

The historical investigation

IB DP History internal assessment full package

1. The investigation at a glance

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IB History internal assessment: a 2000-word piece of original research on a chosen subject, worth 20 percent at HL and SL, marked against six criteria totalling 34 - question and plan, research, sources and evidence, analysis and structure, conclusion and reflection, referencing.

Must-know: the three question tests (narrow, answerable, non-trivial); primary where possible, secondary for debate; TWO sources evaluated in depth with OPVL relative to the question; evidence organised by theme; a conclusion that owns its limits methodologically; the worked Hoare-Laval example, December 1935.

2. Choosing and planning

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The question makes or breaks the investigation: narrow (a person, decision, event or policy - not a war), answerable (the evidence exists and is accessible), non-trivial (historians actually disagree). Compare the League of Nations failure (broad, narrative) with How far was the Hoare-Laval Pact the decisive blow to League credibility (a decision, a date, a debatable how far).

The research plan states the question, the method (which kinds of sources, which archives or editions) and a mini-bibliography - a plan expected to evolve. The plan criterion also rewards a reasoned choice of topic; the classic failure is the biography-report with no question.

3. Sources and evaluation

Sources and evaluation

The source-work is the heart: a broad, relevant, precise set - primary where possible, secondary for context and debate - with TWO sources evaluated in depth: origin and purpose as handles, value and limitation relative to the question. A cabinet minute is valuable for ministers' real positions and limited for what was thought; a memoir is valuable for self-justification unmasked and limited for the sequence of events.

Evidence is organised to the argument, grouped by theme, with sources cross-checked for corroboration and contradiction - both are findings. Citation runs in-text with a complete, consistent bibliography.

4. Analysis and reflection

Analysis and reflection

Analysis argues: each thematic section argues its leg, weighs the counter-case and hands on - organised around a thesis with signposts, no narrative dead-ends. The conclusion answers directly, states the judgement's grounds, and owns its limits.

Worked example: Hoare-Laval - the pact text (a proposal, never a policy) and the Times leading article (establishment opinion in real time) weigh concession as pattern against structure; the conclusion finds credibility destroyed by its own authors, and the reflection names the closed French archives and the pro-League bias of much historiography.

Check yourself

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The three question tests; the plan's three parts.

Primary and secondary roles; the two deep evaluations with OPVL; corroboration and contradiction.

Theme-organised analysis; a conclusion that answers; reflection that is methodological.

The six criteria and their marks; the Hoare-Laval example's question, two sources and conclusion.