Question Design for Investigations: Activities and Strategies to Help Students

You are required to complete an investigation as part of the assessment requirements for this subject.

It can be challenging to choose a question which helps you to provide evidence of your learning at the highest standard possible.

This task sheet has been designed to help you consider all the factors involved in the design of a good question.

Activity 1

From this subject, choose three areas of study which you have enjoyed. Rank them in order, with number 1 representing the area you enjoyed the most.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Activity 2

Mind mapping can help you to organise your ideas and link them together where appropriate. Design your own mind map for the three subject areas you selected in activity 1. An example of a mind map is provided to help you.

Increased public knowledge

Promotion of healthy eating

Impact on food and hospitality industries

Consumption

Current trends in food consumption

Healthy food

Production

Global impact

Sustainability

Activity 3

Applying the questions below to your topics can help you to decide between them and allow you to focus on only one.

The elements in the diagram can help you to narrow your topic. However, you should remember that not all of these might apply to this subject.

Activity 4

At this point it may be a good idea to do some background reading and/or Internet research into your chosen topic area.

This will give you a good idea of how much information there is on your topic and how easy it will be for you to research.

This research can also give rise to questions which you would like answered and could form the basis of your investigation.

Below is an outline of a table you can use to record your references, notes and questions raised. This is similar to the Academic Note-taking templates from the SACE Board which you can use for your main research.

|  |
| --- |
| TOPIC: |
| Author/organisation |
| Year |
| Title |
| Journal/book/website name and URL |
| Publisher |
| Location |
| Website – date you viewed the article |
| Availability of information:  Questions raised: |

Activity 5

Hopefully you now have a good idea about a possible question and some focussed ideas about what you intend to investigate.

This would be a good point to check the validity of your question using the acronym, FINER.

**F**EASIBLE Can it be researched? Can you complete it in the time available?

**I**NTERESTING Will it challenge you and give you the opportunity to learn something new?

**N**OVEL Will your investigation result in original findings?

**E**THICALIs it safe and ethical to research?

**R**ELEVANTDoes it meet the requirements of the subject?

It may be useful to write down your answers or use a table such as the one below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **FINER element** | **Yes / No (√)** | **Evidence/Reason** |
| Feasible |  |  |
| Interesting |  |  |
| Novel |  |  |
| Ethical |  |  |
| Relevant |  |  |

Activity 6

It is important to consider the wording of your question. The wording provides a focus for your investigation and determines the types of data you will need to collect.

The table below summarises the main points about good question wording and what to avoid. Check your question against the information in the table.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Good question wording** | **Things to avoid** |
| Clear, straightforward language | “What” questions |
| Open-ended questions | Closed questions |
| Use words which allow higher order thinking skills | Broad topics |
| Use a hypothesis to test for a relationship between data sets | Questions to which you already know the answer |

Read the following questions and decide which are good examples of question wording and those which you should avoid.

* **What is** soil erosion?
* **How important is** the influence of social media in bullying amongst teenagers?
* **Who were the** pioneers of the modern world?
* **How accurate is** the statement, ‘short-term aid is more important than long-term aid following an earthquake’?
* **What is the relationship between** the orientation of corries and fluvio-glacial erosion?
* **How to become** an astronaut.
* **What are the** benefits of a low fat diet?
* **To what extent** are shoppers influenced by special offers?
* **How reliable** is the evidence supporting the End Cruel Cosmetics Bill?
* **Where is** the best place to go on holiday?