1 Introduction to the development of investigation skills

The University of Cambridge International Examinations recommends that teachers of Development Studies should encourage learners to practice and use investigation skills throughout the course as a method of learning. When answering some questions in Paper 2 candidates need to show that they understand how to use personal and/or group investigations of development issues, using both primary and secondary sources of information and data. Centres should make skills such as planning an investigation, understanding research methods, how to present and analyse the results and drawing conclusions a central part of the teaching programme.

Carrying out practical research investigations with a cross-curricular theme will assist candidates in developing the skills required in Section C (Investigation and decision-making) of the Development Studies syllabus assessment objectives:

8. extract relevant information from a range of sources;
9. understand how a simple research exercise is planned and carried out;
10. use their knowledge, understanding and skills, and a range of resources, to reach and justify informed decisions.

Incorporating practical research investigations into the teaching of the Cambridge IGCSE Development Studies syllabus will also enable teachers to help candidates acquire the skills required in section 4.6 (Skills) of the curriculum content of the syllabus:

Candidates should be able to:

- research secondary sources
- collect primary data through observation, questionnaires, interviews;
- present data in a variety of forms;
- analyse data, graphs, maps, photographs, diagrams, cartoons, text;
- evaluate data and strategies;
- make and justify decisions using a variety of sources of information.

1.1 Practical research investigations

All of the research investigations set out in the Appendix to the schemes of work have cross-curricular themes and teachers should try to incorporate them as regular activities into their planning of lessons. In each unit’s scheme of work there are details of which projects contain work applicable to the unit as well as the other units that the project is relevant to. However, candidates are not required to submit any work from the investigations for assessment; they are intended as a teaching aid only.

The undertaking of these practical research investigations should be seen by the Development Studies teacher as an additional teaching tool to emphasise the links between the different sections of the syllabus. In the Development Studies examinations, candidates are always encouraged to extend their ideas, especially in the latter parts of questions in Paper 1, where an understanding of these inter-relationships can always be expressed. The topics may be amended to suit local conditions and experiences of the candidates.
The Development Studies syllabus emphasises the importance of the inter-relationships between the social, economic, political and environmental processes of development. The practical research investigations set out in the Appendix to the schemes of work may help students to become more aware of local issues and therefore enable them to have a better understanding of how development issues may impact upon the society in which they live.

By collecting primary data when carrying out the practical research investigations, candidates will improve their analytical skills and in the evaluation of evidence may consider the constraints upon development and critically examine the different perceptions people may have within their own community.

1.2 Follow-up work to the practical research investigations

Follow-up work to the research investigations in the classroom can be adapted to suit the primary data that has been collected.

A research report could be written after each research investigation has been carried out, and should include:

- An introduction setting out the aims and objectives of the investigation.
- A rationale for the topic, which may include a limited amount of secondary data. A variety of data representation techniques is preferable and teachers should try to ensure that students can present primary data in written, statistical, diagrammatic, cartographic, pictorial and graphical form.
- Analysis, conclusion and evaluation of the information collected, with reference to the original aim. An attempt to identify inter-relationships between political, social, economic and environmental aspects should be made, although not all elements will be relevant to all topics. The issue of sustainable development should be paid particular attention as should the link to the appropriate Millennium Development Goal, or Goals.
- Conclusions should be drawn up based on the evidence collected and where possible, the importance of the research findings for the local community should be emphasised. This could take the form of an Action Plan to be presented to the local administrators or a poster for display at the centre.
- An evaluation of the research should be made with suggestions for improvement.

The first two research investigations give details of how the studies could be undertaken, but it is not exhaustive and teachers will have other ideas as to how to proceed. Research Investigation 1 is based entirely upon secondary data. For some Centres it may not be possible to undertake primary data collection in the field and statistical data from books or from the Internet can form the basis of very useful enquiries. Research Investigation 2 involves mainly the collection of primary data in the field.

Research Investigations 3 to 10 are given as broader frameworks. Detailed suggestions for methods of data collection and representation are given where appropriate and these are transferable from one study to another.