



IB World Studies

Extended essay guidelines



Nature of the extended essay

The extended essay is an in-depth study of a focused topic chosen from the list of approved Diploma Programme subjects—normally one of the student's six chosen subjects for the IB diploma. It is intended to promote high-level research and writing skills, intellectual discovery and creativity. It provides students with an opportunity to engage in personal research in a topic of their own choice, under the guidance of a supervisor (a teacher in the school). This

leads to a major piece of formally presented, structured writing, in which ideas and findings are communicated in a reasoned and coherent manner, appropriate to the subject chosen. It is recommended that completion of the written essay is followed by a short, concluding interview, or *viva voce*, with the supervisor. The extended essay is assessed against common criteria, interpreted in ways appropriate to each subject.

The extended essay is:

- compulsory for all Diploma Programme students
- externally assessed and, in combination with the grade for theory of knowledge, contributes up to three points to the total score for the IB diploma
- a piece of independent research/investigation on a topic chosen by the student in cooperation with a supervisor in the school
- chosen from the list of approved Diploma Programme subjects, published in the Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme
- presented as a formal piece of scholarship containing no more than 4,000 words
- the result of approximately 40 hours of work by the student
- concluded with a short interview, or *viva voce*, with the supervising teacher (recommended).

In the Diploma Programme, the extended essay is the prime example of a piece of work where the student has the opportunity to show knowledge, understanding and enthusiasm about a topic of his or her choice. In those countries where it is the norm for interviews to be required prior to acceptance for employment or for a place at university, the extended essay has often proved to be a valuable stimulus for discussion.

Aims

The aims of the extended essay are to provide students with the opportunity to:

- pursue independent research on a focused topic
- develop research and communication skills
- develop the skills of creative and critical thinking
- engage in a systematic process of research appropriate to the subject
- experience the excitement of intellectual discovery.

Assessment objectives

In working on the extended essay, students are expected to:

1. plan and pursue a research project with intellectual initiative and insight
2. formulate a precise research question
3. gather and interpret material from sources appropriate to the research question
4. structure a reasoned argument in response to the research question on the basis of the material gathered
5. present their extended essay in a format appropriate to the subject, acknowledging sources in one of the established academic ways
6. use the terminology and language appropriate to the subject with skill and understanding
7. apply analytical and evaluative skills appropriate to the subject, with an understanding of the implications and the context of their research.

Responsibilities of the supervisor

It is required that the supervisor:

- provides the student with advice and guidance in the skills of undertaking research
- encourages and supports the student throughout the research and writing of the extended essay
- discusses the choice of topic with the student and, in particular, helps to formulate a well-focused research question
- ensures that the chosen research question satisfies appropriate legal and ethical standards with regard to health and safety, confidentiality, human rights, animal welfare and environmental issues
- is familiar with the regulations governing the extended essay and the assessment criteria, and gives copies of these to the student
- monitors the progress of the extended essay to offer guidance and to ensure that the essay is the student's own work (this may include presenting a section of the essay for supervisor comment)
- reads and comments on one completed draft only of the extended essay (but does not edit the draft)
- reads the final version to confirm its authenticity
- submits a predicted grade for the student's extended essay to IB
- completes the supervisor's report (if the extended essay cover is not signed by both the student and the supervisor, the essay will not be accepted for assessment and may be returned to the school)

- provides an explanation in the report in cases where the number of hours spent with the student in discussing the extended essay is zero; in particular, it is necessary to describe how it has been possible to guarantee the authenticity of the essay in such circumstances
- writes a report and presents it to the school's Diploma Programme coordinator if malpractice, such as plagiarism, is suspected in the final draft.

Responsibilities of the student

It is required that students:

- choose a topic that fits into one of the subjects on the approved extended essay list
- observe the regulations relating to the extended essay
- meet deadlines
- acknowledge all sources of information and ideas in an approved academic manner.

It is strongly recommended that students:

- start work early
- think very carefully about the research question for their essay
- plan how, when and where they will find material for their essay
- plan a schedule for both researching and writing the essay, including extra time for delays and unforeseen problems
- record sources as their research progresses (rather than trying to reconstruct a list at the end)
- have a clear structure for the essay itself before beginning to write
- check and proofread the final version carefully
- make sure that all basic requirements are met (for example, all students should get full marks for the abstract).

Advice to students from examiners

Recommended: things to do

- read the assessment criteria
- read previous essays to identify strengths and possible pitfalls
- spend time working out the research question (imagine the finished essay)
- work out a structure for the essay.

During the research process, and while writing the essay, students should:

- start work early and stick to deadlines
- maintain a good working relationship with their supervisor
- construct an argument that relates to the research question
- use the library and consult librarians for advice
- record sources as they go along (rather than trying to reconstruct a list at the end)
- choose a new topic and a research question that can be answered if there is a problem with the original topic
- use the appropriate language for the subject
- let their interest and enthusiasm show.

After completing the essay, students should:

- write the abstract
- check and proofread the final version carefully.

Recommended: things to avoid

Examiners' reports also mention these things to be avoided at all costs.

- Students should not work with a research question that is too broad or too vague, too narrow, too difficult or inappropriate. A good research question is one that asks something worth asking and that is answerable within 40 hours/4,000 words. It should be clear what would count as evidence in relation to the question, and it must be possible to acquire such evidence in the course of the investigation. If a student does not know what evidence is needed, or cannot collect such evidence, it will not be possible to answer the research question.

In addition, students should not:

- forget to analyse the research question
- ignore the assessment criteria

- collect material that is irrelevant to the research question
- use the internet uncritically
- plagiarize
- merely describe or report (evidence must be used to support the argument)
- repeat the introduction in the conclusion
- cite sources that are not used.

One further piece of advice is as follows: the more background a student has in the subject, the better the chance he or she has of writing a good extended essay. Choosing to write the extended essay in a subject that is not being studied as part of the Diploma Programme often leads to lower marks.

Researching and writing the extended essay

The research process

When researching the extended essay, students should do the following.

1. Choose the approved Diploma Programme subject for the extended essay.
 - Read the assessment criteria and the relevant subject guidance.
2. Choose a topic.
3. Formulate a well-focused research question.
4. Plan the investigation and writing process.
 - Identify how and where they will gather material.
 - Identify which system of academic referencing they will use, appropriate to the subject of the essay.
 - Set deadlines for themselves that will allow them to meet the school's requirements.
5. Plan a structure (outline headings) for the essay. This may change as the investigation develops but it is useful to have a sense of direction.
6. Undertake some preparatory reading.
 - If students discover that it will not be possible to obtain the evidence needed in the time available, the research question should be changed. This should be done sooner rather than later: students should not lose time waiting and hoping that something will turn up. Students should go back to stage 3, 2 or 1, and choose a new research question that can be answered.

7. Carry out the investigation.

- The material gathered should be assembled in a logical order, linked to the structure of the essay. Only then will students know whether they have enough evidence for each stage of the argument so that they can proceed to the next.

- Students should be prepared for things to go wrong. Sometimes they may discover something later in the investigation that undermines what they thought had been established earlier on. If that happens, the investigation plan needs to be revised.

Writing the extended essay

The structure of the essay is very important. This is what helps students to organize the argument, making best use of the evidence gathered. The required elements of the final work to be submitted are listed here. More details about each element are given in the “Formal presentation of the extended essay” section. Please note that the order in which they are presented here is not necessarily the order in which they should be written.

- Title page
- Abstract
- Contents page
- Introduction
- Body (development/methods/results)
- Conclusion
- References and bibliography
- Appendices

Students should use the chosen system of academic referencing as soon as they start writing. That way, they are less likely to forget to include a citation. It is also easier than trying to add references at a later stage. Most modern word processors are helpful with this.

Some students draft the introduction first. If students do that, they must be prepared to revise it once the essay is complete.

The main task is writing the body of the essay, which should be presented in the form of a reasoned argument. The form of this varies with the subject of the essay but, as the argument develops, it should be clear to the reader what relevant evidence has been discovered, where/how it has been discovered and how it supports the argument. In most subjects, sub-headings within the main body of the essay will help the reader to understand the argument (and will also help the student to keep on track).

Once the main body of the essay is complete, it is possible to finalize the introduction (which tells the reader what to expect) and the conclusion (which says what has been achieved, including notes of any limitations and any questions that have not been resolved).

Any information that is important to the argument should not be included in appendices or footnotes/endnotes.

The examiner is not bound to read notes or appendices, so an essay that is not complete in itself will lose marks.

The remaining stages in writing the essay take time but are not difficult. Students need to check that they have cited sources for all material that is not their own, and that the citations are complete and consistent with the chosen referencing system. The bibliography should list only the sources used in the essay. The whole essay needs to be proofread carefully (computer spelling and grammar checkers are useful but will not do everything). Pages must be numbered and the contents page must be completed. The abstract is normally written last.

Formal presentation of the extended essay

The extended essay should be written in a clear, correct and formal academic style, appropriate to the subject from which the topic is drawn. The use of word processors is encouraged.

The length of the extended essay

The upper limit is 4,000 words for all extended essays. This upper limit includes the introduction, the body, the conclusion and any quotations, but **does not include**:

- the abstract
- acknowledgments
- the contents page
- maps, charts, diagrams, annotated illustrations and tables
- equations, formulas and calculations
- citations/references (whether parenthetical or numbered)
- footnotes or endnotes
- the bibliography
- appendices.

Essays containing more than 4,000 words are subject to penalties and examiners are not required to read material in excess of the word limit.

Title

The title should provide a clear indication of the focus of the essay. It should be precise and not necessarily phrased in the form of a question.

Abstract

An abstract not exceeding 300 words must be included with the essay submitted. It does not serve as an introduction, but presents an overview of the extended essay, and should, therefore, be **written last**.

The inclusion of an abstract is intended to encourage students to examine closely the development of an argument within the extended essay and the pertinence of any conclusions that are reached. It is also designed to allow readers to understand quickly the contents of the extended essay.

The minimum requirements for the abstract are for it to state clearly:

- the research question being investigated
- the scope of the investigation
- the conclusion(s) of the extended essay.

The abstract should be typed or word processed on one side of a sheet of paper, and placed immediately after the title page.

Contents page

A contents page must be provided at the beginning of the extended essay and all pages should be numbered. An index is not required.

Illustrations

Presentation and overall neatness are important, and it is essential that illustrative material, if included, is well set out and used effectively. Graphs, diagrams, tables and maps are effective only if they are clearly labelled and can be interpreted with ease. All such material that is incorporated into the extended essay must be directly related to the text and acknowledged where appropriate. The use of photographs and other images is acceptable only if they are captioned and/or annotated and are used to illustrate a specific point made in the extended essay.

Bibliographies, references and citations

An extended essay must reflect intellectual honesty in research practices and provide the reader with the exact sources of quotations, ideas and points of view through accurate bibliographies and referencing. Producing accurate citations, referencing and a bibliography is a skill that students should be seeking to perfect. Documenting the research in this way is vital: it allows readers to evaluate the evidence for themselves and it shows the student's understanding of the importance of the sources used.

Failure to comply with this requirement will be viewed as plagiarism and will, therefore, be treated as a case of malpractice.

What is a bibliography?

A bibliography is an alphabetical list of every source used to research and write the essay. Sources that are not cited in the body of the essay, but were important in informing the approach taken, should be cited in the introduction or in an acknowledgment. The bibliography should list only those sources cited.

The MLA documentation style should be applied in both the final draft of the essay and in the initial research stages of taking notes. This is good practice, not only for producing a high-quality final product, but also for reducing the opportunities and temptation to plagiarize.

More information about the MLA referencing system can be found here:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

What is a reference?

A reference is a way of indicating to the reader, in an orderly form, where information has been obtained. A reference provides all the information needed to find the source material. References must be cited because they acknowledge the sources used, and enable the reader to consult the work and verify the data that has been presented.

References must be given whenever someone else's work is quoted or summarized. References can come from many different sources, including books, magazines, journals, newspapers, emails, internet sites and interviews.

Internet references should include the title of the extract used as well as the website address, the date it was accessed and, if possible, the author. Caution should be exercised with information on websites that do not give references or that cannot be cross-checked against other sources. The more important a particular point is to the essay, the more the quality of its source needs to be evaluated.

Any references to interviews should state the name of the interviewer, the name of the interviewee, the date and the place of the interview.

What is a citation?

A citation is a shorthand method of making a reference in the body of an essay, which is then linked to the full reference at the end of the essay. A citation provides the reader with accurate references so that he or she can locate the source easily. How sources are cited varies with the particular documentation style that has been chosen.

Page numbers should normally be given when referencing printed material: in some styles this will be in the citation, in others in the full reference. Once again, it is important to emphasize that there must be consistency of method when citing sources.

Appendices, footnotes and endnotes

Appendices, footnotes and endnotes are not an essential section of the extended essay and examiners are not required to read them, so care should be taken to include all information of direct relevance to the analysis and argument in the main body of the essay. An essay that attempts to evade the word limit by including important material in notes or appendices risks losing marks under several criteria.

Unless considered essential, complete lists of raw data should not be included in the extended essay.

Students should not constantly refer to material presented in an appendix as this may disrupt the continuity of the essay.

The *viva voce* (concluding interview)

The *viva voce* is a short interview between the student and the supervisor, and is a recommended conclusion to the extended essay process. Students who do not attend the *viva voce* may be disadvantaged.

The *viva voce* serves the following purposes.

- A check on plagiarism and malpractice in general
- An opportunity to reflect on successes and difficulties in the research process
- An opportunity to reflect on what has been learned
- An aid to the supervisor's report

The *viva voce* should last between 10 and 15 minutes. This is included in the recommended amount of time the supervisor should spend with the student. The following are examples of questions that can be asked, which should be adapted to the particular essay and student.

- "I am not clear what you mean on page XXX. You quote Y: could you explain a little more about what this tells us?"

- “On page *** you cite Z. I couldn’t find this reference (for example, website). Could you tell me more about it?”
- “What have been the high and low points of the research and writing processes?”
- “What were the most interesting aspects of the process? Did you discover anything that surprised you?”
- “What have you learned through writing this essay? Is there any advice you would want to pass on to someone just starting out on an extended essay?”
- “Is there anything else that you would particularly like me to mention in my report?”

In conducting the viva voce and writing the report, supervisors should bear in mind the following.

- Examiners want to know that students understand any material (which must be properly referenced) that they have included in their essays. This is particularly important in subjects like mathematics. If the way the material is used in context in the essay does not clearly establish this, the supervisor can check the student’s understanding in the viva voce and report on it.
- Minor slips in citation and referencing may lose the odd mark. If there appear to be major shortcomings, the supervisor should investigate thoroughly. No essay should be authenticated if the supervisor believes it contains plagiarism.
- In assessing criterion K (holistic judgment), examiners will take into account any information given in the report about unusual intellectual inventiveness or persistence in the face of unexpected difficulties.
- The report should not attempt to do the examiner’s job. It should refer to things, largely process-related, that may not be obvious in the essay itself.
- Unless there are particular problems, the viva voce should end positively. Completion of a major piece of work such as the extended essay is something for students to feel good about.

Assessment criteria

All extended essays are externally assessed by examiners appointed by the IB, and are marked on a scale from 0 to 36. This maximum score is made up of the total criterion levels available for each essay. The total score obtained on the scale 0 to 36 is used to determine in which of the following bands the extended essay is placed.

This band, in conjunction with the band for theory of knowledge, determines the number of diploma points awarded for these two requirements. See the following “Award of diploma points” section for further details.

The band descriptors are:

- A** Work of an excellent standard
- B** Work of a good standard
- C** Work of a satisfactory standard
- D** Work of a mediocre standard
- E** Work of an elementary standard.

Award of diploma points

The extended essay contributes to the overall diploma score through the award of points in conjunction with theory of knowledge. A maximum of three points are awarded according to a student’s combined performance in both the extended essay and theory of knowledge.

Both the extended essay and theory of knowledge are measured against published assessment criteria. According to the quality of the work, and based on the application of these assessment criteria, a student’s performance in each of the extended essay and theory of knowledge will fall into one of the five bands described previously.

		Theory of knowledge					
		Excellent A	Good B	Satisfactory C	Mediocre D	Elementary E	Not submitted
Extended essay	Excellent A	3	3	2	2	1 + Failing condition*	N
	Good B	3	2	1	1	Failing condition*	N
	Satisfactory C	2	1	1	0	Failing condition*	N
	Mediocre D	2	1	0	0	Failing condition*	N
	Elementary E	1 + Failing condition*	Failing condition*	Failing condition*	Failing condition*	Failing condition*	N
	Not submitted	N	N	N	N	N	N

The total number of points awarded is determined by the combination of the performance levels achieved by the student in both the extended essay and theory of knowledge according to the following matrix.

A student who, for example, writes a good extended essay and whose performance in theory of knowledge is judged to be satisfactory will be awarded 1 point, while a student who writes a mediocre extended essay and whose performance in theory of knowledge is judged to be excellent will be awarded 2 points.

A student who fails to submit an extended essay will be awarded N for the extended essay, will score no points, and will not be awarded a diploma.

Performance in both the extended essay and theory of knowledge of an elementary standard is a failing condition for the award of the diploma.

* From 2010 onwards, 28 points overall will be required to be eligible for the diploma if a student attains an "E" grade in either the extended essay or theory of knowledge. As previously, a grade "A" in one of the requirements earns an extra point even if the other is a grade "E". Attaining a grade "E" in both the extended essay and theory of knowledge continues to represent an automatic failure.

Criterion A: research question

This criterion assesses the extent to which the purpose of the essay is specified. In many subjects, the aim of the essay will normally be expressed as a question and, therefore, this criterion is called the “research question”. However, certain disciplines may permit or encourage different ways of formulating the research task.

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	The research question is not stated in either the introduction or on the title page or does not lend itself to a systematic investigation in an extended essay in the subject in which it is registered .
1	The research question is stated in either the introduction or on the title page but is not clearly expressed or is too broad in scope to be treated effectively within the word limit .
2	The research question is clearly stated in either the introduction or on the title page and is sharply focused, making effective treatment possible within the word limit .

Criterion B: introduction

This criterion assesses the extent to which the introduction makes clear how the research question relates to existing knowledge on the topic and explains how the topic chosen is significant and worthy of investigation.

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	Little or no attempt is made to set the research question into context. There is little or no attempt to explain the significance of the topic .
1	Some attempt is made to set the research question into context. There is some attempt to explain the significance of the topic and why it is worthy of investigation .
2	The context of the research question is clearly demonstrated. The introduction clearly explains the significance of the topic and why it is worthy of investigation .

Criterion C: investigation

This criterion assesses the extent to which the investigation is planned and an appropriate range of sources has been consulted, or data has been gathered, that is relevant to the research question. Where the research question does not lend itself to a systematic investigation in the subject in which the essay is registered, the maximum level that can be awarded for this criterion is 2.

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	There is little or no evidence that sources have been consulted or data gathered, and little or no evidence of planning in the investigation.
1	A range of inappropriate sources has been consulted, or inappropriate data has been gathered, and there is little evidence that the investigation has been planned.
2	A limited range of appropriate sources has been consulted, or data has been gathered, and some relevant material has been selected. There is evidence of some planning in the investigation.
3	A sufficient range of appropriate sources has been consulted, or data has been gathered, and relevant material has been selected. The investigation has been satisfactorily planned.
4	An imaginative range of appropriate sources has been consulted, or data has been gathered, and relevant material has been carefully selected. The investigation has been well planned.

Criterion D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Where the research question does not lend itself to a systematic investigation in the subject in which the essay is registered, the maximum level that can be awarded for this criterion is 2. "Academic context", as used in this guide, can be defined as the current state of the field of study under investigation. However, this is to be understood in relation to what can reasonably be expected of a pre-university student. For example, to obtain a level 4, it would be sufficient to relate the investigation to the principal lines of inquiry in the relevant field; detailed, comprehensive knowledge is not required.

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	The essay demonstrates no real knowledge or understanding of the topic studied.
1	The essay demonstrates some knowledge but little understanding of the topic studied. The essay shows little awareness of an academic context for the investigation.
2	The essay demonstrates an adequate knowledge and some understanding of the topic studied. The essay shows some awareness of an academic context for the investigation.
3	The essay demonstrates a good knowledge and understanding of the topic studied. Where appropriate, the essay successfully outlines an academic context for the investigation.
4	The essay demonstrates a very good knowledge and understanding of the topic studied. Where appropriate, the essay clearly and precisely locates the investigation in an academic context.

Criterion E: reasoned argument

This criterion assesses the extent to which the essay uses the material collected to present ideas in a logical and coherent manner, and develops a reasoned argument in relation to the research question. Where the research question does not lend itself to a systematic investigation in the subject in which the essay is registered, the maximum level that can be awarded for this criterion is 2.

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	There is no attempt to develop a reasoned argument in relation to the research question.
1	There is a limited or superficial attempt to present ideas in a logical and coherent manner, and to develop a reasoned argument in relation to the research question.
2	There is some attempt to present ideas in a logical and coherent manner, and to develop a reasoned argument in relation to the research question, but this is only partially successful.
3	Ideas are presented in a logical and coherent manner, and a reasoned argument is developed in relation to the research question, but with some weaknesses.
4	Ideas are presented clearly and in a logical and coherent manner. The essay succeeds in developing a reasoned and convincing argument in relation to the research question.

Criterion F: application of analytical and evaluative skills appropriate to the subject

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	The essay shows no application of appropriate analytical and evaluative skills.
1	The essay shows little application of appropriate analytical and evaluative skills.
2	The essay shows some application of appropriate analytical and evaluative skills, which may be only partially effective.
3	The essay shows sound application of appropriate analytical and evaluative skills.
4	The essay shows effective and sophisticated application of appropriate analytical and evaluative skills.

Criterion G: use of language appropriate to the subject

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	The language used is inaccurate and unclear. There is no effective use of terminology appropriate to the subject .
1	The language used sometimes communicates clearly but does not do so consistently. The use of terminology appropriate to the subject is only partly accurate .
2	The language used for the most part communicates clearly. The use of terminology appropriate to the subject is usually accurate .
3	The language used communicates clearly. The use of terminology appropriate to the subject is accurate, although there may be occasional lapses .
4	The language used communicates clearly and precisely. Terminology appropriate to the subject is used accurately, with skill and understanding .

Criterion H: conclusion

This criterion assesses the extent to which the essay incorporates a conclusion that is relevant to the research question and is consistent with the evidence presented in the essay.

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	Little or no attempt is made to provide a conclusion that is relevant to the research question.
1	A conclusion is attempted that is relevant to the research question but may not be entirely consistent with the evidence presented in the essay .
2	An effective conclusion is clearly stated; it is relevant to the research question and consistent with the evidence presented in the essay. It should include unresolved questions where appropriate to the subject concerned .

Criterion I: formal presentation

This criterion assesses the extent to which the layout, organization, appearance and formal elements of the essay consistently follow a standard format. The formal elements are: title page, table of contents, page numbers, illustrative material, quotations, documentation (including references, citations and bibliography) and appendices (if used).

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	The formal presentation is unacceptable, or the essay exceeds 4,000 words.
1	The formal presentation is poor.
2	The formal presentation is satisfactory.
3	The formal presentation is good.
4	The formal presentation is excellent.

Criterion J: abstract

The requirements for the abstract are for it to state clearly the research question that was investigated, how the investigation was undertaken and the conclusion(s) of the essay.

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	The abstract exceeds 300 words or one or more of the required elements of an abstract (listed above) is missing.
1	The abstract contains the elements listed above but they are not all clearly stated.
2	The abstract clearly states all the elements listed above.

Criterion K: holistic judgment

The purpose of this criterion is to assess the qualities that distinguish an essay from the average, such as intellectual initiative, depth of understanding and insight. While these qualities will be clearly present in the best work, less successful essays may also show some evidence of them and should be rewarded under this criterion.

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	The essay shows no evidence of such qualities.
1	The essay shows little evidence of such qualities.
2	The essay shows some evidence of such qualities.
3	The essay shows clear evidence of such qualities.
4	The essay shows considerable evidence of such qualities.

Academic honesty

The student is ultimately responsible for ensuring that his or her extended essay is authentic, with the work or ideas of others fully and correctly acknowledged. Additionally, it is the responsibility of a supervisor to confirm that, for each student he or she has supervised, to the best of his or her knowledge, the version of the extended essay submitted for assessment is the authentic work of the student.

Both plagiarism and collusion are forms of malpractice that incur a penalty. The same piece of work, or two versions of the same work, cannot be submitted to meet the requirements of both the extended essay and another assessment component of a subject contributing to the diploma or an additional certificate.

The extended essay in World Studies

Overview

An extended essay in world studies provides students with an opportunity to undertake an in-depth, interdisciplinary study of an issue of contemporary global significance. World studies extended essays may examine issues such as the global food crisis, climate change, terrorism, energy security, migration, and global health, technology and cultural exchange. Global issues of this nature play out in local contexts—a zero-carbonfootprint city policy in Denmark; a new clean energy technology used by a village in India; the education of migrant children in two contrasting frontier towns. An in-depth examination of local instances of globally significant phenomena provides opportunities for a well grounded appreciation and understanding of the issue under study.

Complex issues such as these can rarely be adequately understood if only approached from the perspective of a single subject. It is better to approach such issues through interdisciplinary research. The world studies extended essay requires students to identify an issue of global importance and develop a clear rationale for taking an interdisciplinary approach. It provides an opportunity for students to conduct independent interdisciplinary research—research that draws on theories, findings and methods from two or more IB Diploma Programme subjects and integrates them to produce a coherent and insightful analysis of an issue they choose to investigate.

The aims of this interdisciplinary extended essay, while similar to those for single-subject essays, are distinct in important ways. The interdisciplinary essay is designed to provide students with the opportunity to:

- **engage in, and pursue, a systematic process of research appropriate to the topic**—a process that is informed by knowledge, concepts, theories, perspectives and methods from at least two chosen subjects
- **develop research and communication skills**—including the ability to communicate with readers who have a background in more than one subject/discipline
- **develop the skills of creative and critical thinking**—particularly those skills involved in integrating concepts, theories, perspectives, findings, or examples from different subjects to develop new insights or understandings
- **experience the excitement of intellectual discovery**—including insights into how different subjects complement and/or challenge one another when used to address the same topic or issue.

Furthermore, in line with the IB's mission, the world studies extended essay seeks to advance students' **global consciousness**. Global consciousness encompasses:

- **global sensitivity**—a sensitivity to local phenomena and experiences as manifestations of broader developments on the planet
- **global understanding**—the capacity to think in flexible and informed ways about issues of global significance

- **global self**—a developing perception of self as a global actor and member of humanity, capable of making a positive contribution to the world.

In the world studies extended essay, global consciousness can be seen as “the capacity and the inclination to place people, objects, situations with which we come into contact, (including the self) within the broader matrix of our contemporary world. An individual exhibits global consciousness when she is attuned to daily encounters with world cultures, landscapes and products; can place such encounters in a broader narrative or explanatory framework of contemporary global processes; and perceives herself as an actor in such a global context”.

Boix Mansilla, V, and Gardner, H. (2007). From teaching globalization to nurturing global consciousness. In MM. Suárez- Orozco (Ed.), *Learning in the Global Era: International Perspectives on Globalization and Education*. Berkeley, USA. University of California Press.

Choice of topic

Many topics are potentially suitable for a world studies extended essay. The chosen topic must address both an issue of global significance, and invite an interdisciplinary approach. The most successful topics reveal connections between specific and/or local places, people, phenomena or experiences, and the larger global framework in which they take place. Topics must invite a critical examination of the issue in light of relevant theories, methods and arguments in two or more subjects. When choosing a topic, it is important for students to bear in mind that it must encourage analysis and evaluation rather than description and unsupported value judgments.

When choosing a topic, students must ensure that the various assessment criteria can be satisfied within the 4,000-word limit. Students are advised to avoid topics that are too broad in scope to permit an in-depth study within the prescribed word limit. A limited topic thoroughly researched and with a clear focus is preferable to a broad topic that can only be examined superficially.

Students may use journalistic or visual material, interviews, or data from the internet, but their essays should not be based solely on such sources. An extended essay in world studies is expected to show that the student possesses a knowledge and understanding of relevant theories, research methods, or findings in the selected IB Diploma Programme subjects.

Treatment of the topic

Students should craft a specific research question that is both interesting to them and challenging. The question chosen should be limited in scope and sufficiently narrow to allow students to examine an issue or problem in depth. It should present the student with the opportunity to collect or generate information and/or data for analysis and evaluation. Many extended essays will address a research question but inquiries designed to test a hypothesis are also viable.

To address their research question students should ask themselves what aspects of the problem they will need to understand and which subject, or subjects, may best equip them with a set of optimal and viable tools to help them develop a sound understanding of the issues. They should consider how bringing two or more disciplinary perspectives to bear might yield a deeper or better account of the issue. World studies extended essays must demonstrate students' capacity to employ insights from the selected subjects and

meaningfully connect them to address the topic. It is expected that students will have a good grounding in at least one of the IB Diploma Programme subjects used in the essay. If they are unfamiliar with a discipline used, they must access the relevant syllabus for that subject and be able to identify concepts and modes of thinking used in the essay.

The student’s supervisor should be appropriately qualified to give advice in at least one of the subjects used by the student. If other subjects are touched upon in the essay and there are appropriate subject specialists available in the school, students are encouraged to consult them about research, concepts and approaches. However, each student should only have one main supervisor who takes on the role as outlined in the introduction of this guide and who signs the extended essay coversheet.

To do justice to their chosen topic, students will also have to ask themselves how the particular local cases under study illustrate larger processes or issues of global import. They may view a local case as an opportunity to explore the complexities of the problem in a manageable scope or as a way to document “best practices” and offer lessons beyond the local focus. Occasionally, students may choose to compare two small cases from different contexts.

The following examples of world studies extended essays are intended as guidance only. They illustrate that multifaceted questions should be encouraged rather than broad ones that do not clearly state exactly what about the issue is being investigated. In each case the essay title provides a sharp focus on an issue of global significance. The research question further articulates the focus of the study.

Title	HIV-AIDS and religion: Beliefs and knowledge about HIV-AIDS among members of different religious communities in Mombasa, Kenya
Research question	What do members of three religious congregations (Hindu, Muslim and Christian) in my city, Mombasa, believe, or know about, the causes, transmission and cures of HIV-AIDS, and how might religious beliefs inform these people’s views?
Global–local perspective	Concern about the HIV-AIDS epidemic permeates both the developed and developing world. The impact of the disease on individuals and communities is unevenly concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa, where more health education is needed (global). Learning about HIV-AIDS involves informing one’s initial beliefs about its causes and cures—beliefs that often intersect with cultural and religious values. This essay examines how religion and learning about HIV-AIDS interact in the particular case of three religious communities in Mombasa (local). Its results show how religion mediates learning about the disease in this particular locality (local). It invites reflection on the importance of attending to religion, as a key dimension of human life in development work more generally (global).
Dimensions and disciplines	To address the question the student might consider the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What constitutes popular beliefs versus scientific explanations of HIV-AIDS, its causes and cures? (biology) • How have the three religious communities approached the spread of HIV-AIDS in Kenya and how is illness explained in selected passages of religious texts? (world religions) • How best to collect reliable data on beliefs and knowledge about HIV-AIDS. (social science methodology)

Approach	This choice of topic integrates biology, world religions and social science (survey design). After introducing the problem and impact of HIV-AIDS in East Africa, the student reports on an empirical study in which leaders, adults and youths in three religious communities completed a questionnaire about their views on HIV-AIDS. The multiple-choice questionnaire is structured to capture popular beliefs and misconceptions about HIV-AIDS (its causes, transmission and cure) as well as scientific biological explanation. Results reveal consistent views within religious communities but important differences across them. To discuss these differences the student examines the different reactions religious communities have to the spread of AIDS and draws on sacred text to hypothesize why such differences may exist.
Title	Express yourself! Youth culture: A global phenomenon with local meanings everywhere
Research question	How and why have two Japanese graffiti artists used American hip hop art for the purposes of self-expression and community organization in their country?
Global–local perspective	Key to globalization is the accelerated traffic of cultural products around the world. From McDonalds to hip hop, these products illustrate how our world is becoming more alike. As different cultures interpret and use such products in a variety of ways, they also illustrate how different our cultural outlooks can be. The phenomenon of youth culture as a dynamic sharing of ideas, creativity and forms of expression among young people worldwide is examined. This is achieved by exploring how two Japanese artists combine artistic motifs from their American counterparts with traditional Japanese ideas in their graffiti designs to create new culturally relevant expressions of individuality and independence.
Dimensions and disciplines	To address the question the student might consider the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What artistic choices—for example, imagery, style, colour, location— have these artists made, and in what ways do these decisions echo and/or depart from popular trends in American graffiti? (visual arts) • What styles, tastes and ideas characterize contemporary Japanese youth culture? Are they represented in these artists' work? How and why have these artists used graffiti to express their individuality in a culture that emphasizes collectivity? (social and cultural anthropology)
Approach	The student draws from visual arts and social and cultural anthropology to explore graffiti art in Japan. After providing some background on the hip hop movement as a global phenomenon, the work of two Japanese graffiti artists is examined. The student draws on American and Japanese art critics to compare the Japanese works of art to those of American graffiti artists. She shows how contemporary Japanese culture has influenced the style and content of their work by examining symbols that reflect Japanese youth today. The student discusses how and why the artists include cultural critique messages in their work and what these opinions suggest about Japanese society in general.
Title	Weed infestation in fresh water—weed kills fish which in turn destroys the livelihood of fishermen
Research question	What is the impact of non-native aquatic plants on marine and inland environments?

Global–local perspective	The student examines species infestation in the particular case of Lake Maracaibo’s ecosystem and fishing industry (local). After considering this case in-depth, a comparison is drawn between similar species infestation cases taking place around the world (global). The student concludes that accelerating trade, and a growing world population, are resulting in increasing activity on the planet’s shores, and calls for the development of sustainable approaches to development (global).
Dimensions and disciplines	To address the question the student might consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the tender balance of natural ecosystems maintained and how do species compete for resources within them? (environmental systems and societies) • How will I develop criteria to monitor biodiversity and diagnose infestation? (environmental systems and societies) • What incentives lead companies to follow more or less sustainable practices? (economics)
Approach	The student surveys the deliberate and accidental transplanting of aquatic species by human activity as the global issue and considers some worldwide examples such as parasitic plants and algal blooms. The local case study explains the science of a particular weed infestation on Lake Maracaibo and other waterways nearby. The consequences for lost human livelihoods (for example fishing, shipping) are considered, and through interviews with academic experts some realistic proposals are evaluated with a view to solving the problem.
Title	Infant nutrition practices in a comparative perspective: The use of powdered milk in developing and developed countries
Research question	How does baby formula affect the health of infants, and why is it such a popular alternative to mother’s milk in the Philippines and Canada?
Global–local perspective	By comparing newborn feeding practices in two clinics, one in the Philippines (local) and the other one in Canada (local), the student demonstrates how similar behaviours can be rooted in reasons that differ greatly in different parts of the world (global).
Dimensions and disciplines	To address the question the student might consider the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive and negative effects of baby formula on infants’ health. (biology) • The presence of baby formula products in each country—investment, sales, advertisements, government advisories and regulations on the use of baby formula (business and management). Mothers’ beliefs about their babies’ health and nutritional needs. (psychology)
Approach	The approach here integrates (human) biology, business and management (marketing), and psychology. After explaining the debate about the effect of baby formula on infants’ health, the student reports an empirical study in which 20 mothers with newborn babies in two public hospitals (Philippines and Canada) completed a questionnaire about their babies’ nutritional needs, their awareness of government recommendations on the use of baby formula and their feelings about the advertisement campaigns. Results revealed different rationales for the popularity of baby formula consumption.

A weak essay in this category would be one that:

- does not give a strong sense of why the inquiry is important and how it links with a global issue
- defines the problem too broadly, given the 4,000 word limit for the essay, and therefore offers a superficial account
- is largely based on common sense, media or basic information from the internet rather than employing concepts, theories and findings from the subjects involved
- uses subjects (knowledge or methods) without a clear and coherent idea of why these are warranted in the inquiry
- juxtaposes theories, methods and findings from different subjects without any attempt to show how they come together to address the topic in a relevant or compelling way
- offers merely a description of the problem under study without providing a critical examination (for example one that explains, compares, critiques, analyses the topic under study in depth).

Researcher's reflection space

The researcher's reflection space is strongly recommended as part of the world studies extended essay process, providing a space for candid reflection on the issue being studied and how it relates to students' own world views, values and aspirations as global citizens.

The reflection space gives students an opportunity to reflect on their work in personally meaningful ways. It can take the form of a notebook or a blog. It is created by students to record notes on their readings, gather topic-related media clips, paste selected and marked readings, or reflect about interviews, data, and emerging findings.

Most importantly, it is a space where students can reflect candidly about their own views and lifestyles, feelings, values, aspirations and commitments as global citizens in relation to the topic under study.

The world studies extended essay offers an opportunity for students to develop their global consciousness. The reflection space is the place where particular moments of such development are documented, enabling students to reflect upon and deepen their personal connections to the problems under study and gain an insight into whether, or how, learning about contemporary world issues informs their values, beliefs, or commitments in this key phase of their lives. The best examples of reflection space exhibit students' ongoing reflection about who they are as local, regional and global actors.

The reflection space is a document for the student. Students may choose to share a section of the space with their teachers in preparation for a meeting. Supervisors may assign focused reflection tasks for students to include in their space but, fundamentally, this is a student-led space to be owned by the students. Students may also include selected pages from their reflection space in the appendix of their extended essay.

Supervisors should refer to the shared sections of this space when they complete the supervisor's report on the extended essay coversheet. These comments help examiners when they consider the assessment of criterion K: holistic judgment.

It is intended that a well-planned researcher's reflection space arises naturally out of the student research process and should not involve any extra work.

Interpreting the assessment criteria

Criterion A: research question

In world studies, the research question must focus on an issue of contemporary global relevance that the student has investigated; at the same time, this is an interdisciplinary essay and the research question must clearly invite an integrative approach involving dimensions that are typically studied in the different disciplines.

Criterion B: introduction

The introduction should explain succinctly the significance and context of the topic and why it is worthy of investigation. A brief overview as to how the research question links a precise or local issue to a global development should be included. Key concepts or categories should be defined and related to their academic context. A good introduction should explain how the research question requires an interdisciplinary approach, which IB Diploma Programme subjects should be used and why, and offer definitions of key concepts selected from these subjects. The introduction may also include an outline of the essay; it should not include irrelevant background material.

Criterion C: investigation

The materials, sources, data and evidence considered should be relevant to the study and deployed appropriately in the essay given the perspectives of the IB Diploma Programme subjects being used. Students are expected to employ theories, methods and findings from two or more subjects. While journalistic and media sources are permitted, the essay should also include perspectives based on selected subjects. Successful essays may include subsidiary questions that organize the research design and the reporting of findings.

Criterion D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Students should select concepts, theories, perspectives, findings or examples from two or more subjects, demonstrating a sound grasp of the knowledge bases, modes of understanding, and methods of communication of the different subjects. They should place the issue in academic context and indicate the limitations of individual subjects in terms of considering the issue. The award of achievement levels of 2 or above requires evidence that two or more subjects have been used in the essay. Higher levels (3 or 4) require increasingly explicit awareness of the strengths and limitations of the individual subject concepts or ideas.

Criterion E: reasoned argument

Students should present their ideas in the form of a logical and coherent argument that is relevant to the research question. Ideas should be substantiated with evidence and examples. Straightforward descriptive or narrative accounts that lack analysis do not usually advance an argument and should be avoided. In addition, successful interdisciplinary essays scoring a level 3 or 4 require an **integrative** argument or explanation—that is, the different subjects should be coherently brought together to address the question through, for example, a complex causal explanation, a leading metaphor, a model, an analogy.

Criterion F: application of analytical and evaluative skills appropriate to the subjects

Students should analyse and evaluate their evidence in a manner appropriate to the question asked and the IB Diploma Programme subjects employed in the essay, for example, assessing the reliability of sources and evaluating the implications of research reports. At the highest level 4, students should demonstrate effective and nuanced analysis and evaluation of information and findings, as well as evaluation of the success and limitations of their own integrative approach to the issue.

Criterion G: use of language appropriate to the subject

The use of language must be effective and include terminology and concepts relevant to the issue and subjects under study. Students should bear in mind that contested or ambiguous terms may need to be defined and that their work should be accessible and acceptable to audiences from the different subjects being integrated.

Criterion H: conclusion

The essay should have a conclusion consistent with its argument indicating how understanding has been advanced by the integration of perspectives from different subjects. In some cases this may lead to new insights and new questions in relation to the global issue studied.

Criterion I: formal presentation

This criterion relates to the extent to which the essay conforms to academic standards about the way in which research papers should be presented. Essays that omit one of the required elements—title page, table of contents, page numbers, are deemed no better than satisfactory (maximum level 2), while essays that omit two of them are deemed poor at best (maximum level 1).

Criterion J: abstract

The formal abstract should include:

1. the research question
2. how and why it was investigated, including the subjects involved and how they were brought together
3. the conclusion.

Criterion K: holistic judgment

Qualities such as personal engagement, initiative, and depth of understanding, insight, inventiveness and flair are assessed under this criterion. Special attention will be paid to signs of an emerging global consciousness where students demonstrate an awareness of issues around them, an understanding of the world in which we live, and a sense of themselves as global citizens. The award of achievement level 2 requires that the essay shows some evidence of a range of these qualities or clear evidence of one of the qualities. The awarding of higher achievement levels 3 and 4 requires that students show considerable evidence of global consciousness, which may be reflected in one or more of the following:

- personal reflections embedded in the essay
- the researcher's reflection space—extracts of which can be placed in the appendix
- the supervisor's account of the *viva voce*.

The information in this document is taken from:

The International Baccalaureate Organization ® *Extended Essay Guide (First examinations 2013)*