Preparation for the first reflection session

As preparation for their first reflection session, students should 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 their 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 they are interested in, paying particular attention to the nature of the subject and the treatment of the topic.

4. Undertake further background reading and begin to gather information around their area of interest. This exploration should give rise to a variety of topics and questions that students can consider for further research. At this stage it is important that students consider the availability of reliable and valid sources for the topic under consideration. All of this should be recorded in their Researcher’s reflection space.

5. Begin developing a research proposal which might include a MindMap of ideas, an annotated article or preliminary bibliography. Additionally, students 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?**

It is recommended at this point that the student–supervisor relationship is formalized and the student can consider himself or herself prepared for the first formal reflection session.

First formal reflection session

This initial reflection session should be a dialogue between the student and the supervisor based on the student’s initial explorations. It is recommended that the student sends their supervisor an outline of their research proposal ahead of the meeting in order to give the supervisor the opportunity to review their work. This will ensure that the reflection session is focused and productive.

Topics of discussion that should arise during this session include:

**• a review of the requirements and assessment criteria for the subject**

**• a review of ethical and legal implications, if applicable**

**• a dialogue about possible approaches and any potential problems that might arise**

**• a discussion of strategies for developing the student’s ideas for the essay and expanding the research so that the essay starts to take form**

**• probing and challenging questions that will help the student focus their thinking; this should lead to the development of the student’s working research question**

**• an outline of the next steps that the student should undertake in order to refine their question; this should take the form of a research and writing timeline.**