The inquiry project

IB DP Digital Society The inquiry project full package

The inquiry project

- explain what the inquiry project asks for and what you submit;
- turn a broad interest into a focused question about one real digital system;
- choose primary and secondary sources with diverse perspectives, and collect data ethically;

The inquiry project (2)

- distinguish impacts from implications;
- keep an **inquiry process document** and plan a presentation of up to 10 minutes.

The inquiry cycle

- The project follows a cycle:
- 1. **Question**: choose a real digital system that affects people you can find out about, and focus it with the four parts from topic 01: concept + content + context + real-world example. 2. **Research**: collect **primary sources** (your own interviews, surveys or observations) and **secondary sources** (news reports, studies, official documents). 3. **Findings**: explain the impacts (what has changed) and the implications (what follows from it, for whom). 4. **Reflection**: what your inquiry could not see, and what you would do next.

The inquiry cycle (2)

- **Impact or implication?** An **impact** is an effect that has happened ("older people without smartphones were turned away from buses").
- An **implication** is what it means or may lead to ("public services that need an app may leave out whoever cannot use one, so they need a non-digital option").

Worked project

- **System**: health-code apps in a Chinese city, 2020–2022.
- **Focus**: power and change (concepts) + data and networks (content) + social and health contexts. Question: "How did health-code apps change older people's ability to move around the city?"
- **Primary sources**: interviews with six grandparents (names changed, with their **consent**) and a bus driver.

Worked project (2)

- **Secondary sources**: the State Council's November 2020 plan; news reports; census figures on the older population.
- **Findings**: most interviewees relied on a grandchild to show the code; two stopped taking buses for some months; staff help became common after the 2020 plan.
- **Reflection**: everyone interviewed had a family member with a smartphone, so the people most shut out were not in the sample.

Working with sources

- Use the same three questions as in topic 02 (claim, perspective, origin and purpose), and look for real **diversity of sources** : the users, the people who run the system, the government and researchers.
- A source that disagrees with you is useful: show you have weighed it.
- Research ethics matter.
- Ask people for their **consent** before you interview them, do not show faces or real names without permission, and never collect private data such as ID numbers.

The process document

- why you chose this system and this focus;
- the sources you found, and what you learned from each;
- the decisions you made: what you cut, changed or added, and why;
- the feedback you received (for example, from your teacher after a draft), and what you changed because of it.

The presentation and references

- a read-aloud essay with no visuals, or a montage of images with no argument;
- a topic that is too wide (”social media and young people”);
- describing the technology without its impacts on people;
- sources that all say the same thing, or no sources on screen.

Sources for this lesson

- International Baccalaureate, *Digital Society guide* (first assessment 2024), internal assessment criteria, and subject brief.
- State Council of the People's Republic of China, *Implementation Plan on Effectively Solving the Difficulties of Older People in Using Smart Technology* (November 2020).
- National Bureau of Statistics of China, *Seventh National Population Census* (2020).
- British Educational Research Association, *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (5th edition, 2024), on **consent**.

Common errors

- Choosing a topic that is far too wide ("social media and young people") instead of one system, one group and one place.
- Describing how the technology works without saying what it changed for people.
- Writing the process document at the end; it is a record of decisions made during the inquiry.

Common errors (2)

- Using only secondary sources, or only sources that agree with you.
- Interviewing people without their **consent**, or showing faces and real names without permission.
- Making the presentation a read-aloud essay or a slideshow with no argument.

Key terms

- **Inquiry project**: the internal assessment: an investigation into the **impacts and implications** of one real digital system.
- **Primary source**: information you collect yourself, such as interviews, surveys or observations.
- **Secondary source**: information collected by others, such as news reports, studies and official documents.

Key terms (2)

- **Impact**: an effect that has already happened.
- **Implication**: what an **impact** means or may lead to, and for whom.
- **Inquiry process document**: the record, written during the project, of the choices you made and why.
- **Consent**: a person's agreement, given freely and knowing the purpose, to take part in research.

Check yourself

- 1.
- What three things do you submit for the inquiry project, and how much is it worth at SL and HL? 2. "Older people without smartphones were turned away from buses." Is this an **impact** or an **implication**?
- Write the other one. 3.
- Turn "technology and older people" into a focused question. 4.