

Accredited

EXTENDED PROJECT

Teacher's Guide

GUIDE 2: RESEARCHING AND REFERENCING

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Research

The project must lend itself to requiring some form of research. This will be tailored to the individual subject area and type of project undertaken, but research should be interpreted in its widest form. For example, students should consider contacting “experts” in their field for information, or conducting primary research of their own if at all possible.

Finding a wide range of relevant, appropriate and academically sound resources will involve students visiting libraries, online academic archives, exhibitions, performances, films,

Primary Research:

Some projects can really benefit from including some appropriate primary research. Before undertaking primary research, it is very important to consider what the student aims to find out by doing it.

Primary research might include:

- science experiments
- questionnaires
- visits to galleries
- museums or collections
- drawing and taking photographs.
- contacting an “expert” in the subject, and carrying out interviews or discussions with them.

The evidence produced could be in many forms, from emails to photographs to spreadsheets and graphs.

Secondary Research:

This will usually make up the majority of research done for a dissertation, and it is vital that this research meets the following criteria:

- It covers a broad range of sources, including print-based media as well as the internet (and not just Wikipedia).
- The research is selected critically, taking into account the credibility of the source (especially online)
- The research is evaluated at the time. Specific techniques to do this should be taught by tutors, using techniques such as Connect-extend-challenge.
- Notes should be taken from the sources, and included as evidence, to avoid accidental plagiarism.

Recommended academic online sources:

- Online academic journals (Cambridge and Oxford University Press) <http://journals.cambridge.org>
- <http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/category/academic.do>
- Open University Resources: <http://www.open.ac.uk/library/library-resources>
- Harvard University Resources: <http://library.harvard.edu/>

Evaluation of sources:

There are many good guides to evaluating the academic calibre of a source online for example:

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/68542-unit-a144-case-study-preparation-evaluating-sources-of-information.pdf>

This provides an excellent table to help students to evaluate scientific sources.

The critical evaluation of online and print research sources is a skill that will need to be covered during taught sessions. The main points for consideration should be:

- **Timeliness:** when was the information published? Is the information current for your project?
- **Relevance:** Is the source relevant to your topic? Is the information at an appropriate level?
- **Authority:** who is the author? What are their credentials and professional affiliations? For online sources: does the URL reveal anything about the source eg: .com could be a commercial site, .edu and .ac.uk would be more reliable.
- **Accuracy:** Where does the information come from? Is the text free from spelling or grammar errors?
- **Purpose:** Why has the author put the information online? To inform? Teach? Sell? Entertain? Persuade? Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free of emotion?

The evaluation of research sources could be done in the reflective journal (see guide 4), and a final summary of research should be written at the end of the project and submitted with the evidence folder.

Analysis of research data:

Critical analysis of information found during research is a vital part of creating a successful dissertation. This will mean that the student:

- Doesn't accept others' conclusions without question.
- Is able to present a balanced explanation of why certain opinions may be accepted and why some should be treated with caution.
- Confidently builds their own argument or theory, with references to others' opinions and data.
- Shows understanding of how their own work is limited (eg: by time, breadth of research, location etc).

Making connections:

A good project will show the student's ability to make connections between different information found and reflect on how their understanding is developing through the process of their research.

Presentation of research:

A list of research sources should be submitted at the end of the project, along with an evaluation of the research. (See Guide 4: Evaluation)

It is not necessary to include printed or photocopied secondary research in the submission.

Connect, Extend, Challenge:

This is a framework that could be used to help students reflect on research collected:

Connect	How are the ideas and information presented CONNECTED to what you already knew?
Extend	What new ideas did you get that EXTENDED or pushed your thinking in new directions?
Challenge	What is still CHALLENGING or confusing for you to get your mind around? What questions, wonderings or puzzles do you now have?

Plagiarism:

All work submitted will be checked using plagiarism software, and any suspicious work will be checked.

Students and staff can use the following websites to check parts of their text that they are concerned with.

<http://searchenginereports.net/articlecheck.aspx>

<http://www.duplichecker.com/>

Correct and thorough referencing will mean that work is not considered to be plagiarised, but it is recommended that students write notes in their own words as part of the research process to make sure that they are not at risk.

Referencing

What is referencing?

Referencing is a system used by academics to record the source of ideas and information used in their work. It enables students to get credit for the use of the ideas of others and to avoid being accused of plagiarism.

Harvard Referencing:

This is the standard technique used in all academic research. Quotes from the original texts which appear in the text of a dissertation should be referenced like this:

Neville (2010) argues that...
or "Quotation" (Neville, 2010, p.76)
and the bibliography should contain the full information about the book:

NEVILLE, C. (2010)

The Complete Guide to Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism.
2nd Ed.
Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Web references should be recorded like this:

BBC NEWS. (2008) Factory gloom worst since 1980. [Online] Available from:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7681569.stm>. [Accessed: 19th June 2012].

Taught sessions should cover correct use of referencing in academic writing.

Summary of Guide Two

- Consider primary research
- Collect high quality secondary research
- Evaluate sources
- Analyse information
- Make connections
- Avoid plagiarism
- Reference correctly



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