**IB Extended Essay—Lesson #10 Undertaking Your Initial Research**

In this lesson you will now use some of the skills you learned in Unit 1 as you undertake your initial research.

Once you have made some progress on this you will need to arrange your first reflection session with your supervisor.

Unlike many of the lessons so far, this one may take some time to complete and you must not move on to the next unit until this lesson is complete.

Researcher’s Reflection Space (RRS)

The main preparation for this session takes place through the Researcher’s Reflection Space. You have been working with this idea since the very start in this course; so it should already have lots of information in it.

Here are some further thoughts on how to use your Researcher’s Reflection Space:

* Record your reflection notes.
* Respond to artefacts, such as photos, newspaper clippings, twitter feeds, blogs, and so on.
* Respond to relevant prompts and questions that may arise in your subject areas, TOK classes or other aspects of the DP.
* Create mind maps and diagrams.
* Record emerging questions.

*(Source:  IB Extended Essay Guide website)*

The Reflection Process

As you can see one of the important parts of the process is reflection. However it is not always very clear what is meant by reflection. The IB suggests there are four modes of reflection:

* Reflecting, for example guided visualization, dreamtime or silent observation of prompts, images or words.
* Recording reflection retrospectively, for example the students think about something they learned the week before and present it as a collage.
* Recording as reflection, for example the students write an answer to a set question, reflecting on it as they write, providing a series of different responses.
* Reflecting on reflection, for example students examine the collage they created to represent prior learning. They reflect on why they have represented it in that particular way and what it reveals about their learning and thought processes.

*(Source: IB Extended Essay  Guide website)*

**Secondary Reflection**

There will be a need to reflect on your reflections at somepoint!

* If you are using the Journal activities to record your reflection you can do this by adding comments on your own Journal entries.
* If you are using an online shared document as your Researcher’s Reflection Space, you can leave space at the bottom of every page which is marked secondary reflection.

Types of Reflection

In critically reviewing your engagement in the research process, it might help to think in terms of three levels of reflection: **descriptive**, **analytical** and **evaluative** reflection. The sections below give examples of guiding questions to help with this. (They are not exhaustive.)

These levels correspond to the attainment levels of the rubric forcriterion E (engagement). For example:

* Reflection of a Descriptive only nature would result in a level 1-2 Limited Engagement assessment.
* Reflection comprising of Descriptive and Analytical would result in a level 3-4 Good Engagement.
* Reflection that covers all three levels would be regarded as level 5-6 Excellent Engagement.

**If you feel you need more help with your reflection then you will need to contact your supervisor.**

#### [**Descriptive**](https://learn.pamojaeducation.com/courses/23/module/2258/lesson/33899/lesson)

**Example of the kinds of questions students may have asked and answered of themselves**

* What did I do?
* How did I undertake my research?
* What were the problems I faced?
* Did my approach or strategies change throughout the process?
* What have been the high and the low points of the research and writing process?

#### [**Analytical**](https://learn.pamojaeducation.com/courses/23/module/2258/lesson/33899/lesson)

**Example of the kinds of questions students may have asked and answered of themselves**

* Was my research successful?
* If I changed my approach or strategies during the process, why did I do this?
* What did I learn from the experience in terms of my understanding of the subject area and/or the skills needed to undertake research?
* How has my understanding of the topic and research process developed throughout the task?

#### [**Evaluative**](https://learn.pamojaeducation.com/courses/23/module/2258/lesson/33899/lesson)

**Example of the kinds of questions students may have asked and answered of themselves**

* If I were to undertake this research again, would I do it differently—if so, why or why not?
* What has affected this?
* If I did do the research again, would I change the theories applied or the methodological approach? Would this have led to a different outcome?
* What can I conclude from this?
* Were the strategies I used for undertaking my research the most appropriate for achieving my outcomes?
* What, if any, questions emerged as a result of my research that I was not expecting? Would these questions influence my approach if I were to undertake the research again?

Initial Research

Your supervisor will have checked at this point that everything is on track. He/she may already have given you the subject specific guidelines for your subject. If not, now is the time for you to ensure you have a copy and to undertake an initial read-through.

The topic of your research should now be clear and you should have a working research question in mind. You will have undertaken some basic research on the topic and now is the time for you to undertake more research. If you are unsure of how to continue, a look back at Unit 1 Lesson 3 should help.

There are two important things you need to remember at this stage.

1. **You need to be able to easily return to material you think is relevant, and to remember what is said.**

For long excerpts you think may be useful make a note of the source and make sure the source remains accessible.

Ideas that are relevant need to be recorded in some consistent form.

If you are using an online shared document as your Researcher's Reflection Space there could be a section set up for this.

You could create an academic diary with bullet points, a mind map, spider diagrams, pieces of reflective prose, photographs or some combination of all of them. Some suggestions for useful tools and resources are:

* Tools and advice for spider diagrams and mind mapping: [The Organic Mind](http://www.the-organic-mind.com/)
* Popular mind mapping and diagram tools: [Lucid Chart](https://www.lucidchart.com/) , [Bubbl](https://bubbl.us/" \t "_blank), [MindMeister](https://www.mindmeister.com/" \t "_blank) or [Mind42](https://mind42.com/)

It is not which way you do this that matters, but the fact that you must do it in some way. Reflect back on other pieces of work you have done and have a discussion with your supervisor if necessary.

1. **You need to make a note of any source you are thinking about using.**

If you have not done so already start compiling a list of sources to which you have referred. This should have all the details required of your bibliography.

# **First Reflection Session**

You now need to prepare for your first reflection session with your supervisor. This will last for 20 to 30 minutes. The session should be focused on the progress you have made up to this point and by the end of the meeting clear objectives should be set for moving forward with your research process.

## Preparing for the session

To prepare for this meeting it is suggested that you 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 your 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 you are interested in, paying particular attention to the nature of the subject and the treatment of the topic. (Your supervisor will supply this.)
4. Undertake further background reading and begin to gather information around your area of interest. This exploration should give rise to a variety of topics and questions that you can consider for further research. At this stage it is important that you consider the availability of reliable and valid sources for the topic under consideration. All of this should be recorded in your 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, you 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?

## During the session

In this session you will:

* demonstrate your planning
* discuss what you are learning
* evaluate your progress.

You will be expected to share excerpts from your researcher’s reflection space with your supervisor during this first reflection session.

The IB suggests that to make effective use of the session you should:

* go prepared with issues to discuss – share excerpts from your Researcher’s Reflection Space
* reflect on previous discussions and be prepared to show how you have progressed
* do not expect your supervisor to do your thinking for you
* use your supervisor as a sounding board for ideas and arguments

## Reflections on Planning and Progress Form

After the session you and your supervisor will need to complete the first part of the [Reflections on Planning and Progress Form](https://pj-s3-attachments.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/editor_attachment/file/5526/RPPF_e.pdf). This is the PDF document found in Lesson #7

* Download the form and enter your comments and submit the completed form here as a PDF.
* Alternatively, you can submit a document containing just your reflection comments (within your GDoc), for your supervisor to copy into their master copy of the form. This form will be kept as a record and used at each subsequent formal reflection session.

Please check which submission format your supervisor requires.