Learning Online: Researching your Project

Improve your online research skills and your ability to critically analyse sources of information.

If your students are completing the whole of this course online, then they can complete useful and engaging activities, or a test based on the content covered.

You can choose for your students to complete individual tasks by themselves or encourage group work. Though you may have your own ideas about what your students can do with the course content, we've made things easy for you by suggesting some activities that you can submit to your students below. Choose whichever suits your students and needs.

Each task has student-facing instructions you can use (found later in this pack).

Individual student tasks taken from the course

Reflection: Students write a 500-word reflection on what they learned from the course, including anything they might do differently now as a result of their learning and anything additional they found out from their own reading around the topic. They will submit this reflection as a written essay, podcast or video.

Activity: Students complete the source analysis activity on Step 2.6 and then write a 500-word evaluation of two sources for a topic of their choice, which they submit to you.

Research task 1: In a search browser, students try using different variations of their research topic to see what different results they get. They write a list of possible research questions.

Research task 2: Students complete the research task in Step 2.11 about coral bleaching and submit a 500-word summary that analyses the three sources of information, ending with their own argument about coral bleaching. They will submit this summary to you.

Group tasks based on the course

Discussion task: Students discuss: what makes a source reliable? What are the tell-tale signs that a source is unreliable? What are the top five places to search for information? You will need to set up a discussion board for these questions on a platform of your choice.

Test

You can use the test questions listed in the student instructions below as a short assessment to enable your students to demonstrate what they have learned on the course. The assessment has 15 marks in total.

The questions have been designed to be flexible and open. The questions indicate which steps the answers can be found on. The marks available reflect the likely length and complexity of the answer expected, and how many points they are likely to make. For example, a 5-mark question might reflect a longer, more complex question, or one where they have asked to describe or explain a number of elements. Depending on the level and ability of your students, you can decide how you wish to award the marks, so they are appropriate for your class.

Each question suggests which steps the students may wish to return to answer the questions. You can decide if you want to include this information when you share the assessment with your students.

Additional support

You can use the How to use Futurelearn guide with your students to get started. If you have any more questions, please refer to the FAQ section.

Student instructions

Reflection

Write a 500-word reflection on what you have learned from the course. It should include anything you might do differently now because of what you learned and anything additional you found out in your reading around the topic. Submit this reflection to your teacher as a written essay, podcast or video.

Activity

Complete the exercise on Step 2.6 of the course. You will be shown a research topic and then asked to identify the most useful source of information.

Then identify one good source and one bad source of information for your own topic of choice. Write a short summary to explain why they are useful or unreliable (no more than 500 words) and submit this to your teacher.

Research task 1

Pick a topic you would like to find out more about or use the project topic you already have in mind.

In a search browser (or any of the other tools listed in Step 1.5), try using different variations of your research topic to see what different results you get. Make a list of the different research questions you could ask based on these search results.

You may want to read Steps 1.6, 1.7 and 1.8 to help you find different search results.

Research task 2

Complete the research task in Step 2.11 by evaluating these three sources of information about coral bleaching:

1. [Obituary: Great Barrier Reef (25 Million BC-…). Outside Online Article.](#)
2. [Warming Trends and Bleaching Stress of the World's Coral Reefs 1985-2012. Scientific Reports Journal Article.](#)
3. [Satirist writes obituary for the Great Barrier Reef. Internet takes him all too seriously. Grist Online Article.](#)

You should write a short analysis of no-more than 500 words that ends with your own argument about whether you think saving the Barrier Reef is an impossible task. Submit this analysis to your teacher.

Group discussion

Use the discussion board your teacher has set up to discuss these questions:

- What makes a source reliable?
- What are the tell-tale signs that a source is unreliable?
- What are the top 5 places to search for information?

Remember that a source can be a website, video, newspaper article, book, or podcast.

Try to reply to at least two other comments.

Test

Complete the assessment questions below to demonstrate your understanding of the course. You can refer back to the course to find the answers or more detail as you need to. You should not however share your answers with other students.

Your answers should be written in full sentences and be appropriately detailed. Make sure you read the questions carefully before starting to answer. Each question shows how many marks are available – use this to guide how much detail or how many points you need to include.

The questions also indicate where you can start to look to find the answer. You can also include information from other steps if that is relevant.

1. Explain why popular search engines like Google can be useful when starting your research, and also why there are limitations. (3 marks) [Step 1.4]

2. Give two examples of Boolean operators and explain what they do. (4 marks) [Step 1.8 and 1.9]

3. What is the difference between primary and secondary sources? (2 marks) [Step 2.2]

4. What is critical thinking and why is it important? (3 marks) [Step 2.4]

5. What is plagiarism and how can you avoid it? (3 marks) [Step 2.7 and 2.8]