**Focusing the Study on an Issue:**

**Getting started:** use background or immersion knowledge of an area of study to begin your investigation. What do you already know? What more would you like to know? If you are interested in an area of study but do not know much about it, then you need to immerse yourself into it through articles, films, discussion, or other means.). Write about your background knowledge and/or your reaction to immersion activities. This can serve as the basis of the introduction to the analysis later.

**Formulating a good Focusing Question:** develop a good research question that requires you to take a stand on an issue after reviewing the relevant facts. This is your Focusing Question. The question should zero in on a specific issue within the area of study and require you to form, and show, an opinion.

**Possible Focusing Question templates:**

- How important is (access to free education / protecting coral reef / awareness of the causes of climate change / the use of diplomacy /...)?

- Whose responsibility is it to (protect coral reef / combat climate change)?

- Do the benefits of (advancing technology / factory farming / patent laws / urbanization / globalization / access to cheap goods...) outweigh the disadvantages?

- What is more important: (the right to free speech or a nation’s security / conserving energy or making renewable energy sources accessible...)?

- Should (education be considered a right or a privilege / people have access to free drinking water / animals have the same rights as people / freedom of speech ever be limited, and if so, why...)?

**Formulating Supporting Questions:** Supporting Questions are those designed to guide a researcher in finding the facts that will shape and support the answer to your Focusing Question.

**Stating your Opinion:** Once you have gathered and analyzed the information collected to answer these questions, write out the opinion you have formed in a sentence or two.

This is your Thesis Statement (claim, or main idea). The study's aim is to support the thesis statement.

A possible thesis statement for our Focusing Question might be:
Cheap, mass produced disposable goods can present huge benefits in terms of convenience and affordability, but these benefits are small in comparison to the damage that our dependence on cheap goods does to our environment, to people’s health, and to the world’s poor.

**Information Gathering / Bibliography:**

**Use reliable sources:**

When compiling information for a study, use reliable, verifiable, and trusted resources, such as, but not limited to

- Articles from major news sources and professional journals
- Government websites
- NGO websites
- Clips of relevant T.V. news, documentaries, podcasts...

Always question a source, even if it appears reliable. Check a source against other reliable sources. Facts should be verified and/or debated before accepted by a researcher.

**Do not use:**

- Yahoo answers
- Wikipedia
- Or any site on which information can be contributed by any random person
- Or any site on which the information comes in the form of a comments section, unless for the purpose of collecting a random sample of peoples’ beliefs or attitudes toward a specific issue.

**Searching tips:**

- If you cannot find what you are looking for, change the key words of your search term, or ask for help. If you find what you are looking for in Wikipedia, go a step further and open the links to the sources Wikipedia used. These are likely to be reliable sources that have the same information in the Wikipedia article.
- If the source is too complicated for you to understand but you think it is relevant, ask for help, or find a different source that is easier to understand.

**Bibliography**

Always cite all sources you used to inform your research in a BIBLIOGRAPHY (a “works cited” page is for works actually cited, whereas a bibliography lists sources both cited and sources used for gaining general knowledge.)
Analyze and Present:

Never copy information directly from a source into your coursework. That is plagiarism: presenting someone else’s work as your own.

- Note information shorthand instead, and then incorporate the information into your work in your own words. Do not just switch out a few key words with synonyms.

- If you must use a part of someone else’s work, do it sparingly and cite the source. This use of someone else’s work will be apparent by your use of quotation marks and proper citation at the end of the quote.

Use real examples to demonstrate your points or illuminate perspectives. These real examples should come from the excellent sources you have found and studied.

Analysis should emphasize multiple perspectives of the issue you are investigating.

The issue you are investigating is your Thesis.

Possible Scenarios / Futures:

Identify a broad range of scenarios based on the evidence you have collected. Evaluate the likelihood of possible outcomes (effects).

- If this cause continues this way, the effects may be...because...How likely is this?

- But if the cause is altered by this action, the effects may be...because... How likely is this?

- But then if this happens instead, then the effects might be...because... How likely is this?

Possible modes of expressing this step could be

- Artwork or Comic strip
- Cause-effect chart
- Detailed, organized, multi-level bullet-point list (as in this document).
- A well-written paragraph for each course of action, descriptive narratives or poetry.

Formulate Possible Courses of Action

How might some of the problems surrounding the issue be solved or altered? A detailed proposal might include

- What the action is
- Who would perform or organize it, and why
- What resources or support that person or those people would need
- What impact the action might it have

Formulate at least three courses of action. Think personal action, local/national (community or political) action, global (community or political) action.

Possible formats for presenting these courses of action could be
- Detailed, organized, multi-level bullet-point list (as in this document).
- A well-written paragraph for each course of action.
- Paneled comic strips.

**Develop Evidence-based, personal response, demonstrating self-awareness**

This step can be interpreted in many ways, but an adequate response to this step could be to:
Discuss or show how completing this study changed the way you feel or think about the issue, or how it made you more aware of the impact you personally have on the issue.

Give reference to the specific parts of the research that have strongly influenced this effect.

This response would already be interwoven into a well-constructed study; this step is then a focused summation of that personal response. A paragraph, comic strip, song, artwork, poetry or other modes could be used to present this step.
Complete Process Overview

The steps for completing the study, discussed in this document, have been as followed:

**Focusing the study**

1. Choose an area of study based on interest, background knowledge, or in reaction to information presented in class, at home, in the news, or by other means.
2. Write what you know about this area of study, including personal connections.
3. Develop a Focusing Question.
4. Formulate supporting questions you will need the answers to in order to form an informed opinion in answer to your Focusing question.

**Information gathering / bibliography**

5. Find the answers to your supporting questions through reliable internet sources that have been checked against other reliable sources. Your sources should represent various perspectives and discuss specific, real word examples. Create a bibliography for all of the sources that will shape your study.

**Analyze and Present**

6. Analyze and evaluate the information (facts) you have collected.
7. Write your opinion in the form of a thesis statement.
8. Plan, draft, and present your analysis, (using writing from step 2 as an introduction), showing how the facts support your thesis statement. You should follow the conventions of good essay writing, although you are encouraged to choose other modes of expression as well.
9. Identify possible futures
10. **Formulate courses of action.**
11. **Develop evidence-based personal response.**
In order to ensure coverage of the assessment criteria, each area of study within the Individual Research might be structured along the following lines:

1) Identification of the area to be studied and reasons for the choice
2) Research for information, showing different perspectives
3) Analysis and evaluation of the information, highlighting and ranking key elements
4) Prediction of possible scenarios and evaluation of their likelihood and effects
5) Identification of possible course of action
6) A personal response to the issues, showing understanding

Identify the area of study and ask questions
What is the current situation in my country/the country I am studying/countries I am comparing?
What are the global influences on the situation?
How far does the global situation affect the national/local situation I am studying?
Are these effects positive/negative/a combination of both?
What might happen to the situation in the future?
How likely is this to happen and would it be a good idea?

Collect information to answer questions
Different sources - books, internet, CD-ROMs, television and radio programmes, questionnaires, interviews etc.
Different perspectives - local, national, global

Reflect and analyse the information collected
Identify and explain the conditions and causes of the situation you have investigated
Identify and evaluate possible future scenarios

Formulate possible course of action
What action might my government, my family or I take in response to future changes?

Personal response
What is my response to the information I have used and the things I have found out?
Complete self evaluation form for the whole Individual Research!