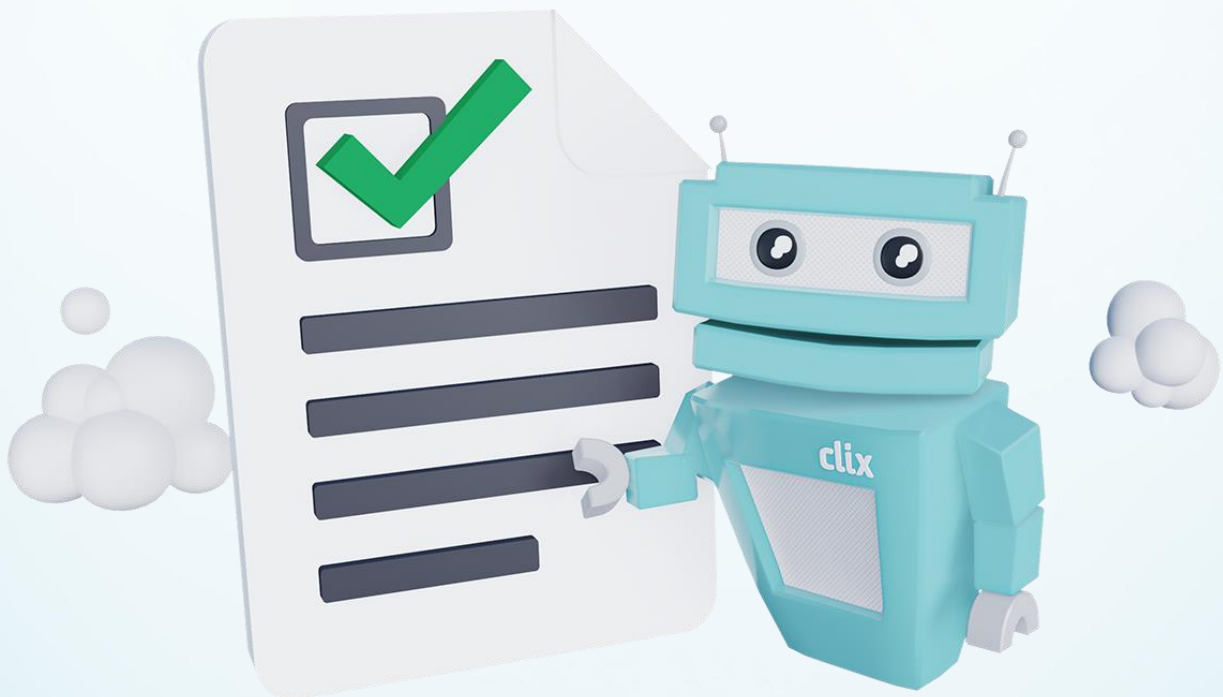


Economics

How to get an H1 in the
Leaving Cert Economics Research Study



by **Beth D.**

Beth D got a H1 in her higher level Leaving Cert Economics paper. She is now doing Law at the University of Cambridge. Here she shares what she has learned

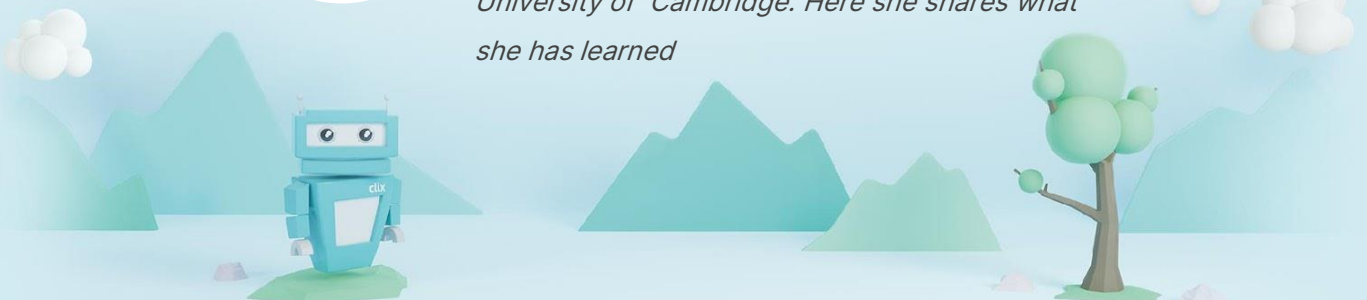


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Introduction

The Research Study is a project completed in the first term of 6th year, and is worth **20% of your Economics grade** at Higher and Ordinary level.

The Research Study focuses on offering students “an opportunity to research into and analyse an economic issue, problem or question” and asks you to pursue an individual line of inquiry based on the topic you choose. You’ll receive **a brief** (list of topics) in 6th year, from which you choose one and conduct research and analysis.

After you conduct the research study itself, you will write up **your report** on the research study. This is what you are **actually assessed on**. The SEC recommends that you keep a portfolio or folder during your research process to help you complete this.

Understanding what the research study is looking for

How the Research Study is Assessed

Section A	Indicative content to be included	55 marks
<p>Introduction</p> <p><i>Maximum 250 words.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the title for the research study • State the individual line of inquiry as an economic question, problem or issue which is to be addressed. • Outline the aims of this line of inquiry, in the context of the learning outcomes in the specification • Select relevant and reliable sources of information and data. A minimum of two sources are required and one must be quantitative. 	

<p>The Research Process</p> <p><i>Maximum 750 words</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research process should be based on the application of economic concepts and economic theory to the line of inquiry • Analyse, interpret, and evaluate the selected sources of information and data to make relevant informed arguments and judgements. • Relevant data may be presented in tabular and graphical format. 	
<p>Section B</p>	<p>Indicative content to be included</p>	<p>30 marks</p>
<p>Conclusion</p> <p><i>Maximum 350 words.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present conclusions as they relate to the stated line of inquiry, the associated aims and the economic concepts and economic theory underpinning the line of inquiry. 	
<p>Reflection</p> <p><i>Maximum 150 words</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on the insights gained from engagement with the research study. • Demonstrate how thinking has evolved and/or how attitudes, opinions or behaviour may or may not be influenced as a result of the research study. 	

<p>Communication Presentation and Overall Coherence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation, presentation and overall cohesion of the report in respect of general evidence of preparation, planning, implementation and completion of the Research Study in the context of the Research Study brief and the individual line of inquiry. 	<p>15 marks</p>
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The key thing the Research Study assesses is your ability to use your knowledge, understanding, concepts and skills to evaluate information and data and make informed conclusions.

The SEC states students should demonstrate that they can:

- **Research and process** information and data that is relevant and meaningful
- **Apply concepts, models and theories** in the evaluation of information and data in order to make an informed conclusion

Each section of the report has its **own criteria (shown above)**, it's important to keep this in mind while writing these sections. I suggest making a **checklist** of the criteria and ticking each element off while editing your work to ensure you meet all the criteria

When writing your report

- Focus on showing off that you can effectively engage with the information and data, and that you can independently pursue the answer to an economic question.
- While the information you encounter is important, the crucial thing is showing that you can analyse the information and make judgments from this.
- In summary, the emphasis across the Research Study Report is on showing your critical thinking skills, creativity, independent research and ability to draw conclusions from examining the information in front of you.

Choosing your topics

When you receive the brief in 6th year, you will have the option of **3 different topics**. Once you choose a topic, you need to come up with your **own line of inquiry**- the question you're going to answer with your research study. You then need to get this line of inquiry approved by your teacher.

I recommend going through the three topics and doing **an initial brainstorm** of the lines of inquiry which come to mind in relation to each topic. This will help you to map out your ideas, get a feel for each topic, and kickstart your creativity.

After you do this, select the lines of inquiry which stick out to you the most. I found doing a second round of brainstorming to be helpful here, to get a better idea of what you would cover under each line of inquiry

The **SEC** suggests asking yourself the following questions to help you choose a line of inquiry:

- What do I already know about the topic of my research study?

- What else do I need to know about the topic of my research study?
- What is the central question/problem/argument/issue?
- Why is this an important question/problem/argument/issue?

Make sure to choose a topic and line of inquiry that you are **genuinely interested in**, and not one that you think you “should” do. The more interested you are in your topic, the more you’ll enjoy the research process and this will shine through in your report! This is one of the areas of the Leaving Cert where you have a great degree of freedom, so make the most of it!

Try to be niche

Your line of inquiry doesn’t need to be so specific that you can’t find enough information, but equally try not to be so broad that you can’t adequately analyse each aspect of your question.

Learning Outcomes

Your line of inquiry should also relate directly to the learning outcomes in the Leaving Certificate Economics [specification](#). Go through these, and try to integrate them while constructing your question. Keep these in mind, and refer back to 2-5 specific ones when writing your report.

When you’ve identified a few potential lines of inquiry, try and phrase them as **specific questions**. During this process, eliminate those which:

- Don’t interest you
- Are too broad - remember the word limit of the project, as well as the time period in which you have to complete it!
- Are too narrow - avoid going so niche that it’s tricky to find information

After this, you should hopefully be left with a single line of inquiry that you will pursue under one of the 3 topics assigned by the SEC!

Finding inspiration

Finding inspiration can be tricky for this part, I recommend:

- Watching and/or reading the news every day for 5 days and seeing if any particular areas or topics jump out to you, then think about whether, and if so how, you could link these to the project brief.
- Think about your extracurriculars e.g. I did drama outside of school which prompted me to think about how the arts industry had been impacted by COVID-19. This will help give you a personal link to the project, and will likely make it more engaging for you!
- Talk about the project briefly with friends or family, they might have personal experiences or ideas that will inspire you and help you narrow down a line of inquiry.

Try and phrase your question in as open-ended a way as possible, to allow you scope to come to a conclusion that you might not have expected as well as explore a range of avenues. This means avoiding a question that can be answered with yes/no and rather a more open phrasing e.g. "how has XYZ affected ABC".

Tip

When choosing your topic, have an idea of what sources you might consult, my project focused on a particular SDG so I knew that I would likely consult the UN SDGs website and the Irish Government's resources on the SDGs, for example.

Planning

The biggest piece of advice I can give is to **PLAN**. Planning will help you manage your time, balance the project with everything else going on in your first term of 6th year, and ensure that your project has a great structure and approach.

Make a research plan which outlines:

- Where you can find your information
- How you'll conduct your research
- Who you'll reach out to, and how you'll do that

When you've decided on your line of inquiry (the question your project is answering), decide your main areas of focus. This will help you narrow your research, and structure your eventual report.

Planning and managing your time is also incredibly important. Identify your key tasks (the process listed below will help for this!) and then make a timeline from October to your deadline for getting each done. When making the plan, take into account exams or other assignments and plan around these. This will help you manage your time across all of your subjects!

Tip

Brainstorm some key questions you'll look at under each main area, and structuring these in a logical way. This way, when you start researching you'll know what you're looking for and have an idea of how to approach it!

1. Conducting research

This is the first step in conducting the research study. Work off of your research plan (outlined above), and ensure to use reputable sources e.g. the CSO, the Department of Finance. I recommend having a document where you collate all of your research first, then draw your conclusions from this and write the study.

The final report: At this stage, ensure to keep track of your sources and your research methodology. This will be particularly useful in “The Research Process” section.

2. Analysing and Drawing Conclusions

From your research, evaluate what you’ve gathered and ask yourself: what does this tell me about my line of inquiry?

- In this section, you need to ensure you reference and explain at least one economic concept e.g. demand and supply. When looking at your research, get your textbook out and relate it to the various concepts on the course!
- The final report: Analysing your data will be particularly relevant for the research process and conclusions. Take care at this stage to really think about what your data is telling you, and then explain how you did this when writing the final report.
- Once you’ve discerned what your data tells you, use this to answer your questions. This will make up your “Conclusions” section of your final report. Refer back to the initial questions you asked yourself- have all of these been answered? Are all my conclusions logical and based on what I have investigated?

- Don't be afraid to say something new based on your data, this is testing your ability to make informed conclusions- not to just recite information you have found!

3. Presenting

This is where you'll collate all of your findings into the report for your teacher, this is the stage to create graphs and tables which you can then insert into the final report. Be creative at this stage and think about the best way to make your data interactive and ensure whoever reads it can clearly understand the points you are making! These graphs and tables can then be inserted into the "Research Process" section of your final report.

Editing

Make sure to leave time for editing in your timeline for the project, you don't want to be rushing it at the last minute! I recommend going through at least 2-3 drafts with feedback from your teacher.

When editing, I found these stages useful:

- A broader edit, where you look at the overall structure of your report and whether it achieves what you set out to do.
- Then go section by section, using the SEC criteria and guidance as a checklist to see if you've addressed everything you need to.
- A more specific edit, where you look at the flow of your paragraphs and sentences.
- Finally, proofread for spelling and grammar mistakes.

If you're struggling with going over word count, look through your sentences and ask yourself: how can I say this in half as many words? Make sure to leave at least a day between finishing your draft and the editing process to allow the material to "sit" and your brain to refresh.

Tip

Change the font of your project to something like Comic Sans and then edit it, this helps your brain to get a fresh look at the material!

How to make your project stand out

If you want to make your project stand out to your examiner, it's imperative that your project has an emphasis on your conclusions, an analytical approach, and a personal response- all based on your research which has focused purposefully on your line of inquiry. What does this mean in practice?

Don't be afraid to come to your own conclusions

Don't doubt your abilities here, this is what the project is looking for. When you've done the research and found all the information, show the examiner what this has made you think. What has it shown you about your topic? If you make a clear, logical argument from this information, there are very few wrong answers here. Showing independent, unique conclusions based on the research will make your project stand out and will show the examiner you have truly engaged with what the research project is looking for!

Interrogate your information:

Show the examiner that you're actively engaging with the information throughout the research process. Don't simply state the information you found, ask questions! What does this mean? How does it relate to the topic? How does it support your conclusions as they develop? Plenty of students can state information they've found, actively "interrogating" your data and explaining how you did so will elevate your project. The focus should ideally be on "what this means" rather than "what this says". Of course, you may need to briefly outline statistics, but try to have a good mix!

Personal response

Relate your project and research to your own life and community. How has this changed your perspective, if at all? What are the implications of your conclusions for you and those around you? Showing personal engagement will give the examiner a sense of who you are, will make your project stand out and - once again- illustrate that you have truly engaged with the research process.

Final tips

When writing your initial research study, keep the structure of the final report which will be submitted to the SEC in mind. As this is what you will be graded on, it's important to be aware of how your research will relate to this.

Below is how the SEC describes a "high level of achievement" in the Research Study. I recommend keeping this in mind and considering how to integrate this into your report.

Remember, this is all about your ability to work independently and come up with your own ideas! Have confidence in yourself, take a deep breath and you'll be great!

Tip

A high level of achievement in the research study is characterised by a thorough engagement with the topic. The student's report is purposeful and clear. The report is sufficiently detailed to provide concrete evidence of the student's knowledge and understanding but moves beyond a mere re-telling of facts and information to focus on insights and learning gained. Students demonstrate an ability to research, select, organise and process information and data from a variety of sources for relevance and reliability very judiciously. They accurately apply concepts and theories to analyse and evaluate qualitative and quantitative information and data from different sources; manipulation of data, where appropriate, will be correct. Students present informed conclusions which are clearly based on evidence. The

Useful links

- [Leaving Certificate Economics Guidelines to support the Research Study](#)
- [Central Statistics Office website](#)
- [The SEC website: Project and Practical section](#)
- [Sample Economics Coursework Brief](#)



Best of luck in the exam!
You will be great



