?	

The Extended Essay

The Extended Essay is the most substantial of the three components in the research study report. The word length should be 600-800 words for Ordinary level students, and 1200-1500 words for Higher level students. In the Extended Essay, the student sets down his/her main findings and conclusions. Findings should be laid out in a coherent manner, with a clear introduction and conclusion, and a line of logical development in between. Students should also include a review of the research process undertaken, and indicate how useful that process was in achieving the aims laid down in the Outline Plan.

Review of the research process

In your review of the research process, you need to indicate how you carried out your research, the benefits you think you gained from it and any problems you had to deal with along the way. **If you are unclear as to what you should be dealing with in reviewing the research process, the following list may help you.**

Please note that you do not need to include a response to every question, **although it is necessary to address the point raised in number 6 below.**

1. **Defining the subject:** How did you go about choosing a title for your research study?
2. **Location of information:** How did you find your sources? Where did you find your sources?
3. **Interrogating the sources:** How did you go about asking questions of the sources? Skim-reading? Checking chapter headings for relevance? Checking the index or bibliography? How easy was it to find the data you needed? Did you find you needed to keep anything in mind as you read, interviewed or examined your sources?
4. **How did you select and record your data to answer the questions you set yourself?** Note taking? Highlighting segments in photocopied pages?
5. **Collating of data:** How did you put your data in order? Did you use a computer? Notebook? Separate folders/pages for separate sections?
6. **The aims of the study: How well did you achieve the aims of the study as laid down in the Outline Plan?** Were there any difficulties involved? Were you in any way surprised by the evidence you uncovered? Would you do anything differently if you were to start again?
7. **Writing:** How did you go about writing your essay? Did you make out a plan? Did you do a first draft? If so, how did you change that draft? Did you find yourself making judgements about what evidence to use?
8. **What has the experience of doing this essay taught you about the skills of the historian?** Did you learn any new skills from the whole experience? Information-gathering skills? Research skills? Technical skills? Skills in working with evidence?

Final Checklist for the Research Study

Use this checklist to ensure that you have completed the research study as required.

Title:

1. Have I written down the full title of my research study in the booklet?
2. Is the subject of my research clearly and concisely stated in my title?
3. Have I included the date parameters of my research study in the title?
4. Are the dates of my research study located in the period before 1993 if my subject relates to Irish history or before 1992 if my subject relates to the history of Europe and the wider world?

Outline Plan:

5. Have I responded to each of the requirements laid down for the Outline Plan?
 - a. Define and justify the proposed subject of study;
 - b. Identify the aims;
 - c. Identify the intended approach;
 - d. Cite at least two sources at Ordinary level or at least three at Higher level.
6. Have I ensured that the aims I have set down are sufficiently focused on my subject?
7. Have I ensured that my intended approach as set down is sufficiently focused on my subject?
8. Have I ensured that at least one of my sources is written by an historian?
9. Have I cited my sources fully and accurately?
10. Have I cited any website source that I used fully and accurately?
11. Have I completed my Outline Plan on the relevant page of the booklet?

The Evaluation of the Sources:

12. Have I evaluated each of the sources that I cited fully in my Outline Plan?
13. Have I commented on the relevance of each source to the subject of my study?
14. Have I commented on the strength and weaknesses of each source to the subject of my study?
15. Have I completed the Evaluation of the Sources on the relevant page of the booklet?

The Extended Essay:

16. Have I set down my findings and conclusions under the appropriate heading in a coherent manner, with a clear introduction and conclusion, and a line of logical development in between?
17. Have I addressed in my essay the aims that I set down in my Outline Plan?
18. Have I ensured that the essay is sufficiently focused on the title of my study?
19. Have I included a review of the research process in my essay?
20. Have I made clear in my review how useful the research process I undertook was in addressing the aims laid down in my Outline Plan?
21. Have I ensured that my review is specific to the subject of my research study?
22. Have I ensured that my Extended Essay consists of 1200-1500 words HL/ 600-800 words OL, including my review?
23. Have I written the word length of my Extended Essay in the appropriate space on the cover of the booklet?

Finally:

24. Have I kept notes and rough drafts prepared as part of the research study, including tapes and/or transcripts of oral history testimony (where appropriate)?
25. Have I submitted my report to my teacher and signed the appropriate form?