

ii – A Guide to Writing a Research Plan

Entering into a long-term research investigation is not something that can be done well without proper planning. A planning sheet can be a good way of focussing on the different stages of the research process that lie ahead. With sections in the chronological order in which the Independent Investigation can be written, the planning sheet can act as both a rough guide and a diary for your personalised research procedures. Showing a research planning sheet to a teacher can also help them to see what you intend to do and how you intend to do it. In some cases, they may be able to offer you guidance before you go too far down the wrong path in your thinking. Show your teacher the document again if you make changes.

Spending time completing a planning sheet can really save you time and effort in the long term and it is worth considering each of the questions carefully. However, the sheet is also just a rough guide: you should not aim to write in too much detail at this stage, as specific descriptions and explanations should be saved for the actual write-up of the Independent Investigation. Instead the planning sheet can be a set of notes and ideas – some might not even be firmly thought through at this stage, but instead be seen as a starting point for future thought.

The completed planning sheet will help you to identify any gaps in your knowledge of research methods and identify areas for future background reading. As you understand how to find certain information or carry out certain techniques you can add to your planning sheet.

The planning sheet can also be viewed as a working document: it is highly likely that as you plan your research in more detail your ideas will change and you will refine your strategies for tackling different parts of the process. Consider editing your ideas as you think through your research. It is important to remember that a good researcher is one who adapts their research to new ideas and information. Most researchers at university level will change their research focus many times before they actually go into the field to collect data – and in some cases after this point too.

In this sense the planning sheet also acts as a diary and you can use it to record observations and make notes on what goes well about your research and indeed what you would change if you were to carry out your Independent Investigation again: something on which you should aim to comment in the final stages of your write-up. You may also be able to use your planning sheet as a guide for when you write-up the earlier stages of your Independent Investigation. To have a working document like this makes this process a lot easier than if you were to try to undertake it from cold memory, sometimes months after you have carried out your data collection, for example.

Student Planning Form

This form can be used by students to gather ideas before completion of a formal proposal form.

Student Name	
Proposed Independent Investigation Title	
Link to Exam Board Specification	
Broad aim of the research	
Research questions/hypotheses	1.
	2.
	3.