

This project is intended for classroom use to be examined against the descriptors required. It is not intended to be a model H1 project to be copied. It is intended to be used to identify good and bad elements and used to investigate how it could be improved.

Section 1: Introduction

My research question

"How has the introduction of touchscreen ordering technology changed the workload of order processing employees at McDonald's Ireland?"

Why I chose this question

I chose this question because touchscreen ordering is now used in almost every McDonald's in Ireland, yet most of the conversation around it focuses on the customer experience rather than what it means for the people working there. McDonald's is one of Ireland's largest employers, with almost 9,000 staff across more than 95 locations nationwide (McDonald's Ireland, 2024). The company announced plans to open 200 new restaurants across Ireland and the UK in 2024, meaning this technology and its impact on workers is only going to become more relevant, not less. I wanted to investigate how the work itself has changed, not whether the technology is good or bad, but what staff are doing differently because of it.

How I used my project plan

I set three goals: interview a member of staff, interview a shift manager at a different branch, and carry out a structured observation at a busy time. I identified two risks early on:

The first was finding a manager with enough time to be interviewed. When my first contact was unavailable I had a backup ready and arranged a new interview within two days, so I did not lose time at a critical stage.

The second was making sure my observation captured the restaurant at its busiest. I went at lunchtime, and that single planning choice gave me the burst pattern that became my strongest finding.

Word count: 238 words | Target: 200 words

Section 1: Introduction

What the brief asks for in this section

- State the research question.
- Explain the rationale for choosing it.
- Reflect on how you engaged with your project plan.

The descriptors that apply

	Students demonstrating a high level of achievement	Students demonstrating a moderate level of achievement	Students demonstrating a low level of achievement
Planning	<p>-demonstrate effective engagement with planning throughout their study and clearly reflect on and evaluate the extent to which the planning undertaken contributed to the effective completion of the study.</p> <p>-develop a clear and probing research question that is underpinned by the relevance or importance of business locally, nationally and/or internationally.</p>	<p>- demonstrate engagement with planning throughout their study and reflect on the extent to which the planning undertaken contributed to the completion of the study.</p> <p>- develop a clear research question that is underpinned by the relevance or importance of business locally, nationally and/or internationally.</p>	<p>-demonstrate limited engagement with planning throughout their study and present limited reflections on the extent to which the planning undertaken contributed to the completion of the study.</p> <p>- develop some form of research question.</p>

How the project tries to achieve the descriptors

P1 Engagement with planning	<p>The plan reflection shows the plan doing something. Three goals are named, two risks are identified before they materialised, and the closing line ties one specific planning choice (going at lunchtime) to one specific finding in the project (the burst pattern).</p> <p>The plan should not just be described, it should be evaluated.</p>
P2 Clear and probing RQ	<p>The question names a technology, a work practice, a group of staff, and a measure, so is SMART and in line with the brief.</p> <p>The rationale uses real numbers: 9,000 staff, 95 locations, 200 more planned providing business relevance for the scope of the project.</p>

Potential problem areas for this section

- The question is described instead of stated. The corrector should not have to hunt for it.
- The rationale is about the student, not the business. "I find this interesting" is not a rationale that has a clear business relevance.
- The plan reflection names what the plan was or contained, but not what it actually contributed.

Section 2: Investigation and Findings

Overview

To answer my research question I focused on primary research - the only way to understand how a job has changed is to talk to the people doing it or watch it happen.

Source 1: Interview with staff member

Findings

Before the screens arrived, the member of staff described a job where one person handled everything at the till - taking the order, entering it, sorting payment and dealing with the customer. *"Before you could kind of pace yourself. Now it just doesn't stop."* Since the screens were introduced, orders arrive from multiple kiosks at the same time directly to the kitchen screen. They also said one of the harder parts of the job now is dealing with frustrated customers waiting at the collection point, which they linked directly to the change in how people order.

Why I used this source

No report or article could tell me what the job actually feels like from the inside. This was the only source that could give me that first-hand account.

Source 2: Interview with shift manager

Findings

The manager confirmed the till-based role is effectively gone from most shifts. Staff are now split between watching the kitchen screen and assembling orders as they come in. The manager said order accuracy has improved and complaints have dropped, but the pace of work is much higher because orders arrive in waves rather than one at a time. *"We used to get complaints about wrong orders every day. Now it's rare."*

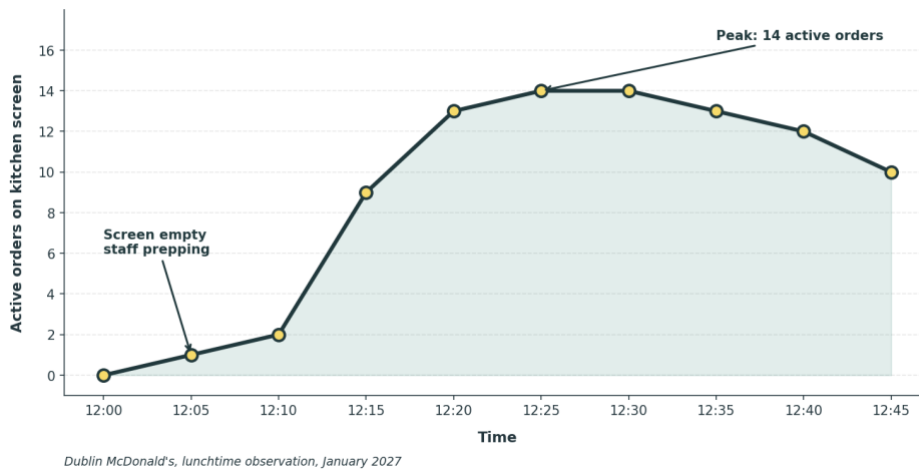
Why I used this source

The manager could tell me about actual changes to how the work is structured - who does what, how roles shifted, what the business gained and lost - that staff members might not appreciate.

Source 3: In-store Observation

Findings

Figure 1: Active orders on kitchen screen during lunchtime observation



I carried out a lunchtime observation at a Dublin McDonald's. No member of staff was at a till during either observation. All orders arrived directly to the kitchen screen. Over the hour there was an average of 11 orders active at the same time, rising to 14 between 12:15 and 12:30. Orders did not build gradually - between 12:00 and 12:10 the kitchen screen had nothing active and the two staff members on duty were prepping items for orders. Then the screen filled rapidly and stayed full (Figure 1).

Why I used this source

Watching how the ordering happened showed me why orders arrive in bursts, and helped me connect why the work feels different to the staff I interviewed.

Source 4: CNN article

Findings

The CNN Business investigation (Meyersohn, 2024) found that kiosks had not replaced workers but had added significant extra work for kitchen and assembly staff. Customers also tended to order more through the screens than they did at the till, meaning more to prepare per order. This pattern was found across several fast food chains, not just McDonald's.

Why I used this source

This source looked specifically at what kiosk technology meant for the people doing the work rather than the customers using it, and showed an international pattern that matched what I was finding in Ireland.

Word count: 511 words | Target: 400 words

Section 2: Investigation and Findings

What the brief asks for in this section

- Explain the purpose and relevance of the research methods and sources.
- Present findings in appropriate formats.
- Consider a variety of perspectives.

The descriptors that apply

	Students demonstrating a high level of achievement	Students demonstrating a moderate level of achievement	Students demonstrating a low level of achievement
Investigating	-identify and evaluate the potential value of a wide range of appropriate sources related to the research question created based on the brief. - complete an in-depth analysis and evaluation of data and information from a range of reliable sources justifying the choice of sources.	-identify and evaluate the potential value of a range of appropriate sources related to the research question created based on the brief. -analyse and evaluate data and information from a range of reliable sources justifying the choice of sources.	-identify a limited range of sources related to the research question created based on the brief. -present limited analysis and evaluation of data and information from a range of sources.
Communicating	-present clear and appropriate data and information and analysis using a range of relevant graphics as appropriate.	-present adequate data and information and analysis; using relevant graphics as appropriate.	-present limited data and information and analysis, limited or no use of graphics.

How the project tries to achieve the descriptors

I1 Wide range of appropriate	<p>Four sources covering different angles/perspectives – the staff member doing the job, the manager structuring the work, the observation showing it happening, and CNN giving the international pattern. Each source brings something the others cannot.</p> <p>The range is on the lighter side at four sources, could a wider range / more secondary sources have strengthened it.</p>
I2 Sources justified	<p>Every source has a "Why I used this source" line. The student says what each source added that others source couldn't to justify their value/inclusion.</p> <p>The observation justification is the strongest as it names exactly what watching the lunchtime rush showed that the interviews on their own would have missed.</p>
C1 Present clear data and a range of relevant graphics	<p>Direct quotes from both interviews, observation data with times and counts, and a labelled figure showing the lunchtime burst pattern.</p> <p>Only one graphic though, so worth asking whether a second would have added more.</p>

Potential problem areas for this section

- Sources are listed but not justified. "I used an interview" is not a justification
- Findings and analysis are mixed together. The student interprets what the source means in the same paragraph as the finding, leaving nothing for Section 3.
- Primary and secondary are unbalanced and not offering different viewpoints.
- Graphics are decorative rather than analytical.

Section 3: Analysis and Evaluation

Finding 1: The technology removed the natural rhythm of the job

Before the screens, the till acted as a natural buffer between orders. One customer came up, the order was taken, payment sorted, and only then did the next one start. That gap - even a few seconds - gave the kitchen time to breathe. The member of staff described it simply: *"Before you could kind of pace yourself. Now it just doesn't stop."*

The observation showed exactly why. Between 12:00 and 12:10 the kitchen screen had nothing active and the two staff members on duty were prepping items for orders. Then the screen filled rapidly and stayed full, peaking at 14 active orders between 12:25 and 12:30 (see Figure 1). Because customers order independently across multiple screens at the same time, orders hit the kitchen in waves rather than one at a time. The till used to act as a filter, regulating the flow. The screens removed the filter entirely.

What the observation made clear is that the quieter moments for staff that used to exist when no customer was at the till are gone. There is no station now where waiting is the default. Every quiet moment had prep or restocking to fill it. The technology did not just speed up the busy periods, it removed the breaks between them.

Finding 2: The job got harder in some ways and easier in others at the same time

The job is more physically demanding than before - more orders, less time between them, no till role to break it up. But two things have genuinely improved. The member of staff no longer has to deal with difficult customers at the point of ordering, that pressure is gone. And the manager pointed out that order errors have dropped significantly: *"We used to get complaints about wrong orders every day. Now it's rare."* Part of the reason is that the screens removed a specific source of confusion. A lot of the old order errors came from struggling to understand customers, especially with strong accents or when English was not the customer's first language. The screen takes that out of it - the customer picks exactly what they want and the order arrives at the kitchen the same way every time.

A new pressure has appeared though, and this was the most unexpected finding of the investigation. The staff member said one of the harder parts of the job now is dealing with frustrated customers waiting at the collection point. Before the screens, customers queued at the till and could see how busy it was, so by joining a visible queue they had a sense of what the wait should be. Now that reference point has been removed. Customers tap the screen, then wait, and have no way to judge whether two minutes or ten is reasonable. By

the time they come up to collect, many of them have already built up impatience. The difficult interactions at the till are gone. A different kind of difficult interaction has appeared at collection dealing with these frustrations.

Limitations

The research question: My question asked how workload had changed but I never said what kind. The staff member mostly talked about pace, the manager mostly talked about errors and structure, and CNN focused on volume. I was treating these as evidence for the same thing but they were not really pulling in the same direction. A sharper question would have made comparing the sources easier.

The sources: Both interviews were at busy urban Leinster branches. So my findings cannot really speak to smaller or rural branches where the burst pattern in Finding 1 might not even happen. I also only had one secondary source. CNN was useful but it is journalism rather than research, and I could not find an Irish source specifically on what kiosks mean for staff. That gap probably says something about how little this side of the change has been written about.

The analysis: Finding 1 rests on one observation at one branch on one day. It is also the most specific finding I have. A second observation at a quieter time of day or a smaller branch would either confirm the burst pattern or show it as something that only really happens at big urban locations.

Word count: 691 words | Target: 600 words

Section 3: Analysis and Evaluation

What the brief asks for in this section

- Analyse your research findings.
- Evaluate your research findings.
- Demonstrate originality and critical thinking throughout your analysis and evaluation.

The descriptors that apply

	Students demonstrating a high level of achievement	Students demonstrating a moderate level of achievement	Students demonstrating a low level of achievement
	- complete an in-depth analysis and evaluation of data and information from a range of reliable sources justifying the choice of sources.	-analyse and evaluate data and information from a range of reliable sources justifying the choice of sources.	-present limited analysis and evaluation of data and information from a range of sources.
Investigating (continued)	-present conclusions justified by the analysis and evaluation of the data and information, related to the research question developed. - clearly identify limitations in the investigative study across the design of the research question, the research gathered and/or analysis conducted.	-present conclusions related to the research question developed. - identify some limitations in the study.	- present limited conclusions demonstrating engagement with the topic. -do not identify limitations in the study.
Applying	-demonstrate capacity to reflect on how the findings relate to the world of business and business-related stories in the media where relevant, and how their perspectives have been influenced by the investigative study.	-demonstrate some capacity to reflect on how the findings relate to the world of business, business-related stories in the media where relevant, and how their perspectives have been influenced by the investigative study.	-demonstrate limited capacity to reflect on how the findings relate to the world of business, business-related stories in the media where relevant, and how their perspectives have been influenced by the investigative study.

How the project tries to achieve the descriptors

I2 In-depth analysis	Sources are brought together rather than handled one at a time. The staff member, the observation, and CNN all point at the same thing, the till used to slow orders down, the screens removed that. The student says <i>why</i> the change happened, not just <i>that</i> it happened.
I3 Conclusions justified	Finding 2 reframes workload/pressures " <i>the technology did not remove customer-facing pressure from the job, it moved it.</i> " That is more interesting than saying the job got harder or easier. The evidence gathered shows this has occurred.
I4 Limitations	The student names three limitations: the question (workload was never properly defined), the sources (one branch, no Irish secondary source on kiosks and staff), and the analysis (one observation, one day). Each one is specific to this project, not a generic line about sample size.
A1 Critical thinking / originality	The student followed the customer-frustration thread that they discovered in their research and found something only this project could have shown: pressure on staff shifted to a different point in the customer interaction. The student went where the evidence pointed.

Potential problem areas for this section

- The student describes findings again in different words. That is not analysis, it is repetition.
- Sources are treated one at a time, never brought together. Triangulation does not happen.
- Generic limitations like saying "small sample size" without saying why that matters or what it limits.
- The student goes deep on one thing and misses any interesting tension the data actually shows.

Section 4: Conclusions

My conclusion

Touchscreen ordering technology has changed the workload of staff at McDonald's Ireland in two clear ways. The pace has gone up because orders now arrive in waves rather than one at a time. And the customer-facing part of the role has not disappeared, it has shifted. The difficult interactions at the till are gone, but a new kind has appeared at the collection point with customers who have no sense of how long they should be waiting. The technology did not remove customer-facing pressure from the job, it moved it.

Connection to the real world of business

Similar technology is in use in Supermac's, KFC and in supermarkets nationwide. The technology improves efficiency for the business but changes what the job actually involves for the people doing it.

My findings point to one small change McDonald's could make. Adding a visible countdown timer beside each order number on the kiosk screen would give customers the reference point the queue used to give them. The old queue did that job without anyone realising. Adding a clock with each order would reduce the new frustrations McDonald's workers face due to the order kiosks.

Cross Cutting Theme - Digital Transformation

The use of digital technology usually comes with the assumption of job losses. That is not what I found here. McDonald's still has almost 9,000 staff in Ireland and is opening more restaurants. The kiosks did not take jobs away, they changed the role of the worker. Less customer interaction, less free time waiting for more customers and there are now more orders coming in at once and a higher volume in each order, so it has not reduced the need for staff, staff now just do different tasks.

How my view changed

Before I started I assumed the screens mainly affected customers. The research changed that, but not in the way I expected. I thought the impact on staff would be one-sided - the technology removing some pressure. What I did not see coming was that it would create a new pressure too, with customers now waiting after ordering and that frustration landing on staff at collection.

Planning

When my first manager contact fell through my plan meant I already had a backup ready. Without that I would have lost days at a critical point. Planning the observation times in advance also meant I captured the busiest periods, which gave me the most useful data in the whole project.

Word count: 391 words | Target: 300 words |

Section 4: Conclusions

What the brief asks for

- Present conclusions justified by the analysis and evaluation.
- Outline how your planning contributed to the successful completion of the study.
- Discuss how your perspective evolved.
- Consider how your findings connect to the real world of business.

The descriptors that apply

	Students demonstrating a high level of achievement	Students demonstrating a moderate level of achievement	Students demonstrating a low level of achievement
Investigating (continued)	-present conclusions justified by the analysis and evaluation of the data and information, related to the research question developed.	-present conclusions related to the research question developed.	- present limited conclusions demonstrating engagement with the topic.
Applying	-demonstrate capacity to reflect on how the findings relate to the world of business and business-related stories in the media where relevant, and how their perspectives have been influenced by the investigative study. -clearly and appropriately relate the findings of the investigation to the cross-cutting theme(s) within the specification.	-demonstrate some capacity to reflect on how the findings relate to the world of business, business-related stories in the media where relevant, and how their perspectives have been influenced by the investigative study. -relate the findings of the investigation to the cross-cutting theme(s) within the specification.	-demonstrate limited capacity to reflect on how the findings relate to the world of business, business-related stories in the media where relevant, and how their perspectives have been influenced by the investigative study. -make limited links between the findings of the investigation and the cross-cutting theme(s) within the specification.
Planning	-demonstrate effective engagement with planning throughout their study and clearly reflect on and evaluate the extent to which the planning undertaken contributed to the effective completion of the study.	- demonstrate engagement with planning throughout their study and reflect on the extent to which the planning undertaken contributed to the completion of the study.	-demonstrate limited engagement with planning throughout their study and present limited reflections on the extent to which the planning undertaken contributed to the completion of the study.

How the project tries to achieve the descriptors

I3 Conclusions justified	A corrector reading just this section finds the conclusion straight away. The countdown timer suggestion is a specific recommendation McDonald's could actually act on, and it traces back to the customer-frustration finding in Section 3.
A1 Perspective shift / world of business	The shift is named and tied to a finding: the student started thinking the screens mainly affect customers, ended up seeing a new pressure on staff at the collection point.
A2 Cross-cutting theme	Digital Transformation is named directly. The student then engages with what people usually assume about it, that the technology takes jobs, and shows what this project found instead: jobs reshaped, not lost. The theme is being applied, not just labelled.
P1 Engagement with planning	Two planning decisions from Section 1 come back here: the backup manager contact (so no time was lost) and the lunchtime observation choice (which gave the strongest finding). The plan does not just get re-described, the student says what it actually enabled. Query if it is just repetition of the plan reflection in section one.

Potential problem areas for this section

- The answer is buried. The corrector has to read to the end to find out what the project concluded.
- The perspective shift is vague. "I learned a lot" is not a perspective shift.
- Cross-cutting themes are implied but never named.
- The plan reflection is repeated from Section 1 instead of completed.

Section 5: References

Meyersohn, N. (2024) McDonald's touchscreen kiosks were feared as job killers. Instead, something surprising happened. CNN Business, 20 September. Available at: <https://www.cnn.com/2024/09/20/business/self-service-kiosks-mcdonalds-shake-shack> (Accessed: January 2027).

The Irish Times (2024) McDonald's plans 200 new restaurants in UK and Ireland, creating 24,000 jobs, 21 August. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com> (Accessed: January 2027).

Primary research: Interview with McDonald's member of staff, Leinster branch. Conducted January 2027. Notes held by researcher.

Primary research: Interview with McDonald's shift manager, Leinster branch. Conducted January 2027. Notes held by researcher.

Primary research: Structured observation, McDonald's Dublin branch. Conducted January 2027, 12.00-12.45. Observation notes and Figure 1 held by researcher.

Overall Coherence

Not a separate section, awarded across the whole report for organisation, clarity, references, graphics, business terminology, and whether the threads hold together.

The descriptors that apply

	Students demonstrating a high level of achievement	Students demonstrating a moderate level of achievement	Students demonstrating a low level of achievement
Communicating	<p>-present clear and appropriate data and information and analysis using a range of relevant graphics as appropriate.</p> <p>-use coherent and consistent language throughout the report with clearly acknowledged appropriate supporting references and reflections on the study.</p>	<p>-present adequate data and information and analysis; using relevant graphics as appropriate.</p> <p>-use moderately coherent and consistent language throughout the report with some acknowledged supporting references and reflections on the research.</p>	<p>-present limited data and information and analysis, limited or no use of graphics.</p> <p>-present a report where the language used demonstrates limited coherence and consistency with limited supporting references and reflections.</p>

How the project tries to achieve the descriptors

C1 Data and graphics	<p>The lunchtime burst chart shows the burst pattern visually, the shape of the line is the finding that shows the order patterns with kiosks.</p> <p>Light on graphics? What other image/graphic could be used or data gathered to use here? (a workflow diagram, a labelled photo of the kiosks) would they have strengthened the section?</p>
C2 Coherent language and references	<p>The project should read like one piece of work with the same language and flow. It should read like one project, not four separate ones.</p> <p>Sources should be referenced clearly.</p>

Potential problem areas for this section

- No graphics / or too many graphics shown without identifying the findings in the graphics.
- References are inconsistent or missing. Primary research is mentioned but never referenced.
- Threads are dropped -> something raised in Section 1 never gets resolved later, or findings in Section 3 do not match the answer in Section 4.

The threads that carry the report to show coherence

- The research question in Section 1 is answered in the opening of Section 4.
- The staff member's quote about not pacing themselves, from Section 2, is used as evidence in Finding 1 in Section 3.
- The customer-frustration line from Source 1 in Section 2 is developed in Finding 2 in Section 3 and underpins the recommendation in Section 4.
- The planning risk about the manager interview (Section 1) resurfaces in Section 4 as the backup that meant no time was lost.
- The lunchtime observation choice (Section 1) returns in Section 4 as the planning that gave the strongest finding.