

The Extended Essay

The extended essay is an in-depth study of a limited topic within a subject. Its purpose is to provide the candidate with an opportunity to engage in independent research. The emphasis is placed on the process of engaging in personal research, on the communication of ideas and information in a logical and coherent manner, and on the overall presentation of the extended essay within a clearly defined set of guidelines. The extended essay is to cover a well-defined research question within a 4000 word limit. Students are encouraged to choose a topic of personal interest and relevance. Each student will work closely with a faculty supervisor, or mentor, who has qualifications in the essay subject area. The supervisor will provide guidance in the process of topic selection, research options, and presentation format. Students will be apprised of the specific guidelines and available subject areas for the extended essay at the beginning of the junior year.

Scoring of the Extended Essay

Based on the total score obtained, extended essays will be marked as:

- A Excellent standard
- B Good standard
- C Satisfactory standard
- D Mediocre standard
- E Elementary standard

Examples of Extended Essay Titles

Language A

- A comparison of Aldous Huxley's 'Brave New World' and George Orwell's '1984'.*
- The problems of racial conflict as shown through the works of James Baldwin.*
- Religious imagery in 'Wuthering Heights'.*

Language B

(the essay will be written in the target language)

- The language conflict in Quebec and its effects on everyday life in the province.*
- Political slogans on the Berlin Wall.*
- The influence of emigration on Mexican life and culture.*

Experimental Sciences

- The ozone hole, UV radiation and its possible effect on the growth of *Lepidium sativum*.*
- Spectrophotometric determination of trace amounts of lead in drinking water.*
- Wind power: a clean source of energy?*

Mathematics

- Prime numbers in cryptography.
- The Hausdorff dimension of fractal sets.
- The proof of the law of quadratic reciprocity.

Individuals and Society

- An analysis of the first five-year plans of Mao Zedong and Stalin.
- Use of the visual arts in fascist propaganda.
- The role of the Pan-African movement in the downfall of Kwame Nkrumah in 1966.

The Arts and Electives

- Picasso: genius or cultural thief?
- The role of creation myths in Maori religion.
- An investigation into the use of, and ethical consequences arising from, robots in surgery.
- The debate about the effects of television violence on pre-teenagers: social and legislative safeguards and their effectiveness.

Students are required to select one subject group from those listed below for their essay. The subject chosen for the extended essay does not have to be one of the subjects being studied by the candidate for the diploma, but care should be taken to choose a subject about which the candidate has sufficient knowledge and skills. Candidates should also base the choice of subject on the level of personal interest they have in that subject.

Subject Groups

World religions

Visual arts

Theatre arts

Social anthropology

Psychology

Politics

Physics

Philosophy

Peace and conflict studies

Music

Mathematics

Information technology in a global society

History and history of the Islamic world

Geography

Environmental systems

Economics

Design technology

Computer science

Classical Greek and Latin

Chemistry

Business and organization

Biology

Group 2: Language B (French, German, Spanish, Japanese)

Group 1: Language A (English; primary focus on literature)

GENERAL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

IB students need to be aware of the assessment for the extended essay as it will guide them in their research and writing. These general assessment criteria are applicable to all extended essays, irrespective of the subject in which the extended essay is registered. However, each extended essay will be assessed against these criteria in the context of the subject in which the extended essay is registered.

A Research question

The extent to which the focus of the essay is expressed and specified. This need not be in the form of a question. An example of an alternative form is a hypothesis.

Achievement level

- 0** The research question is not stated in the early part of the essay **or** does not lend itself to systematic investigation in the context of an extended essay.
- 1** The research question is stated in the early part of the essay but not in a precise manner **or** the research question is clearly and precisely stated but is too broad in scope to be treated effectively within the word limit.
- 2** The research question is clearly and precisely stated in the early part of the essay and is sharply focused, making it susceptible to effective treatment within the word limit.

Levels will be awarded for the remaining criteria regardless of whether the research question is clearly stated or implicit.

B Approach to the research question

The extent to which the essay appropriately addresses and develops the specific research question, including the collection of any relevant information.

Achievement level

- 0** The approach used is completely inappropriate to the research question.
- 1** The approach used is generally inappropriate to the research question.
- 2** The approach used is generally appropriate to the research question.
- 3** The approach used is well chosen and highly appropriate to the research question.

C Analysis/Interpretation

The extent to which relevant materials, sources, data and evidence are considered appropriately in the essay. Where the research question does not lend itself to systematic investigation in the context of an extended essay, the maximum level that can be awarded is 2.

Achievement level

- 0 There is no attempt at analysis/interpretation.
- 1 There is some attempt at analysis/interpretation.
- 2 Analysis/interpretation is carried out but not always thoroughly or correctly.
- 3 A competent analysis/interpretation is carried out.
- 4 An effective analysis/interpretation is carried out with skill and understanding.

D Argument/evaluation

The extent to which the essay develops an argument relevant to the research question from the materials/information considered. Where the research question does not lend itself to systematic investigation in the context of an extended essay, the maximum level that can be awarded is 2.

Achievement level

- 0 There is no argument relevant to the research question.
- 1 There is a limited or superficial attempt to formulate an argument relevant to the research question.
- 2 An argument is developed which addresses the research question but which is incomplete. Where an evaluation is appropriate, it is likely to be subjective, with little attempt at substantiation.
- 3 An argument which addresses the research question is competently developed. Where an evaluation is appropriate, some attempt has been made to substantiate it.
- 4 A convincing argument, which addresses the research question, is well developed, well organized and clearly expressed. Where an evaluation is appropriate, it is fully substantiated.

E Conclusion

The extent to which the essay incorporates a conclusion consistent with its argument, not necessarily in the form of a separate section.

Achievement level

- 0 Little or no attempt has been made to provide a conclusion which is consistent with the argument presented in the essay.
- 1 Some conclusion is attempted which is consistent with the argument presented in the essay.
- 2 A conclusion is clearly stated, is relevant to the research question and is consistent with the argument or explanation presented in the essay. Where appropriate, the conclusion clearly indicates unresolved questions and new questions that have emerged from the research.

F Abstract

The adequacy of the formal abstract as a synopsis of the essay.

Achievement level

0 The abstract exceeds 300 words **or** one or more of the following is/are missing: the research question; the scope of the investigation; the conclusion reached.

1 Within the abstract, the research question, the scope of the investigation and the conclusion reached are all present but not all clearly stated.

2 Within the abstract, the research question, the scope of the investigation and the conclusion reached are all clearly stated.

G Formal presentation

The layout, table of contents, references, bibliography, appendices, title, quotations, illustrations and organization, where appropriate. General descriptors of the different achievement levels can be found on the following page.

Achievement level

0 The essay exceeds 4000 words **or** the formal presentation of the essay is poor.

1 The formal presentation of the essay is adequate.

2 The formal presentation of the essay is good.

3 The formal presentation of the essay is excellent.

G Formal presentation (general descriptors)

Achievement level 0

The essay exceeds 4000 words **or** the overall presentation and neatness of the essay are poor. Illustrative material, if included, is untidy and not used effectively. A contents page or list of section/chapter headings, if included, is not clearly set out. The pages are not numbered.

References (if appropriate) are not set out consistently, according to a standard format. The bibliography (if appropriate) clearly omits some works of reference used and/or does not specify author/s, title, date of publication and publisher in a standard or consistent way. The appendix (if appropriate) is poorly presented, not selective and contains redundant information/data.

Achievement level 1

The essay is within 4000 words. The overall presentation and neatness of the essay are adequate. Illustrative material, if included, may on occasions be untidy and not used effectively. A contents page or list of section/chapter headings is provided, but may not be clearly set out. The pages may not be numbered. References (if appropriate) may not be set out consistently, according to a standard format. The bibliography (if appropriate) appears to include most works of reference used but it does not specify author/s, title, date of publication and publisher in a standard or consistent way. The appendix (if appropriate) contains more information/data than is necessary in support of the text.

Achievement level 2

The essay is within 4000 words. The overall presentation and neatness of the essay are good. Illustrative material, if appropriate to the essay, is well set out and in most cases used effectively. A contents page or list of section/chapter headings is provided and clearly set out. All pages are numbered. References (if appropriate) are set out consistently, according to a standard format.

The bibliography (if appropriate) appears to include most works of reference used and it specifies author/s, title, date of publication and publisher following one standard method of listing sources. The appendix (if appropriate) contains information/ data that is required in support of the text.

Achievement level 3

The essay is within 4000 words. The overall presentation and neatness of the essay are excellent. Illustrative material, if appropriate to the essay, is well set out and used effectively. A contents page or a list of section/chapter headings is provided and clearly set out. All pages are numbered. References (if appropriate) are set out consistently, according to a standard format. The bibliography (if appropriate) appears to include all, and only, those works of reference which have been consulted by the candidate and it specifies author/s, title, date of publication and publisher following consistently one standard method of listing sources. The appendix (if appropriate) contains only information/data that is required in support of the text.

H Holistic Judgment

An overall assessment of qualities such as personal engagement, initiative, depth of understanding, insight, inventiveness and flair. Achievement levels 0, 1, 2, 3 or 4 will be determined by the examiner based on the extent to which these qualities are demonstrated in the essay. The supervisor's report may also be taken into account.

Achievement level

0 The essay is judged to be routine and to show little evidence of any of the qualities listed above.

4 The essay is judged to be outstanding with regard to qualities such as those listed above.