

The Research Study Report

Headings	Notes
The Research Study Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As part of the assessment process in Leaving Certificate History, students must submit a written report on a Research Study carried out by them under the supervision of their history teacher. It counts for 20% of the total marks, and presents a number of advantages for students:• Students can choose a topic that they find interesting.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unlike the final written examination with its strict time limits for each answer, students can work on the Research Study in their own time and at their own pace. As the Chief Examiner remarked in the 2017 Report: 'As well as taking ownership of the research process, the candidate avails of the guidance of his/her teacher without the imposition of urgent deadlines or the stress of presenting the research findings under examination conditions.'• Crucially, students tend to do very well in this part of the assessment. According to the Leaving Certificate Chief Examiner's Report in History (2017), the average mark for the Research Study Report was 89%.• In order to gain high marks in the Research Study Report, students must be aware of two contrasting approaches:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On the one hand, they enjoy a high degree of freedom in choosing a topic and they exercise responsibility and judgement in drawing up the report and in reaching and justifying their conclusions.• However, there are strict rules which must be followed in terms of overall length, citation of sources, and time limits on possible topics.• If students observe these requirements, there is no reason why they should not succeed in achieving close to full marks in the Research Study Report.
Choosing a Topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If a student finds a topic interesting, then it follows that the research process and subsequent written report will benefit as a result. Therefore, time and care devoted to choosing a suitable topic are well worth the effort. In choosing a topic, certain pitfalls should be avoided:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students are not allowed to research anything that occurred after 1993.• Key personalities or case studies in the syllabus should not be chosen. The Chief Inspector's Report (2006) stated that 'examiners' reports often expressed concern about the wisdom of these choices.'• Subjects that are too broad should not be chosen. The history syllabus states that 'the subject for investigation must be clearly defined. Its focus should be narrow rather than broad so as to allow for depth of investigation.'• Topics that do not have a clear historical significance should not be chosen. The syllabus states that the subject chosen 'should not be obscure or trivial'.• In choosing a topic, consider:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A topic from local history. The Chief Examiner's Report (2011) observed that 'examiners were pleased to note that, while most topics were drawn from the historical mainstream of the syllabus, more candidates were opting for local history'.

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Choosing a Topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A person in history who was not one of the leading personalities or a key personality in the syllabus.• A link with another favourite subject – for example, a subject from the country whose modern language a student is studying; a business-linked topic like the history of a local industry; a topic linked to art or music like the role of Hugh Lane or Seán Ó Riada in Irish history.• A local school or sporting organisation. In this case, care must be taken to link developments at local level with developments throughout Ireland.• A topic connected to culture, religion or science with a historical significance. In the Chief Examiner's Report (2011), it is stated that 'students' learning experience and examination options will be optimised if they are exposed to history from the perspective of culture, religion and science'.• Having chosen the subject of their Research Study in consultation with their teacher, students will then need to consider the structure of the Research Study Report.
The Structure of the Research Study Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outline Plan 15 marks• Evaluation of Sources 25 marks• Extended Essay 50 marks• Review of Research Process 10 marks
The Outline Plan (15 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The following must be clearly stated in the Outline Plan:
A. Setting out the approach to the study (9 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The title and scope of the topic, including relevant dates. The title should be carefully chosen so as to ensure that it covers the main aims of the study.• The reasons for choosing it, including its historical significance. Here students have an opportunity to explain their personal decision to choose a particular subject and to defend their choices by showing that they are significant historically.• The aims of the study: this involves outlining clearly what the student hopes to discover in the course of the study.• Students can lose marks at this stage if they are not clear and exact in their approach. The Chief Examiner's Report (2017) identified some faults here that were found at both Ordinary and Higher levels:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Defining the chosen subject but failing to justify its historical significance.• Not clearly identifying all of their intended aims.• Giving generic, that is non-specific, points about their intended approach.• Having set out the approach to be taken in the Research Study, the student then proceeds to list the sources used.
B. Correctly listing sources (6 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••

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B. Correctly listing sources (6 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Because history is based on evidence, some of the main skills of the historian centre on gathering, ordering and referring to sources. When carrying out research, students should always be aware that they may need to use evidence to support their statements. For the purposes of the Research Study sources may be primary or secondary. There is a difference in the requirements for Ordinary and Higher Level students:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ordinary Level At least two sources• Higher Level At least three sources• Because the examiner must be able to authenticate the sources used, students must cite them accurately as follows:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primary sources such as letters or other documents usually include the date of the source and the place where it is held; e.g. Letter of Count John McCormack to Archbishop Edward Byrne, 18 September 1931. Dublin Diocesan Archives.• When using interviews as sources, the person being interviewed together with the date must be cited; e.g. Mary Browne, North Strand, Dublin interviewed three times between 1 February and 1 March 2019 regarding her memories of the North Strand bombings in 1941.• For newspaper articles, the author's name, the title of the article, the name of the newspaper and the date of publication must be given: e.g. D. Ferriter, 'Why the Rising matters', The Irish Times, 23 September 2015.• Secondary sources such as books should be listed in alphabetical order based on the author's surname:<ul style="list-style-type: none">J.S. Donnelly, <i>The Land and the People of Nineteenth-Century Cork</i> (London, 1975)J.J. Lee, <i>Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society</i> (Cambridge, 1989)F.M. McGarry, <i>The Rising: Ireland, Easter 1916</i> (Oxford, 2018)• Note that the place and date of publication are cited within round brackets after the title.• Having listed the secondary sources correctly in the Outline Plan, students should note that, when using them later in the course of the Extended Essay, it will be sufficient to place the name of the author and the date of publication in round brackets after the relevant statement or quotation: e.g. (Lee, 1989, p.X) or (Donnelly, 1985, p.X).• Internet sources demand special care. The full web address (URL) and the date of access must be given. The omission of any of these details will result in a loss of marks. In the Chief Examiner's Report (2011), the following warning was clearly stated: "The citing of internet sources proved the most problematic: some merely mentioned that they had used the internet as a source, which is as vague as saying that they had read a book. It appeared that many candidates had recourse to the internet as their first and only source."• The correct citation of sources is, therefore, of vital importance. To quote again from the Chief Examiner's Report (2011): "Many [students] lost marks for not citing sources completely and accurately."

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<i>B. Correctly listing sources (6 marks)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having listed the sources accurately, the student is in a position to move on to the next part of the Research Study Report which consists of the evaluation of sources.
<i>The Evaluation of Sources (25 marks)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This section of the Research Study Report carries a quarter of all the available marks. Therefore, it is vital that students approach it carefully and avoid the pitfalls identified in the Chief Examiner's Report (2006):<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The evaluation of sources was where students lost marks. This was because they tried to summarise the historical content of the sources rather than identify their strengths and weaknesses in the pursuit of the research objectives.• Three ideas are clear from this:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Content or narrative must be avoided here.• The strengths and weaknesses of each individual source should be highlighted.• The sources should be evaluated in terms of how they help the student to achieve the research objectives.• When evaluating a source, students need to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify the type of source, whether primary or secondary.• Identify the author or provider of the source.• Comment on its strengths or weaknesses, mentioning whether it provides a balanced/unbiased view or is biased/prejudiced in its approach. Note that biased sources can be very useful in providing the historian with an insight into strongly held views.• Consider the author's use of narrative and evaluation, particularly in the case of secondary sources (i.e. books and articles).• Consider the content and structure of a source, i.e. whether it deals with a topic chronologically or thematically.• Comment on the relevance of the source to the objectives of the Research Study.• When the evaluation of sources is completed the student is in a position to tackle the final section of the Research Study Report - the Extended Essay and the Review of the Research Process.
<i>The Extended Essay (50 marks)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Both the Extended Essay and the Review of the Research Process are added together when it comes to the permitted length of the Research Study Report: the earlier sections on the Outline Plan and the Evaluation of Sources are not included for the purposes of the word count. Note that different word counts apply for Ordinary and Higher Level students:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ordinary Level 600-800 words• Higher Level 1,200-1,500 words• It is important not to exceed these limits as Chief Examiners' Reports frequently complain about the failure of students to observe these rules. Half the marks for the Research Study are allocated to the Essay. This is the student's opportunity to present research findings in a clear and convincing way.

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<p>The Extended Essay (50 marks)</p>	<p>Allocation of Marks</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="443 285 1567 426"> <tr> <td data-bbox="443 285 992 331">Historical Knowledge</td> <td data-bbox="1000 285 1567 331">25 marks</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="443 342 992 388">Research Skills</td> <td data-bbox="1000 342 1567 388">15 marks</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="443 399 992 426">Presentation</td> <td data-bbox="1000 399 1567 426">10 marks</td> </tr> </table> <ul data-bbox="443 436 1567 1192" style="list-style-type: none"> • The Extended Essay should include a clear introduction, a well-developed and logical discussion of the chosen topic and a strong conclusion based on the main findings of the study. In referring to sources in the course of the Extended Essay, there are two possibilities: <ul data-bbox="443 583 1567 804" style="list-style-type: none"> • Close Reference: here the student does not quote directly from the source but mentions information that comes from the source, so reference is made to it by placing a citation such as (Lee, 1989, p.X) directly after the statement. • Direct Quotation: here the student quotes directly from the source and follows with a citation such as (Lyons, 1971, p.X). • It is extremely important that the student never uses exact words from a source without letting the reader know that they are not his/her own words, as to do so would amount to plagiarism (i.e. attempting to pass off other people's work as the student's own). Although this is a rare at Leaving Certificate level, it does occur, leading to failure of the student to obtain a grade in the history examination (Chief Examiner's Report, 2011). Thankfully, the vast majority of students present their own work and the Extended Essays have received high praise in the Chief Examiners' Reports. 	Historical Knowledge	25 marks	Research Skills	15 marks	Presentation	10 marks
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<p>The Review of the Research Process (10 marks)</p>	<ul data-bbox="443 1203 1567 2045" style="list-style-type: none"> • In this section examiners are looking out for reflections on the student's own personal experience of the research process. It is essential that students do not fall into the trap identified by the Chief Examiner's Report (2006): <ul data-bbox="443 1350 1567 1518" style="list-style-type: none"> • A considerable number of candidates failed to include the required review of the research process with their essay. Where reviews were presented, there was often evidence of formulaic answers, based perhaps on 'model answers', rather than on the candidate's individual response to his/her own research experience. • This section should incorporate the following considerations: <ul data-bbox="443 1581 1567 2045" style="list-style-type: none"> • What difficulties were encountered in sourcing information on the research topic? • How was information recorded and collated? • Were the aims of the study fulfilled? • What was learned from the research about the skills of the historian? • What could have been done differently? • Are there any aspects of the Research Study which would require further exploration? • How did the research benefit the student personally and how did it contribute to your historical knowledge of the topic? 						

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<i>A Final Piece of Advice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One of the realities of the lives of historians as in the lives of other authors is the existence of deadlines. Just as historians have publication deadlines, Leaving Cert History students have submission deadlines.• The ultimate deadline for submission of the Research Study Report is usually in April/May of the Leaving Certificate year when it must be written into a special booklet. At this stage students will be practising another essential skill of the historian – presenting their findings in the form of a clear readable account. For the best outcome, they will have written a number of successive drafts until they are satisfied with the result.• However, in order to obtain the best possible result, it is strongly recommended to students that they aim to produce their final drafts by the month of February around the time when they are sitting their Pre-Leaving Certificate/Mock examinations. As the months of March and April usually contain oral examinations in languages and some practical examinations in other subjects, it would be a great advantage to students to have the Research Study Report completed. In this case, along with extensive preparation completed in the Documents-Based section of the history examination, students will then be able to focus on the three topics for revision.