

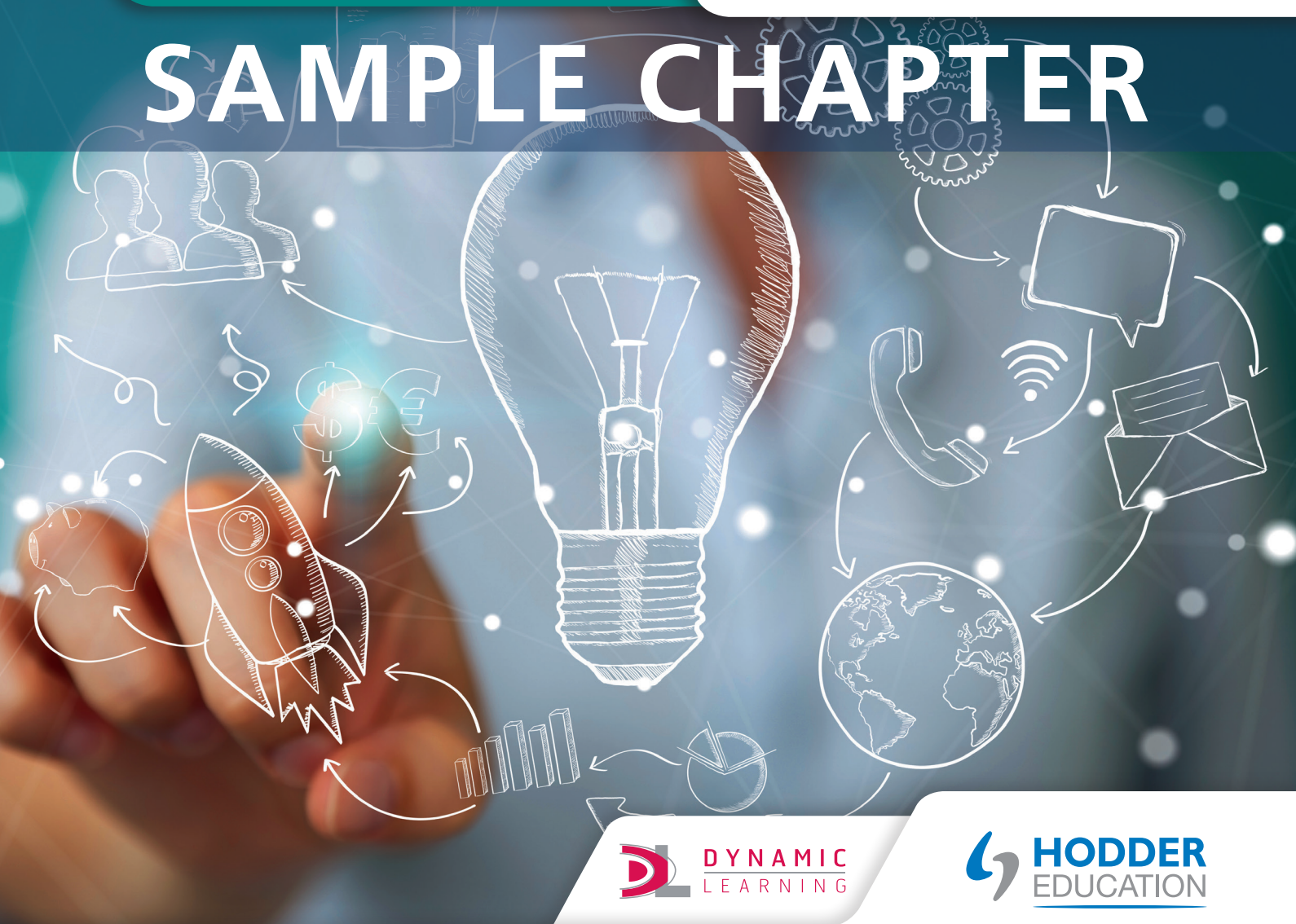
FOR MYP
4&5

Personal Project

Skills for Success

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SAMPLE CHAPTER



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Investigating

While carrying out your instigation you need to consider the **learner profile attributes** and the **global contexts**.





Investigating

■ ATL skills

- Communication skills
- Organization skills
- Information literacy skills
- Media literacy skills
- Critical-thinking skills
- Creative-thinking skills
- Transfer skills

LEARNER PROFILE ATTRIBUTES

Inquirers	Communicators
Knowledgeable	Risk-takers
Thinkers	Reflective

Defining a clear goal

The personal project is an exciting opportunity to explore an area of personal interest but also to challenge yourself by learning new skills. In completing your project, you will pull together the different elements of the MYP. If approached with the right mindset, the personal project can be a highly rewarding experience – and good preparation for the Extended Essay in the Diploma Programme.

■ Focus on something that interests you

The first step in completing the personal project is to define a goal. This is often the most daunting part of the process for many students, so it might be helpful to reflect on your interests and skills, in the following activity.

ACTIVITY: WHAT INTERESTS ME?

Ask yourself the following questions to help you refine your ideas for your personal project.



It is important to note that a topic is not the same thing as a goal. Your topic will be a broad theme, but your goal will be a specific action that you plan to undertake in relation to that theme. For example, your topic may be human cloning, but your goal could be to produce a journal article which considers the ethical implications of human cloning.

The end result of your goal must be a *product*. This could be a physical product such as a report, an original work of art, an invention, a science experiment or it could be a less tangible product like a performance, a presentation or an awareness campaign. Either way, you must provide *evidence* of your product within your process journal and report (for example, photographs, slides or video clips).

EXPERT TIP

If you choose to write a report as part of your product, you must still produce a separate report (whether in a written or oral format) in which you explicitly address the assessment criteria. If this is the case, it may be helpful to refer to the project report as the “reflective report” in order to avoid confusion and differentiate between the two project elements.

When choosing a goal, it is a good idea to ensure that it is a SMART goal. Copy and complete the following table:

S M A R T		
	What does it mean?	Ideas for my own SMART goal(s)
Specific	<p>This is the who, what, when, where and why of your project.</p> <p>Who will be involved (besides you)?</p> <p>What do you plan to produce/achieve?</p> <p>When and where do you plan to complete your project?</p> <p>Why this particular goal? What is your personal motivation?</p>	
Measurable	Your goal must be measurable. If your goal is not measurable, you will have difficulty developing relevant criteria to evaluate the success of your project.	
Achievable	Your goal should be achievable within the time frame you have, whilst still presenting the appropriate level of challenge.	
Relevant	Your goal should be relevant – to the project objectives, to your own interests and to your chosen global context.	
Timely	Your goal should have a clear time limit. This will help you in terms of your self-management.	

■ Demonstrating an appropriate level of challenge

When defining your goal, it is important to demonstrate an appropriate level of challenge. Ultimately, this can mean the difference between achieving the top levels of Criterion A, which specify that you must “define a **clear and highly challenging** goal and context for the project, based on personal interests”. You will need to justify your goal as highly challenging in your report.

So while it may be tempting to play it safe and choose a project based on skills you already have, remember that as an IB learner you are encouraged to be a risk-taker!

Challenging goal	Highly challenging goal
A student documents his or her self-taught skills of photography.	A student documents his or her neighbourhood through a photography exhibition.
A student creates a durable bag using second-hand materials.	A student creates a range of bags using second-hand materials to exhibit at the local arts centre.
A student writes an article on a topic of interest for a journal (school/academic/special interest) and submits it to an audience.	A student writes and publishes an original book-length feature on a topic of interest.

Why is this a highly challenging goal? Documenting a self-taught skill is certainly a challenging goal, but what makes the highly challenging goal is the way in which the product is presented. An exhibition allows you to demonstrate the ATL skill of communication; specifically, to communicate information and ideas effectively to audiences using a variety of media and formats.

Why is this a highly challenging goal? Again, the level of challenge here is best reflected in the way in which the product is presented.

Why is this a highly challenging goal? The highly challenging aspect of this goal is in the depth of research that would be required – not to mention the time commitment involved – to write a book-length feature. The student would also potentially have to communicate and collaborate with publishers and editors to be able to successfully achieve the second aspect of the goal, demonstrating further development of ATLs.

ACTIVITY: DEFINE YOUR GOAL

■ ATL skills

■ Communication skills

- Give and receive meaningful feedback
- Negotiate ideas and knowledge with peers and teachers

■ Organization skills

- Set goals that are challenging and realistic

Now it's your turn. Define your goal for your personal project. Then in pairs, give your goal to your partner.

Read your partner's goal and question them about it in order to write a more challenging goal.

You could ask your partner some of the following questions:

- Is it specific enough?
- What is your criteria for evaluating the success of your project?
- What is your time frame? Is it achievable?
- Have you chosen the most appropriate and relevant global context?

You may wish to redefine your goal after answering some of these questions!

Identifying prior learning and subject-specific knowledge relevant to the project

If you have chosen a goal based on your personal interests, it is likely that you will bring a certain level of prior knowledge to the process. This could be knowledge you have gained through your MYP studies or through your personal hobbies and interests. It is important that you make explicit reference to this prior knowledge within your process journal and report, and that you explain clearly how this prior knowledge contributed to the creation of the product or achievement of the goal.

Reflecting on your prior learning and subject-specific knowledge demonstrates engagement with your topic and gives the assessor a context for your choice. You will not be able to demonstrate the highest levels of Criterion A without addressing this key element.

ACTIVITY: KNOW-WANT TO KNOW-LEARNT

■ ATL skills

■ Transfer skills

- Apply skills and knowledge in unfamiliar situations

Copy and complete the first two columns of the KWL chart opposite. You will revisit this activity in Chapter 6 when you reflect on what you have learnt throughout the process.

K: What do you already KNOW about your chosen topic?

W: What do you WANT to learn through your process of inquiry?

L: What have you LEARNT? What knowledge have you gained or skills have you developed?

K	W	L

Choosing a global context for the project

After deciding on a goal, the next most important step in the personal project process is to select a **global context**. The global context is the lens through which you view, or approach, your project, and often it will direct your line of inquiry.

It is important to note that more than one global context may be relevant to your chosen topic, but you should settle on the one which is most relevant to your project's goal and final outcome. Reflecting meaningfully on one global context is better than superficially addressing several global contexts.

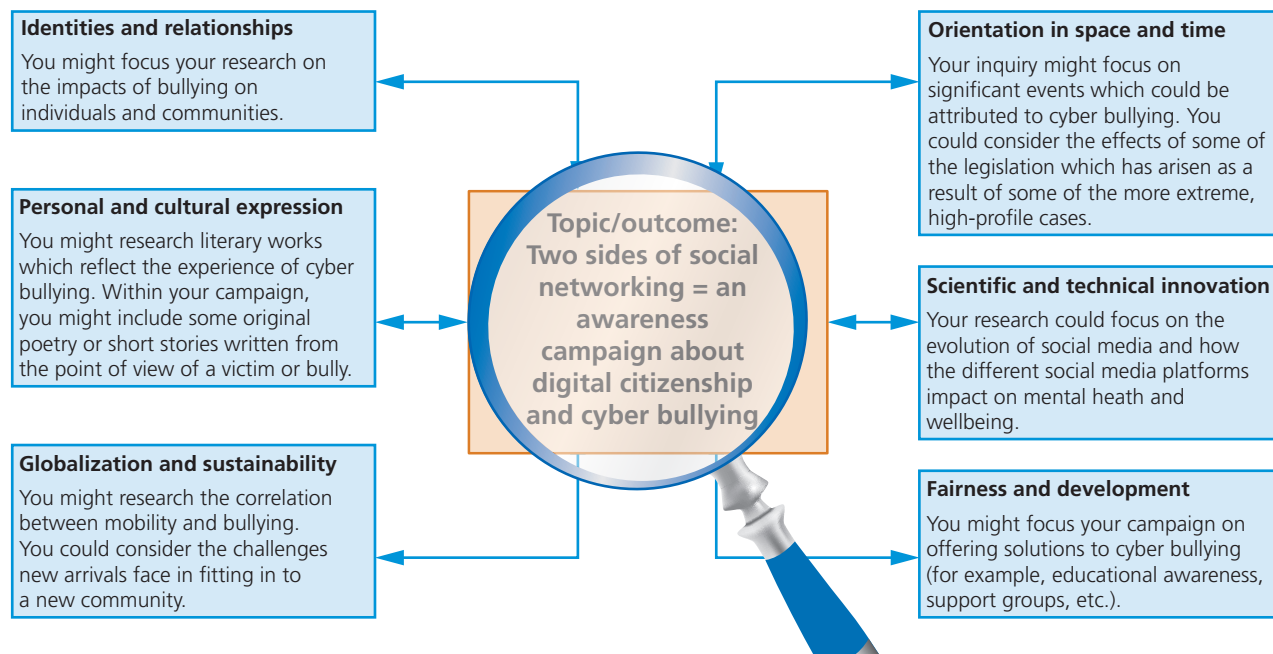
Think–Pair–Share

Read the information provided in the table on page 31. In pairs, think of some examples of personal projects you might like to explore for each of the global contexts. You need to think about what the product and outcome might be too. What is the best outcome for the global context? Share your ideas with your partner. Can they suggest other global contexts you could use? What do they think of your product and outcome? Can they suggest any alternatives?

Global context	Examples of personal projects and their product/outcome
Identities and relationships Explores: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identity beliefs and values personal, physical, mental, social and spiritual health human relationships including families, friends, communities and cultures what it means to be human 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two sides of social networking → an awareness campaign about digital citizenship and cyber bullying. How online identities impact offline relationships → a research essay. Keeping culinary traditions → a video series following family recipes with historical relevance. The effect of mass media on teenage identity → a short film.
Orientation in space and time Explores: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> personal histories homes and journeys turning points in humankind discoveries explorations and migrations of humankind relationships between and the interconnectedness of individuals and civilizations from personal, local and global perspectives 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Euclidean space perspective of the universe → a 3-D model. Explorers in search of a new world → immigration over the ages through visual texts. The <i>Mayflower</i> and the dream of religious freedom → a personal family history. Charting a family history through archives → a representational statue.
Personal and cultural expression Explores: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the ways in which we discover and express ideas, feelings, nature, culture, beliefs and values the ways in which we reflect on, extend and enjoy our creativity our appreciation of the aesthetic 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Video games as a form of cultural expression → a short film using five video games that shows how they are an expression of our culture. The art of Manga in Japanese culture → a Japanese anime and a survey of the understanding of my peers. Culture and self-expression through dance at the local community arts centre → a performance.
Scientific and technical innovation Explores: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the natural world and its laws interaction between people and the natural world how humans use their understanding of scientific and technological advances on communities and environments the impact of environments on human activity how humans adapt environments to their needs 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nanofibers build stronger bikes → a prototype bike with nanofibers. What's the matter with the anti-matter? → an informational talk. Why are genetics and genomics important to my health? → a media presentation. Can stem cells replace organ transplants? → an investigative report.
Globalization and sustainability Explores: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the interconnectedness of human-made systems and communities the relationship between local and global processes how local experiences mediate the global the opportunities and tensions provided by world-interconnectedness the impact of decision-making on humankind and the environment 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The struggle for water in developing countries → an awareness campaign. The impact of the financial crises of Europe and the European Economic Community on the United States → a visual presentation. Education as the tool to change the future of Peru → a workshop for adults. The role of developing countries in protecting the tropical rainforest → a collection of slides.
Fairness and development Explores: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> rights and responsibilities the relationship between communities sharing finite resources with other people and with other living things access to equal opportunities peace and conflict resolution 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting fair trade: cocoa trade in Ghana → an awareness campaign for our school restaurant/cafeteria to promote fair trade. Open-market economies and their role in fair trade → a talk for students. Exploring the intersections of race and inequality → a radio broadcast. Asylum seekers and their right to live like us → a painting.

The global context should not be an add-on at the end but should form an integral part of your inquiry from the very early stages of the process.

An example of how your inquiry process may be affected by the global context you choose is shown here:



Defining a global context

ACTIVITY: GLOBAL CONTEXT

■ ATL skills

■ Transfer skills

- Change the context of an inquiry to gain different perspectives

In groups, place each of your personal project ideas in the centre, and think about how the global context changes your goal.

ATL skills

Throughout the completion of your personal project, you will be demonstrating a number of the Approaches to Learning skills. You must reflect explicitly and meaningfully on which skills you have demonstrated – and how – in your process journal and report.

The following table can help you visualize possible alignment of the ATL skill clusters with the objective strands. This is not the only way to align ATL skills with the objectives; there is flexibility regarding how and where you evidence the skills that you have demonstrated throughout the project, but you must make this explicit within your process journal and your report.

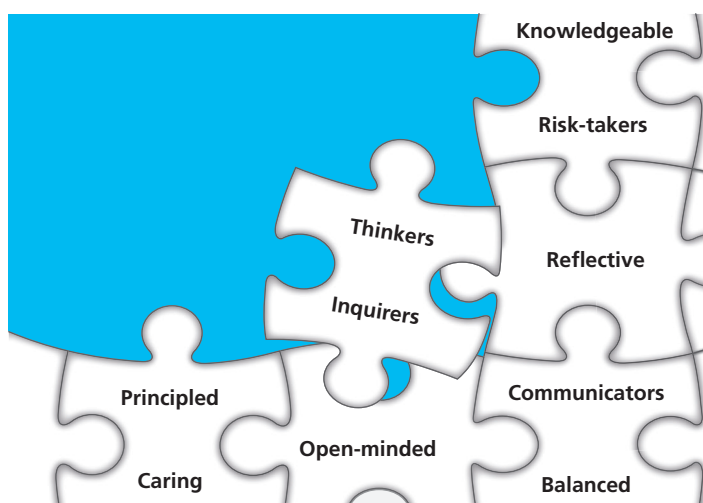
Objectives	ATL skills clusters	Affective skills: Mindfulness, perseverance, emotional management, self-motivation and resilience
Objective A: Investigating		
Define a clear goal and a global context for the project, based on personal interests	Collaboration Critical-thinking Creative-thinking	
Identify prior learning and subject-specific knowledge relevant to the project Demonstrate research skills	Information literacy Media literacy Transfer	
Objective B: Planning		
Develop criteria for the product/outcome	Collaboration Organization Critical-thinking Creative-thinking	
Plan and record the development process of the project Demonstrate self-management skills	Collaboration Organization Reflection	
Objective C: Taking action		
Create a product/outcome in response to the goal, context and criteria	Organization Critical-thinking Creative-thinking	
Demonstrate thinking skills Demonstrate communication and social skills	Communication Collaboration Critical-thinking Creative-thinking Transfer	
Objective D: Reflecting		
Evaluate the quality of the product/outcome against the criteria	Communication	
Reflect on how completing the project has extended their knowledge and understanding of the topic and the global context	Reflection	
Reflect on their development as IB learners through the project		

EXPERT TIP

It is a good idea to label your process journal entries with the ATL skill or skills that are best demonstrated in each entry. This sign-posting can help the assessor, who will be looking for clear and explicit evidence of the ATL skills that you have developed throughout the project. Some of these skills can be reflected on in further detail in the report.

Learner profile attributes

Throughout your MYP studies you will have developed as an IB learner. Just as you will have reflected on which ATL skills you have developed throughout the project, you should also reflect on which of the learner profile attributes you have demonstrated, and *how*. For example, have you been a risk-taker? Has your topic required you to be open-minded? Have you become more reflective? Although you will address this most explicitly in relation to Criterion D, your development as an IB learner, which includes the learner profile traits and the approaches to learning (ATL) skills, is an element which lies at the heart of the project and should be considered and reflected on from the initial stages of the process.



The IB learner profile

We will cover the learner profile attributes in more detail in Chapter 6, but it is important to start thinking about the learner profile attributes you demonstrate throughout your personal project.

Research skills

It is important to remember that the personal project is an inquiry-based project; therefore, your project must involve a certain level of research. Even creative projects should include some outside research. For example, if you are writing a collection of short stories based around a particular theme, you could research, among other things, notable authors who have written about similar themes, characteristics of the short story genre or the publishing process. However original the end product may be, you should demonstrate evidence of research and inquiry throughout the process, and this must be documented in your process journal and report.

Prior knowledge alone is not enough to demonstrate *breadth* of inquiry. Therefore, you will need to seek out other sources of information, including primary and

secondary sources. Examples of primary sources might include, but are not limited to, images, interviews, survey data, results of experiments or field work. Secondary sources might include books, websites, journal articles or other published media. Depending on the type of project you undertake, you will likely use a combination of primary and secondary sources. There is no set number of sources which you must use as this will depend on the nature of the project itself.

Evidence of your research should be embedded throughout the project; a bibliography in and of itself is not sufficient enough to show *depth* of research. Within your process journal and your report, you should show evidence of your evaluation of sources. Using the OPVL (Origin, Purpose, Value and Limitation) method for evaluating sources, which you may be familiar with through your studies in Individuals and Societies, might be useful. Most importantly, you should reflect on how you have applied what you have learnt from your research to the product itself.

Origin	Purpose	Value	Limitation
Where does the source come from?	What is the purpose of the source?	How useful is the source?	How reliable is the source?
When was the information published or posted?	What perspective is the author trying to convey?	How can it be applied to my project?	Is it objective or subjective?
Who is the author, publisher, source, or sponsor?	Is the purpose clear?	Has the information been reviewed or referred?	Are there political, institutional, religious, cultural, ideological or personal biases?
Are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations given? What are they?	Is the information fact, opinion or propaganda?	Can you verify the information in another source?	
	Does the point of view appear objective or impartial?		

ACTIVITY: HOW RELIABLE ARE YOUR SOURCES?

■ ATL skills

■ Information literacy skills

- Collect, record and verify data
- Identify primary and secondary sources

■ Media literacy skills

- Locate, organize, analyse, evaluate, synthesize and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media (including digital source media and online networks)

Consider one of your sources through the OPVL lens. How reliable is that source? Will you still use that source in the same way now you have reflected on its reliability?

It is important to keep detailed notes and records in your process journal of the sources that you use throughout your project; it is worth referring to the section on academic honesty in Chapter 7. When assessing your project, assessors will be looking for clear evidence of research skills, which can include:

- creating research questions
- locating relevant, credible sources of information
- evaluating sources for reliability
- note-taking, summarizing or paraphrasing information
- acknowledging sources accurately
- creating (and including) a properly formatted bibliography.

Supervisor check-in

- Share your initial ideas with your supervisor. Your supervisor may be able to help you narrow your ideas down to a focused, specific goal.
- Discuss with your supervisor how you might focus your project through the different global context lenses. Which one seems most appropriate for your goal?
- Share your process journal with your supervisor. Your supervisor will need to see evidence of ongoing reflection, especially in relation to the ATLs.
- Share your research with your supervisor. If your supervisor is a subject expert, ask for their advice regarding further sources you might consult.

CHAPTER SUMMARY KEY POINTS

- The first objective of the personal project is Investigating.
- The first step in the investigation process is to choose a topic that interests you but also allows you to learn something new or develop a new skill.
- Once you have chosen a topic, you will need to define a clear and challenging goal.
- Goals should be SMART:
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Achievable
 - Relevant
 - Timely.
- You should identify any prior knowledge you bring with you to the project. This could include knowledge you have gained or skills you have developed through your MYP studies or outside of the classroom setting.
- You must choose a global context through which to focus your project. The global context should serve as a lens for your inquiry. The global contexts are:
 - Identities and relationships
 - Personal and cultural expression
 - Globalization and sustainability
 - Orientation in space and time
 - Scientific and technical innovation
 - Fairness and development

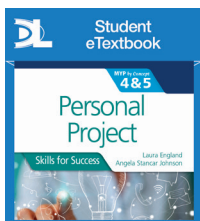
- Throughout the project, you will demonstrate several of the approaches to learning. You should reflect on these in your process journal and report.
- You will develop as an IB learner throughout the project. You should reflect on which of the learner profile traits the project allows you to demonstrate:
 - Inquirers
 - Knowledgeable
 - Thinkers
 - Communicators
 - Principled
 - Open-minded
 - Caring
 - Risk-takers
 - Balanced
 - Reflective
- The personal project provides you with an opportunity to develop and demonstrate research skills. Even creative projects should involve some level of research or inquiry.
- As part of the research process, you will need to show evidence of your evaluation of sources. A helpful tool is the OPVL method:
 - Origin
 - Purpose
 - Value
 - Limitation.

Personal Project

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- Clarify IB requirements with concise and clear explanations, including assessment objectives and rules on academic honesty.
- Foster the attributes of the IB learner profile with explicit reference made throughout to link with your research.
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