The engagement project

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Global Politics · SL

IB Diploma Programme Global Politics SL (the guide first assessed in 2026). The internal assessment is the **engagement project**, which SL and HL students both do. You choose a **political issue**, **engage** with it outside the classroom (for example by interviewing people, volunteering or observing meetings), research it, and write a **report** of up to 2,000 words. It is worth 30% at SL and 20% at HL. HL students also write a separate, evidence-based **recommendation** (up to about 400 words) on how the issue could be addressed.

Every evening in Chinese cities, millions of food-delivery riders race against the clock. An app sets their routes, their time limits and their pay. Who decided those rules, and who can change them? Is a rider an employee with rights, or an independent worker? The same questions are argued in courts and parliaments from London to California. A local scene like this, connected to a global debate, is exactly what an engagement project studies.

Must-know for the engagement project:

Area	Key content
format	report of up to 2,000 words; 30% SL, 20% HL; HL adds a recommendation
issue	political, debatable, connected to a global debate, possible to engage with
engagement	first-hand, purposeful, recorded, ethical
research	published sources and different perspectives, compared and evaluated
report	issue, research, engagement, analysis with key concepts, reflection

Choosing the issue

An issue is **political** when it is about power: who decides, who benefits and who pays. "Plastic in the ocean" is a topic; "who should pay to clean plastic from our coast: the city, the companies that make plastic, or the people who buy it?" is a political issue.

A good issue is:

- **debatable**: different groups really disagree;
- **globally connected**: a local example of a global debate, or a global debate felt locally;
- **engageable**: you can actually meet people, visit places or join activities connected to it.

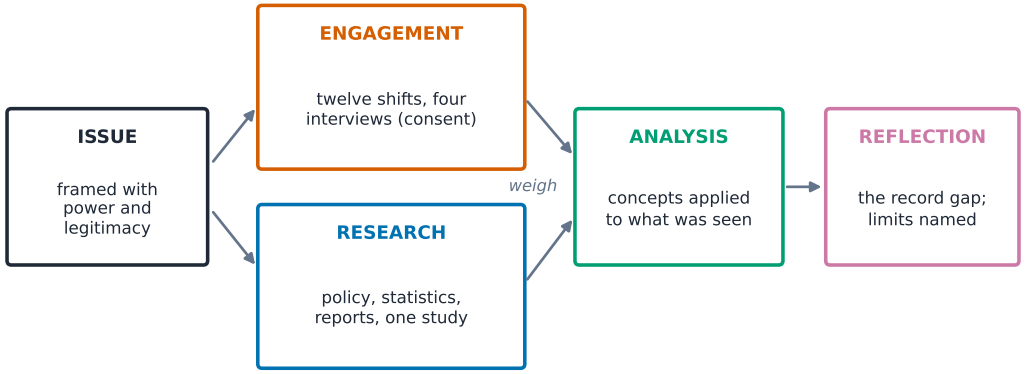
Turn the issue into a question that uses one or two key concepts from the core:

Weak	Strong
Are delivery apps good?	How do delivery platforms use power over riders in my city, and how far do recent rules protect riders' rights?
Is pollution bad?	How far has the river clean-up programme in my district gained legitimacy with local residents?

Engagement and research

Engagement is first-hand experience of the issue. It must be purposeful (chosen to answer your question) and recorded (notes, interview transcripts, a diary, photographs where allowed). Follow basic **research ethics**: ask for **informed consent** before an interview, keep people anonymous if they ask, and never put anyone at risk.

Research adds published sources: official documents, statistics, news reports and academic studies. Compare different **perspectives** (the government, a company, the people affected, independent experts), and evaluate them: whose view has evidence, whose view serves its own interests, and whose voice is missing?



Engagement and research are weighed against each other in the analysis; reflection names what was learned and its limits.

Writing the report

1. **The issue**: the question, why it is political, and how it links to a global debate.
2. **Research**: what the published sources and perspectives show.
3. **Engagement**: what you did, saw and heard.

4. **Analysis**: apply the key concepts (power, sovereignty, legitimacy, interdependence, and ideas such as rights or development) to your evidence. Compare what people told you with what the documents say.
5. **Reflection** : what the engagement showed that reading alone could not; the limits of your evidence; what you would do differently; how your own position (age, background, language) affected what you learned.

> **Worked example.** Question: *How do delivery platforms use power over riders in my city, and how far do recent rules protect riders' rights?*

- Engagement: interviews with six riders at a rest station (with consent; names not used); a conversation with a staff member at a community service centre for riders; two hours observing pick-ups at a busy shopping centre.
- Research: national guidelines on delivery riders' rights issued in 2021; platform statements on how delivery times are set; news reports; a study of platform work in another country.
- Analysis: the app's algorithm sets the agenda (a hidden face of power): riders cannot negotiate times, only accept or refuse orders. The guidelines gained legitimacy with riders when they produced visible changes (longer time limits), but riders said that pay per order still depends on the platform alone. Interdependence: platforms need riders, but each rider depends far more on the platform (asymmetric).
- Reflection: six riders at one station are not all riders; riders may not speak freely to a student; the platforms did not agree to an interview, so their perspective comes only from public statements.
- HL recommendation: an evidence-based proposal, such as publishing how delivery times are calculated, with the reasons from the evidence and the likely objections.

Checklist

- The format: up to 2,000 words; 30% SL, 20% HL; the HL recommendation.
- A political, debatable, globally connected, engageable issue, framed as a question with key concepts.
- Engagement: first-hand, purposeful, recorded, ethical (consent, anonymity, safety).
- Research: sources and perspectives compared and evaluated.
- The report's five parts, with analysis through key concepts and an honest reflection.