

9 Course Requirements

For the Preliminary course:

- 120 indicative hours are required to complete this course.

For the HSC course:

- 120 indicative hours are required to complete this course
- completion of a personal interest project is a prerequisite of completing this course.

9.1 Personal Interest Project Requirements

Each personal interest project is to:

- be a topic of the student's own choice
- be related to the course
- develop appropriate methodologies
- include a cross-cultural perspective.

Each personal interest project has a substantial amount of subject matter that is brought together by each individual student on the basis of their reading, research and personal experience. The personal interest project will be the student's own work, although published material should be consulted to provide background material and/or comparative data.

The student should submit a research proposal outlining the topic and its relationship to the course as a whole. Accompanying this research proposal should be an outline of how the topic will be approached, including the methodologies to be employed. This outline should be submitted to the teacher before detailed work is begun, so that the teacher may advise on subject matter and methodologies. As a result of this teacher feedback, the student may need to rethink the topic and/or the approach.

Should a student choose a personal interest project topic or method of research that could be considered unethical or controversial, it may be advisable to discuss the topic selection with the school's principal.

The student should utilise a range of methodologies that are suited to the topic being studied. These methodologies may be those studied during the Preliminary course or those introduced to the student during the HSC core study. Appropriate methodologies/instruments may be:

- survey
- case study
- participant observation
- content analysis
- focus group
- action research
- questionnaire
- interview
- observation
- statistical analysis
- ethnographic study
- personal reflection
- secondary research.

The student should keep a personal interest project diary that will later form the basis of the log. In this diary, the student should record the progress of the personal interest project, showing a sequential record of the research and details of the processes followed, problems encountered and how these were overcome. This personal interest project diary will not be submitted with the final personal interest project, but may be submitted as part of the school based assessment program.

Presentation of the Personal Interest Project

The personal interest project should be carefully prepared for submission. It may be word processed, typed or hand-written but it must be double-spaced, using one side of the paper only. Students must not submit their projects in hard covered folders or place pages in plastic sleeves. The personal interest project cover supplied by the Board of Studies should be attached to the front of the personal interest project. It must be securely bound and every page must be numbered. Each student's certification documents should be submitted with the personal interest project.

Word limits are indicated for each component of the personal interest project. The word count is based on all words written, as shown by a computer word count or manual count of each word.

The presented project must include the following components:

An Introduction

The introduction will be a brief description (no more than 500 words) of what the topic is about, why this topic was chosen and in what ways it contributes to a better understanding of Society and Culture. The choice of methodologies should be explained and justified, and the cross-cultural component specified.

Log

The log should be based on the student's personal interest project diary and will be a summary (no more than 500 words) of the sequential development of the final product, outlining the procedures undertaken in researching the topic.

Central Material of the Personal Interest Project

The central material will be in written form and may be accompanied by photographs, tables, graphs and/or diagrams that should be labelled and incorporated into the text through discussion. The central material will be between 2500 and 5000 words. The central material must contain a cross-cultural perspective, that is, a perspective different from the student's own. This may involve some knowledge and understanding of viewpoints that differ over space and/or time. The cross-cultural perspective should be integrated in the central material of the personal interest project.

Conclusion

The conclusion will be a statement (no more than 500 words) of what the student learned from the personal interest project.

Resource List

A list of annotated references used in the personal interest project and/or a list of other kinds of resources, for example, films, Internet-sites or video programs referred to during the preparation of the project and resource persons (eg people interviewed). The references should be accurate, publication/production details included, and in the case of internet sites, the URL, access date and a short annotation added, outlining their usefulness to the personal Interest project.

Certification

Certification will have two components. Firstly, the student will report their progress at three points during the process. Both the student and the teacher will sign these reports. Secondly, a final statement that the personal interest project is considered to be an original piece of work carried out by the student will be signed by the principal, the teacher and the student.

Considerations in the Preparation of the Personal Interest Project

For external assessment, the personal interest project will count as 30% of the total HSC course mark. This weighting has been determined because the project develops from the concepts, methodologies and subject matter of the syllabus as a whole.

The course outcomes will be used to assess the personal interest project.

The following questions should be considered in the preparation of the personal interest project.

Clarity

Is the topic clearly stated and are the purposes and procedures of the personal interest project clear?

Conceptual Content

Does the personal interest project reflect the fundamental concepts of the course plus additional, more specific concepts?

Methodological Content

Does the personal interest project demonstrate some of the methodologies essential to the Society and Culture course plus any other distinctive procedures? Are the methodologies appropriate for the topic? Is there evidence of a systematic approach to the study of the topic? Is there an awareness of both the limitations and the values of the methodologies used? Students should consider the ethical implications of both their topic and the methodologies they employ to research that topic.

Subject Matter Content

Is the subject matter accurate, relevant to the topic and adequately explained for the purposes of the project?

Cross-cultural Content

Does the topic reflect some knowledge and understanding of viewpoints different from that of the immediate culture of the student, for example, in terms of generation, socioeconomic group, gender, ethnicity or location?

Integrative Skills

Has the personal interest project integrated various aspects of Society and Culture? Does the personal interest project achieve a coherent structure? Do the conclusions proceed from the statements in the introduction and the arguments presented in the central material? Is personal experience related to public traditions of knowledge?

Communication Skills

Has the student effectively communicated her or his ideas to the external audience of examiners?

Originality

Does the personal interest project give evidence of originality in design, execution and analysis?