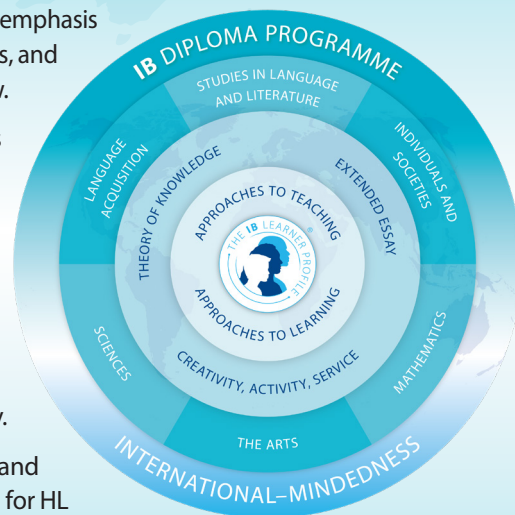


The Diploma Programme (DP) is a rigorous pre-university course of study designed for students in the 16 to 19 age range. It is a broad-based two-year course that aims to encourage students to be knowledgeable and inquiring, but also caring and compassionate. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging students to develop intercultural understanding, open-mindedness, and the attitudes necessary for them to respect and evaluate a range of points of view.

The course is presented as six academic areas enclosing a central core. Students study two modern languages (or a modern language and a classical language), a humanities or social science subject, an experimental science, mathematics and one of the creative arts. Instead of an arts subject, students can choose two subjects from another area. It is this comprehensive range of subjects that makes the Diploma Programme a demanding course of study designed to prepare students effectively for university entrance. In each of the academic areas students have flexibility in making their choices, which means they can choose subjects that particularly interest them and that they may wish to study further at university.

Normally, three subjects (and not more than four) are taken at higher level (HL), and the others are taken at standard level (SL). The IB recommends 240 teaching hours for HL subjects and 150 hours for SL. Subjects at HL are studied in greater depth and breadth than at SL. In addition, three core elements—the extended essay, theory of knowledge and creativity, activity, service—are compulsory and central to the philosophy of the programme.



I. Course description and aims

The extended essay, a component of the DP core, is a compulsory, externally assessed piece of independent research, presented as a formal piece of academic writing. It is an in-depth study of a focused topic, undertaken either through a subject-focused approach, or an interdisciplinary approach combining two DP subjects.

Students choose from the list of available Diploma Programme subjects for the examination session in question. For those taking the diploma this is normally one of the student's six selected subjects, or two in the case of the interdisciplinary pathway. Students can also choose a topic in which they have some background knowledge.

The EE is intended to promote academic research and writing skills. It gives students the opportunity to engage in personal research on their own choice of topic, under the guidance of a supervisor (an appropriately qualified member of staff within the school). Students produce a significant piece of appropriately presented and structured writing, in which their ideas and findings are communicated in a coherent, reasoned manner that is suitable for the chosen subject(s).

The extended essay aims are to enable students to:

- experience the excitement of intellectual exploration
- engage in student-led academic research on a topic of personal interest
- develop skills in research, thinking, self-management, and communication
- reflect on the learning experience of producing an extended essay.

II. Overview of the extended essay process

The research process

The research process involves the following steps, though the order may unfold differently for different students.

- Choose a broad topic then refine and focus it.
- Decide the appropriate pathway: interdisciplinary or subject-focused.
- Choose the approved DP subject(s).
- Undertake some preparatory reading.
- Form a well-focused research question.
- Plan the research and writing process.
- Plan a structure for the essay. This may change as the research develops.
- Carry out the research.

Writing and formal presentation

The required elements of the final submission are as follows.

- Title page
- Contents page
- Introduction
- Body of the essay
- Conclusion
- References and bibliography

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

Reflection process

Reflection is the process by which students recapture their experience and think about its impact on them as learners. This includes how they envisage applying what they have learned to other circumstances, including future studies, career, or life in general. To assist students with this, there are three mandatory, formal reflection sessions with the supervisor.

The reflection sessions also give students the opportunity to:

- reflect on their engagement with the research process
- consider the effectiveness of their choices
- re-examine their ideas and decide whether changes are needed.

The final reflection session is the viva voce, a short interview (10–15 minutes) between the student and the supervisor. The viva voce serves to check academic integrity, reflect on successes and difficulties, and think about what has been learned.

Reflective thinking is recorded as a 500-word reflective statement. The student writes the statement at the end of the extended essay process and includes it on the Reflection and progress form (RPF). The form also notes the student's attendance at each reflection session.

III. Assessment model

The extended essay, whether subject-focused or interdisciplinary, is assessed against common criteria.

In working on the extended essay, students are expected to achieve the following assessment objectives.

Assessment objectives	
Know and understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the topic chosen and the research question posed. To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of terminology and concepts. To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of relevant research methods.
Apply and analyse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To apply relevant research methods to respond to the research question. To analyse the research to determine appropriate findings.
Synthesize and evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To discuss in a balanced way the significance of the research findings. To develop a clear line of argument that links the research question, research findings, and conclusions. To evaluate the effectiveness of the essay. To evaluate the extended essay learning experience and reflect on the growth of the learner.
Communicate research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To communicate research according to appropriate structural conventions. To understand and demonstrate academic integrity.

Assessment at a glance

Assessment criteria	Guiding question
Framework for the essay	Do the research question, research methods, and structural conventions followed provide an effective framework for the essay?
Knowledge and understanding	Does the student demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being used in their research?
Analysis and line of argument	Does the student analyse the information presented in the essay and produce a line of argument?
Discussion and evaluation	Does the student discuss the findings and evaluate the essay?
Reflection	Does the student evaluate the effect of the extended essay learning experience on them as a learner?

The extended essay contributes to the student's overall score for the diploma through points awarded 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.

Example extended essay topics

Research question	Approach
Language A: How effectively does Oscar Wilde both present and critique social expectations in <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> ?	Various social expectations are identified, such as marriage, manners, religion, duty and gender. How effectively Wilde presents and critiques them is investigated through a close reading of the play and attention to language. Some background research into Victorian society provides social context, but the focus is on the play.
Economics: Does current economic research into minimum wage invalidate the neoclassical argument that increasing the minimum wage will lead to increased levels of unemployment?	The neoclassical argument is researched and presented. The counterarguments are researched and evaluated in terms of the nature of the evidence and studies that have been carried out.
Psychology: Is mindfulness or cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) the more effective means of coping with stress?	Research that directly compares the two treatments is analysed, leading to a well evidenced conclusion.
Chemistry: What is the effect of manganese oxide versus copper (II) oxide in the catalysation of hydrogen peroxide at 21°C?	Background information is sought regarding the decomposition of hydrogen peroxide and different catalytic pathways and mechanisms. This is followed by practical research using carefully selected variables.
Visual arts: To what extent do the skull series of compositions by the artist Joni Brenner embody the cyclical nature of life and death?	The socio-historical context of Apartheid and the art produced in the post-Apartheid era is researched. This is followed by an analysis of the artistic and symbolic aspects of Brenner's skull compositions.

About the IB: For over 50 years, the IB has built a reputation for high-quality, challenging programmes of education that develop internationally minded young people who are well prepared for the challenges of life in the 21st century and are able to contribute to creating a better, more peaceful world.

For further information on the IB Diploma Programme, visit: <https://ibo.org/en/dp>.

Complete subject guides can be accessed through the Programme Resource Centre or purchased through the IB store: <https://www.ibo.org/new-store>.

For more on how the DP prepares students for success at university, visit: <https://ibo.org/en/university-admission>.