

Leaving Certificate History Research Study Report

Student's Guide to the RSR
Wicklow County Archives





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Note

Website links can change over time.

If you find that some of the links in this guide no longer work go to:

www.wicklow.ie
and search for
County Archives



KEY DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT YOUR WORK

The following documents are available on our website at <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Archives/Collections/Digitised-Collections>

	Format	Content
Teacher's and Student's Guide to the Archives	PDF & Print	A guide to Wicklow County Archives and the resources available to help you complete your project
Teacher's Guide to the RSR	PDF	A guide of the processes and requirements for completing the RSR project.
Student's Guide to the RSR	PDF	Step by step guide to how to complete the RSR, with guidance and checklists
How to do Historical Research	Powerpoint	A presentation on how to approach historical research
How to do Historical Research - Student Guide	PDF	Where to find information sources. How to carry out research, record your findings and correctly cite information sources
RSR Worksheets	PDF	A series of worksheets to help students record their findings

WHAT IS THE RSR?

The Research Study Report (RSR) is based around researching a topic of interest and historical significance, and writing an essay based on the topic. The RSR is worth up to 100 marks, so you have the opportunity to have up to 20% before sitting the exam in June.

While it involves a good deal of work, students' generally achieve high marks in the Research Study Report. Choosing a topic that interests you makes the work much easier to undertake.

The RSR is completed individually over the course of 5th and/or 6th year. It is handwritten, in a booklet provided by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) and submitted in March/April of 6th year. All work submitted must be your own, plagiarism or using work completed by somebody else could impact you – your results can be withheld in situations where plagiarism is discovered.

You should, where possible, keep copies of all the information and sources you use until results are issued. It is also very important that you cite and reference all of the sources used in your report as this will affect your marks. More information on how to correctly cite information sources is shown later in this document.

It is advisable to have a folder and a refill pad that is specifically for all work related to your RSR.

The RSR contains four different sections:

	Section		Marks
1	The Outline Plan		15
2	Evaluation of Sources	Higher Level need a minimum of 3 sources.	25
		Ordinary Level need a minimum of 2 sources.	
3	The Extended Essay	Higher Level 1,200 – 1,500 words	50
		Ordinary Level 600 – 800 words.	
4	The Review of the Process		10

Note: The word count for the extended essay includes the Review of the Process.



General Approach

It is advisable to create a plan of how you intend on completing the RSR.

A good path to follow is:

1. Selecting topic for research and explaining why you selected this topic, as well as why it is considered historically significant.
2. Writing down what you already know about the topic.
3. Deciding what you would like to find out more about, or what questions you would like to know the answer to.
4. Finding sources to use and research. (See **“How to Research”** paper at <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Archives/Collections/Digitised-Collections>)
5. Gathering information that is relevant from the sources.
6. Using information previously known, and newly gathered, to answer your questions and present your ideas as part of ‘The Extended Essay’.
7. Completing a number of drafts for the different sections in the RSR booklet.

STEP 1: CHOOSING A TOPIC

You have a lot of freedom in selecting your topic. However, there are a few things to note before selecting a topic and beginning your research.

- ▲ If you are selecting a topic that is based in Irish History (event, person, movement, etc.), it must have happened before 1993. If selecting from European or World History, it must have happened before 1992. If the RSR is completed based on something after these dates, no marks will be given.
- ▲ Before selecting a topic, you should also consider how accessible sources will be for that topic – it may be very hard to get sources if covering something from the 13th or 14th century! The more sources you can find and use during your investigative research, the more you can show your interest in the subject and your skills as a student of history.
- ▲ Be specific in the topic you select. Researching a topic like the War of Independence could take years of work. Instead, you should narrow the focus, for example, Robert Barton of Wicklow and his role in the Treaty Negotiations, Wicklow Women and their Role in the War of Independence, etc.

General	Focused
The 1798 Rebellion	South or West Wicklow and the 1798 Rebellion
The Great Famine	The Coolattin Estate during the Famine
	The Poor Law and the Shillelagh Workhouse
	Death and Emigration from Wicklow during the Famine
Ireland and World War I	Wicklow women in WWI
	WWI impact on Wicklow
	Wicklow men in the great War
	Kynoch Munitions, Arklow and WWI
Wicklow Women	Jennie Wyse Power - Women's right activist 1858 - 1941
	Anna Parnell - Ladies Land League
	Teresa Dargan - Poor Law Union and Rathdrum Rural District Council

(See RSR Worksheets <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Archives/Collections/Digitised-Collections>)



STEP 2: HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

You can research any part of history for the RSR – e.g., political, sporting, military, local, women's, scientific, warfare, etc. BUT the topic must be historically significant! In determining if the topic is historically significant; we come back to the 4Rs. In working out if the topic is historically significant they must meet at least one of the following criteria:

1	Remarkable
2	Remembered
3	Resulting in Change
4	Revealing

For more information on historical significance see *How to Research* available on our website at <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Archives/Collections/Digitised-Collections>.

You must be able to explain the historical significance of your topic to your teacher when explaining what your RSR will be about; but you will also have to justify and explain your selection when completing the Outline Plan.

(See RSR Worksheets)

STEP 3: RESEARCHING YOUR TOPIC, FINDING SOURCES AND GATHERING INFORMATION

In The Outline Plan, you will also be asked to list the aims of the research – what information do you specifically want to find out. As part of this, it is a good idea to create a couple of questions that you want to find the answers to, these questions do not have to be included as part of the Extended Essay, but will give you a more focused approach to your research. Think about what you know already, what you are focusing on, and why you would like to learn more about your selected topic.

The guide to carrying out research provides a lot of useful information on how to approach historical research. (See the separate paper on **'How to Research'** <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Archives/Collections/Digitised-Collections>)

At Higher Level, students are expected to have at least **three** sources. Ordinary Level students need to have at least **two** sources, but there is no harm in using three. It is expected that primary sources and specialist secondary sources will be used. Specialist secondary are focused on a particular topic or period in history, e.g., a Junior Cycle History textbook is not considered specialist secondary because it covers many topics but not in as much detail.

There are many different types of sources that can be used, it all depends on the topic that you have selected. The main types of primary sources that are used as part of the RSR are newspapers, official documents, government reports, speeches, interviews, autobiographies, diaries, letters, etc. While the types of secondary sources used are books (but you cannot use your History textbook), biographies, articles, most websites, documentaries, podcasts, YouTube, etc. Remember, we now live in a digital age so a huge amount of information and material can be found online. For a list of possible topics and sources of information see (Possible Topics List in the **Guide to the Archives** <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Archives/Collections/Digitised-Collections>).

Where do we find sources?

Sourcing information is covered in the paper on **'How to Research'** <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Archives/Collections/Digitised-Collections>)

(See also RSR Worksheets for recording your Research)

Step 4: Citing Sources Used

You should also keep a record of all the sources used, it is important to cite (refer to) where you got some of your information from. Citing information is covered in the paper on **'How to Research'** <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Archives/Collections/Digitised-Collections>



STEP 5: COMPLETING THE OUTLINE PLAN

The Outline Plan is the first section of the RSR booklet. You have 1 page to fill in the booklet for this section, and it is worth up to 15 marks in the RSR. There is four different things to address in The Outline Plan (these should be used as subheadings):

1. Define and justify the topic you selected (up to 3 marks).

- ▲ What exactly are you going to research for your RSR?
- ▲ Why is this topic important and considered historically significant? As part of this you should be aiming to link in the 4Rs – remarkable, remembered, revealing, and resulted. Failing to explain the historical significance is how a lot of students lose marks!
- ▲ Why did you select this topic for your RSR?
- ▲ What about this topic are you interested in?

2. Identify your aims for the RSR (up to 3 marks).

- ▲ What things about the topic do you want to find out more about?
- ▲ You should have 3 – 5 things that you want to find out more about. These can be presented as numbered bullet points, but when doing the research, you may address them as questions. Your aims must be about the topic that you have selected, not about how you will research or the skills you may use. It should also be written in the future tense.
 - ▶ 'I would like to discover...', 'I would like to find out about...', 'I would like to understand why...', 'I hope to discover...', 'I intend to establish why/when...', 'I aim to...', etc.
 - ▶ Key words = explore, investigate, assess, impact, consequences, causes, understand, develop, etc.
- ▲ What else do you hope to achieve when completing the RSR?

3. Explain your **intended approach** for completion of the RSR (up to 3 marks).

- ▲ How do you plan on completing the RSR?
- ▲ A step-by-step guide on how you will do the RSR, from the finding sources, gathering information, organising ideas, planning the extended essay, teacher feedback and re-drafting work, completing a sample booklet, etc.
 - ▶ How will you achieve the aims that you have previously stated?
 - ▶ How will you find the sources to consult? Name the places that you will look.
 - ▶ How will you decide on what sources to use? How will you ensure that sources are objective and present an accurate view?
 - ▶ What are the areas that you intend to concentrate on?
 - ▶ How will you store the information that you gather as part of your research?
 - ▶ Will you crosscheck information to ensure its reliability?
 - ▶ Will you redraft your RSR after receiving feedback from the teacher, will you edit and condense it to meet the word count?

4. List and correctly cite the sources (primary and secondary) that you plan to use while conducting your research (3 sources x 2 marks) Ordinary level (2 sources x 3 marks). (see **Citing Sources** in **How to Research** paper <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Archives/Collections/Digitised-Collections>)
- ▲ This is listing the sources, you do not need to say what you thought of the sources, that is completed in the next section.
 - ▲ You could rank the sources in order from best to worst.
 - ▲ For each source, the following information should be included – source type, author, title, publisher, year of publication, URL, dates accessed, etc., all of this information is shown above on how to cite sources.
 - ▲ It is advised to use one book, one website and another source. It would be excellent to use a primary source also.
 - ▲ It is OK to use more than three sources, but you should only list three in The Outline Plan, the remaining should be listed at the end of the RSR.

Outline Plan Marking Scheme (15 marks)

Define and Justify + Identify Aims + Intended Approach		Citation of Sources			
		Higher Level		Ordinary Level	
Very good	8-9	Max 6 marks (2 marks x 3 sources)		Max 6 marks (3 marks x 2 sources)	
Good	6-7				
Fair	3-5	Accurate Citation	2	Title	1
Weak	0-2	Author and Title only	1	Author	1
				One further piece of validating info	1



STEP 6: COMPLETING THE EVALUATION OF SOURCES

Section 2 of the RSR is The Evaluation of Sources. This is 2 pages in the RSR booklet and is worth up to 25 marks. In The Outline Plan, you have listed the sources and all of the information relating to them; to save space, it is best to now refer to them as Source 1, 2 and 3, or refer to the author of the source.

1. When evaluating your sources, you must state what type of source they are (book, website, journal, newspaper article, etc.), as well as saying if they are primary or secondary sources.
2. You will now evaluate the sources listed from The Outline Plan. The key words to think about when evaluating the sources are **Relevance, Strength and Weakness**. You need to be completely honest about your sources (even if you spent 4 weeks reading a book and it gave you very little new information!)
 - ▶ For example: 'The most useful source I consulted during my research was ... It was written by ... This is a secondary source but references some primary source material, for example ... I believe this source gave me a greater insight and understanding of ... (relevance) The main strength of this source was ... Another strength of this source was ... One weakness I found in this source was ... While using the source I had to be aware of bias, for example ...'
3. When considering the relevance, strengths and weaknesses of the sources, think about the following questions:
 - ▶ What type of source is this?
 - ▶ Where did the source come from?
 - ▶ Is this source relevant to the topic I have selected?
 - ▶ Was this source based solely on my topic, or did it cover more topics in a wider context?
 - ▶ What information did I get from this source?
 - ▶ Did this source answer any of the questions I set out at the start of my research?
 - ▶ What were the limitations of the source?
 - ▶ Who produced the source? Is the author well-known?
 - ▶ Is the author an eyewitness or a historian?
 - ▶ Does the source appear to be biased or prejudiced in any way? Or does it present an objective account?
 - ▶ Would you consider the source to be reliable?
 - ▶ Are any quotes used from the source referenced in the RSR footnotes?
 - ▶ Does the source contain up to date information on the topic?
 - ▶ Does the source include information that other sources have not mentioned before?

- ▶ Were the sources easy to use? Was there a list of contents and chapter headings? Was there a glossary of key words included? Were there any visuals (maps/graphs/timelines/photographs, etc.) included with the source?
- ▶ Was the source accessible to all? Was it easy to understand the content, language and information presented by the author?
- ▶ Was there enough information presented in the source? Or do you feel it was very vague in the information presented?

Possible Strengths for Sources	Possible Weaknesses for Sources
Nicely illustrated.	No maps/photos/graphs/illustrations used to support the content in the text.
Good selection of maps/graphs/photos that support the content.	Some information is relevant, but a lot of information is selective and not explained in enough detail.
Relevant information.	Concentrated more on ... aspect, instead of giving more information on the topic.
Clear explanations given and coherent arguments presented in a well-organised manner.	A very limited and narrow account was presented.
Accurate facts, statistics and figures are presented.	Too much information and detail presented, it felt very overwhelming.
Gives a good overview of the time in history.	The author presented a lot of opinions, without supporting it with fact or evidence.
Provides relevant and accurate background information.	The text shows some evidence of bias from the author as not all sides of the story are discussed in equal detail and measure.
A wide range of facts and evidence is presented and allows the reader to make an objective judgement.	Text relies heavily on secondary sources and does not reference any primary sources throughout.
Good use of quotations from witnesses.	Information presented is difficult to follow, there were no paragraphs used and information was not presented in a chronological order.
Primary materials is referred to throughout the text.	Confusing layout and difficult to follow.
A good mix of primary and secondary sources were referred to on the website.	Facts and statistics that were presented are not the same as all the other sources on this topic.
Quotes and information from primary sources and eyewitnesses led to more sources on the topic.	The author's name was not presented on the website, it is difficult to know who is presenting the information or how many people can edit the relevant information.



Possible Strengths for Sources	Possible Weaknesses for Sources
Enjoyable text to engage with.	No background information provided.
Helped to further my understanding of a particular topic.	No historical context of this period in history is presented, so a thorough understanding is needed before engaging with this resource.
A lot of information is presented in the text.	The information and evidence presented had some gaps, this made the source questionable and made it difficult to come to a conclusion.
Website is updated regularly, and all information is based on evidence, facts, statistics, etc.	No glossary of terms was presented, and some of the language was difficult to understand.
Easy to use – a clear contents page, chapters divided in a coherent and structured manner.	The website allows users to edit the posts, this meant that a lot of the information was not accurate, instead it was presenting people's opinions and not facts.
The website was user friendly with clear headings, as well as a search bar and an option to filter results.	Too much background information was presented and not enough content on the topic.
A reliable and reputable website.	The relevant information was not contained in the chapter, as stated, instead it was spread across several different chapters.
Glossary of key terms at the end.	As it was an older source, some of the language was old-fashioned and difficult to understand.
Bibliography included which suggested other sources based on the topic.	The website was difficult to navigate, with no links or search bar.
The website had a lot of external links as part of the topic, this made more sources and websites more accessible.	Lacked in-depth analysis of the topic that would be expected in a specialist secondary source.
The author is reliable as they have written several texts on the topic and are highly regarded for their work.	The website is outdated and not regularly updated.
Author/editors name was presented on the website for users to see.	
A fair and balanced viewpoint is presented.	
Presents the causes and consequences of actions to show a more detailed understanding of the topic.	

4. It is also a good idea to compare and contrast your sources; e.g., Source 1 was the most helpful source because ... Source 2 was helpful, but not as good as Source 1 and Source 3 because ...
5. If one of the sources was not as helpful, it is ok to say that. However, don't say the source was useless, if you got no information from it then you should not have selected it as one of your sources!

Evaluation of Sources Marking Scheme (25 marks) - Higher Level

Reference to THREE sources		Reference to TWO sources		Reference to ONE source	
Excellent	22-25	Excellent	15-17	Excellent	8-9
Very good	17-21	Very good	12-14	Very good	6-7
Good	13-16	Good	9-11	Good	4-5
Fair	9-12	Fair	6-8	Fair	2-3
Weak	0-8	Weak	0-5	Weak	0-1

Evaluation of Sources Marking Scheme (25 marks) - Ordinary Level

Reference to TWO sources		Reference to ONE source	
Very good	21-25	Very good	14-17
Good	15-20	Good	10-13
Fair	8-14	Fair	5-9
Weak	0-7	Weak	0-4

(See RSR Worksheets)



STEP 7: COMPLETING THE EXTENDED ESSAY

Section 3 of RSR.

Worth up to 50 marks.

Higher Level the word count is 1,200 – 1,500 words. Ordinary Level the word count is 600 – 800 words (this includes the Review of the Research Process).

In the Extended Essay, the student sets out the answers to the questions they had at the beginning of the RSR, and the aims they originally set out in the Outline Plan

- ▲ Like your essays completed in class, write the essay as if you are explaining the topic to somebody who knows nothing about it!

Should be written in a **coherent** and **logical** manner – introduction, main body, conclusion, inclusion of quotes/facts/statistics.

- ▲ It is a good idea to start with a quote (don't forget the quotation marks!) from the person being studied, or about the event being researched. You should also use a few quotes throughout your essay. When using a quote, make sure to use a footnote to reference this.
 - ▶ A footnote is where a small number¹ is placed beside the quote. At the end of the essay, the footnotes are listed. 1. Source Type, Name of Source, Author, Page Number.
 - ▶ The introduction should give some background information and a broad overview of what the essay will be about.
 - ▶ In the body of the essay, address the main findings during your research, and state the conclusions that you have come to based on the research process.
 - ▶ Conclusion should summarise what you have found out, has your opinion on the topic changed or has it influenced your beliefs or future actions in any way?

The essay is marked based on – historical knowledge, research skills and presentation.

It is advised to use linking phrases as part of the extended essay. A list of phrases can be found in the **How to Research** paper at <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Archives/Collections/Digitised-Collections>.

Extended Essay Marking Scheme (50 marks)					
Historical Knowledge	25	Research Skills	15	Presentation	10
Thorough, accurate and relevant to the title. Detailed account. Inclusion of facts, figures, statistics, etc. All must be relevant to the title of your RSR.		Such as – a good depth of investigation evident, correctly using sources, fair treatment of issues presented. Use quotes, figures and opinions. Refer to the views of historians as presented in the sources.		Literacy and Structure, Logical Manner, etc. Spelling, Grammar, Punctuation. Neat and legible handwriting.	
Higher Level					
Excellent	21-25	Excellent	13-15	Excellent	9-10
Very good	16-20	Very good	10-12	Very good	7-8
Good	11-15	Good	7-9	Good	5-6
Fair	6-10	Fair	4-6	Fair	3-4
Weak	0-5	Weak	0-3	Weak	0-2
Ordinary Level					
Historical Knowledge	25	Research Skills	15	Presentation	10
Very good	21-25	Excellent	13-15	Very good	8-10
Good	15-20	Very good	10-12	Good	6-7
Fair	8-14	Good	7-9	Fair	4-5
Weak	0-7	Fair Weak	4-6 0-3	Weak	0-3



STEP 8: COMPLETING THE REVIEW OF PROCESS

This can be completed as part of the Extended Essay, or as a stand-alone section at the end. It is important to note that the review of process **is included in the word count for the extended essay**.

- ▲ Review of process should be no more than 200 - 300 words at Higher Level, and 100 - 200 words at Ordinary Level.
- ▲ Worth up to 10 marks.

Upon completion of the RSR, you must review the research process. This means you review how you completed the RSR, and how you feel each stage went. You should be honest and specific in discussing this, do not be vague – e.g. I completed my research by finding sources – be more specific! How did you go about finding sources? Was it easy or difficult to find sources?

Although the Review is written as part of the Extended Essay section, ideally you should start it on a new page and put the title at the top of the page.

Below are some points to consider when completing the review of the process:

- ▲ How did you pick the title of your RSR?
- ▲ What problems did you encounter as part of your research and the completion of the RSR?
- ▲ How did you find the sources that you used? Was it easy or difficult to find sources to use? Where did you find them in the end?
- ▲ How did you conduct the research? When you read a source how did you keep track of the information that was gathered? Did you come across any problems in the sources you used? Was there conflicting information in some of the sources?
- ▲ Did you achieve the aims you set out in the Outline Plan? Yes/No? Why/Why not? Explain the difficulties you came across that stopped you from achieving them. Explain the successes you had in achieving your aims.
- ▲ Was there any part of the research that surprised you in the research? Did your opinion of anything change while consulting the sources?
- ▲ What problems did you encounter throughout your RSR? Is there anything that you would change if you were to complete this project again?
- ▲ How many drafts did you complete of the project? Did you have to make any major changes after receiving feedback from the teacher? How did you make these changes?
- ▲ What have you uncovered about the skills of a historian from completing this project? Did you learn about new skills? Do you feel completing this project was a good experience and worth the time in completing it?

Key words to use – consulted the teacher, skills of a historian, used the internet, planned the structure of my project, read the sources, took notes, extracted the important information, would have liked to write more/find out more about, libraries were very helpful/unhelpful,

the internet was very good/flawed/inaccurate, developed the outline plan, compared the information, planned the structure of my essay, one main idea for each paragraph, difficulty condensing all of the information into a short essay, tried to be fair and objective, identified bias, sorted out causes and effects, evaluated each of the sources, strengths and weaknesses,

Review of the Research Process Marking Scheme (10 marks)

Can be a stand-alone section or may be integrated into the extended essay.

It should be personal to your project and address specific aspects of your RSR. It should not be generic and vague!

Higher Level		Ordinary Level	
Excellent	9-10	Very good	8-10
Very good	7-8	Good	6-7
Good	5-6	Fair	4-5
Fair	3-4	Weak	0-3
Weak	0-2		



STEP 9: FINAL CHECKLIST FOR THE RSR

Title – does the title selected fit the content of the RSR?	
Is there a date included in the title?	
The subject of my research is clearly stated in the title of the RSR.	
All of the information included and completed is within the date parameters (before 1993 for Irish history, and before 1992 for European history).	
Is the Outline Plan completed?	
All four parts of the Outline Plan are completed, and each has been given a section heading that is clearly identified.	
The aims of the RSR have clearly been identified. Are all of these aims focused on the topic that is being researched?	
Is the intended approach focused on the subject and the expected path for completion of the RSR?	
Are all of sources quoted correctly and referenced as per the type of source?	
Have I evaluated all of the sources that are listed in the Outline Plan?	
Are three sources evaluated? Do they have strengths, weaknesses and relevance included as part of the evaluation?	
Is the Extended Essay divided into paragraphs?	
Have I presented my findings and conclusions in the Extended Essay, and kept a logical and focused approach throughout?	
Have I addressed in my essay, the aims that I originally stated as part of my Outline Plan?	
Are there quotes/references used from all three sources?	
Footnotes are correctly used and referenced in the RSR.	
Is there a bibliography included at the end of the RSR?	
Is the Review of the Process completed after the Extended Essay?	
Have I made a clear review on how useful the research process I completed was in addressing and achieving the aims I set out in the Outline Plan?	
My review of the research process is specific to the subject of my RSR.	
I have successfully stayed within the word count for my extended essay (and review).	
Is the front of the RSR booklet correctly filled out with all required information?	
Blue or black pen has been used throughout the booklet.	
I have checked my booklet for accurate spelling and grammar.	

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