

International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme Subject Brief

Diploma Programme Core:

Extended essay, including the world studies option

First assessments 2013 – Last assessments 2017



The IB Diploma Programme (DP) is a rigorous, academically challenging and balanced programme of education designed to prepare students aged 16 to 19 for success at university and life beyond. The DP aims to encourage students to be knowledgeable, inquiring, caring and compassionate, and to develop intercultural understanding, open-mindedness and the attitudes necessary to respect and evaluate a range of viewpoints.

To ensure both breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding, students must choose at least one subject from five groups: 1) their best language, 2) additional language(s), 3) social sciences, 4) experimental sciences, and 5) mathematics. Students may choose either an arts subject from group 6, or a second subject from groups 1 to 5. At least three and not more than four subjects are taken at higher level (240 recommended teaching hours), while the remaining are taken at standard level (150 recommended teaching hours). In addition, three core elements—the extended essay, theory of knowledge and creativity, action, service—are compulsory and central to the philosophy of the programme.

These IB DP subject briefs illustrate four key course components.

- I. Course description and aims
- II. Curriculum model overview

- III. Assessment model
- IV. Sample topics



I. Course description and aims

The extended essay is an in-depth study of a focused topic chosen from the list of approved DP subjects—normally one of the student's six chosen subjects, or in World Studies. World Studies provides students the opportunity to carry out an in-depth interdisciplinary study of an issue of contemporary global significance, utilizing two IB disciplines. Both are intended to promote high-level research and writing skills, intellectual discovery and creativity, engaging students 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, coherent and appropriate manner.

The extended essay, including the world studies option, is a compulsory, externally assessed piece of independent research/investigation. Presented as a formal piece of scholarship containing no more than 4,000 words, it is the result of approximately 40 hours of student work, and concluded with a short interview, or viva voce, with the supervising teacher (recommended).

The aims of the extended essay, including the World Studies option, are to provide students with the opportunity to:

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

II. Curriculum model overview

Component

The research process

1. Choose the approved DP subject*.
2. Choose a topic.
3. Formulate a well-focused research question.
4. Plan the investigation and writing process.
5. Plan a structure (outline headings) for the essay. This may change as the investigation develops.
6. Undertake some preparatory reading.
7. Carry out the investigation.

**for the World Studies option, students choose a topic which must address both an issue of global significance, and invite an interdisciplinary approach involving two approved DP subjects.*

Writing and formal presentation

- The required elements of the final work to be submitted are:
- Title page
- Abstract
- Contents page
- Introduction
- Body (development/methods/results)
- Conclusion
- References and bibliography
- Appendices.

The upper limit of 4,000 words includes the introduction, body, conclusion and any quotations.

The viva voce (concluding interview)

The viva voce is a short interview (10-15 minutes) between the student and the supervisor, and a recommended conclusion to the process. The viva voce serves as:

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

III. Assessment model

The extended essay, including the World Studies option, is assessed against common criteria, interpreted in ways appropriate to each subject. Students are expected to:

- plan and pursue a research project with intellectual initiative and insight
- formulate a precise research question
- gather and interpret material from appropriate sources
- structure a reasoned evidence-based argument in response to the research question
- present their work in an appropriate format, acknowledging sources in an established academic way
- use the appropriate terminology and language with skill and understanding
- apply appropriate analytical and evaluative skills, with an understanding of the implications and context of their research.

Assessment at a glance

Assessment criteria	Description
Research question	The purpose of the essay is specified.
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.
Investigation	A planned and an appropriate range of sources have been consulted, or data has been gathered, relevant to the research question.
Knowledge and understanding of the topic	The knowledge and understanding of the topic studied, as well as the ability to locate the academic context for the investigation.

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Reasoned argument	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.
Application of appropriate analytical and evaluative skills	The essay demonstrates appropriate analytical and evaluative skills.
Use of appropriate language	The language used communicates clearly the ideas and arguments presented, and whether terminology appropriate to the subject is used accurately.
Conclusion	The essay incorporates a conclusion that is relevant to the research question and is consistent with the evidence presented in the essay.
Formal presentation	The layout, organization, appearance and formal elements of the essay consistently follow a standard format.
Abstract	Clearly states the research question, how the investigation was undertaken and the conclusion(s) of the essay.
Holistic judgment	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.

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.

IV. Sample extended essay topics chosen by students

- To what extent did General Zia Ul-Haq disrupt the progress of women's rights in Pakistan?
- How useful is the concept of totalitarianism in explaining Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia?
- How do photographers of violence and suffering make a fair, accurate and visually compelling case for human rights? (World Studies).