

Fairview High School
International Baccalaureate

Extended Essay Handbook



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Dear Student,

Although you may not see it now, assembling the extended essay will be one of the more rewarding experiences you have here at Fairview. The skills and experience you glean from the project will pay you dividends later in college . . . and even in the workplace.

You have many responsibilities and tasks to fulfill as a diploma candidate, and it is critically important that you approach the extended essay with as much fervor, discipline, and enthusiasm as the other requirements. Beyond the grade, the greatest value in completing the extended essay is the very fact that you did it, and that you did it well. Please approach the assignment with an inquisitive demeanor.

Above all, have fun with it. Philosophical discussions, discovering new truths about your favorite historical character, or successfully proving a hypothesis in physics are all exciting and fun endeavors! Please read through the following for detailed instructions on how to proceed; visit or contact the IB office any time you have questions.

Upward and onward,

D. Bessett

What is the Extended Essay?

The Extended Essay (EE) is a learning experience that introduces students to personal research, and is an assignment that is based on a topic of the student's choice (although the EE topic must clearly fit within one of the offered IB subjects). The extended essay is written outside of the classroom on students' own time. Students begin the EE process in the spring semester of their junior year and submit their final work in the fall of their senior year. Each student proactively obtains a Fairview supervisor, and if desired, an outside mentor to advise and guide him/her during the research and writing period. This is excellent preparation for similar tasks given to students in higher education.

The essays are externally assessed by an examiner on the international grading team and can earn, together with a positive ToK result, up to three bonus points toward earning the diploma.

Length - All extended essays should be between 3500 and 4000 words in length. An extended essay requires an abstract, title page, table of contents, and bibliography. You will document some of your thoughts, challenges and processes

Presentation - All graphs, diagrams, tables, maps, and other supporting material must be neatly presented, well labeled, and easily interpretable. The essay should be logically presented and clearly ordered. A contents page or list of chapter headings should be added and all pages numbered clearly. Take advantage of your word processor!

Documentation - A standard research paper format should be used. Any recognized format is acceptable providing it utilizes footnotes/endnotes, appendices, and bibliographies. Students who use standard MLA or Turabian guidelines will meet all IB Extended Essay requirements.

According to the quality of work, the student's performance will fall into one of the following five grading bands: ¹

- **Grade A** - Demonstrates effective research skills resulting in a well-focused and appropriate research question that can be explored within the scope of the chosen topic.
- **Grade B** - Demonstrates appropriate research skills resulting in a research question that can be explored within the scope of the chosen topic; reasonably effective engagement.
- **Grade C** - Demonstrates evidence of research undertaken, which has led to a research question that is not necessarily expressed in a way that can be explored within the scope of the chosen topic.
- **Grade D** - Demonstrates a lack of research, resulting in unsatisfactory focus and a research question that is not answerable within the scope of the chosen topic.
- **Grade E (Failing Condition)** - Demonstrates an unclear nature of the essay; a generally unsystematic approach and resulting unfocused research question; limited engagement with limited research.

Note: The award of an 'E' for *either* the Extended Essay and/or ToK essay is a failing condition for the diploma.

The worst extended essays are written by students who try to do only the minimum. The papers are painful to write and embarrassing to read. Please do not go down this road. ***The best EEs are written by students who care about their work.*** Their investigations lead them to Norlin Library, reading biographies, interviewing people, and to finding creative ways of unearthing new information. Extended essays, when properly engaged by the students, take on a life of their own; they then become much more important than a mere IB assessment.

¹ International Baccalaureate, Guide, Extended Essay. IBO, March 2018.

Alright, I now understand the basic idea, what are the specifics, and how do I proceed with the process?

Requirements - First, you must complete each of the steps outlined in this handbook: research proposal, advisor contact, rough, revised and final drafts by their deadline dates. Second, your paper must meet all the general assessment and subject specific criteria outlined by IB. Remember, assembling an extended essay is a process; honor the spirit of the assignment, and you will like the end result.

How is the extended essay graded? - Completing each step in the extended essay process leads to a grade in your ToK class. Secondly, your paper will be assessed (marked) by an IB examiner. Roughly two-thirds of your marks will come from the IB general criteria and the remaining third will apply to the subject-specific criteria.

Research paper format style - IB provides no specific format for the extended essay. Your advisor, however, can inform you how papers in your subject matter are best formatted and documented. Consistency is the key.

Choosing a topic - The process of narrowing down your topic begins very early. First, you choose an academic subject (e.g., math, history, social anthropology, biology, etc.). Then you select a topic within that subject - something which interests you and about which you already have some basic knowledge. After some preliminary research you create a research question - the rest of your paper answers the question! Specific questions tend to steer students toward assembling better papers.

Guidelines for Choosing an Extended Essay Topic

The success of your extended essay will depend on choosing a suitable topic. It is a non-trivial assignment. IB suggests that you choose the *subject* area that you would like to write an essay in before you choose your **topic**.

Extended essays may be submitted in one of the subject areas listed below:

Group 1 (Literature in native language)

Group 2 (Foreign language. Essays can be on the language itself, culture and society, or literature)

Biology

Mathematics

Business and Management

Music

Chemistry

Peace and Conflict Studies

Classical Greek or Latin

Philosophy

Computer Science

Physics

Design Technology

Politics

Economics

Psychology

Environmental Systems

Social Anthropology

Geography

Theatre Arts

History

Visual Arts

Information Technology in a Global Society (ITGS)

World Religions

Dance

Film

Human Rights

The following questions may be helpful to review as you begin choosing your topic:

Does my topic fall into one and only one subject area? Extended essays are meant to be an in-depth study within a single subject area. Multi-discipline areas (i.e. biochemistry) are unlikely to score well.

Is my topic narrow enough to be effectively treated in a 4000 word essay? If you can find a book written entirely on your topic, then your topic is almost certainly too broad.

Am I writing in a subject area of which I am already knowledgeable? It is much more difficult to write in a subject area with which you are unfamiliar, as you often need to learn suitable vocabulary and basic premises. You would never write a biology essay without having taken biology lessons. Think hard before planning on writing an essay in such subjects as philosophy, psychology or social anthropology if you have never taken a class in these areas.

Is there information available on my topic? Check on the Web using a variety of key words. You must find scholarly sources such as books and professional journals. Can I understand the information that I find on my topic? It is easy to get out of your depth with some science topics. Also you could find that most of your sources were written in a language other than English.

If I choose to write an essay on English literature, are the works that I discuss originally written in English? These essays are written in the language offered, and you may only use works in translation when doing a comparison with a piece of English literature. If, for example, you choose to write about a piece of Spanish literature, your essay must be written in Spanish.

Developing a research question - All research starts with a general interest, and as you read your broad, general sources about a topic you should start asking yourself questions about it. For example, if I'm interested in Japan's role in World War II, I might start by reading about Pearl Harbor. As I read more about it I might come across Barbara Tuchman's book *The March of Folly*, which has an excellent chapter on Pearl Harbor. Tuchman asserts that the Japanese knew that attacking America was at best a risky strategy, and she has memos from the Japanese defense ministry to prove it. This might lead me to the obvious question: If the Japanese knew that Pearl Harbor was such a high risk target, why did they go ahead with their attack? This is a good beginning, and might end up being the question about which I write. It might, however, lead on to other questions such as, What cultural factors inherent in the Japanese military of 1941 led to the decision to attack Pearl Harbor? The most important thing to realize is that your question will develop over time.

Special note: Work closely with your supervisor to develop a good research question early in the research process. There is a tendency to 'hold on' to initially proposed questions, which is often detrimental to students.

What kind of research is required? - The extended essay is your introduction to serious academic research. This means that your sources must go beyond whatever websites Google or Wikipedia provide you on keyword searches. You need to spend time in libraries; Norlin Library is an excellent source. While there you should consult the research librarian and ask for the best resources that library can offer for your topic. Special note for science folks - to score the highest points in this category, students must devise a separate research section within the paper (this means some sort of actual experiment).

What personal input am I going to be able to put into my essay? How am I going to show the reader my thoughts on my topic? The best essays tend to have a strong personal voice.

Is my viewpoint of my topic biased? Is it based on research or emotion? It maybe very hard for you to write objectively on some topics. Religion is always a particular area of concern, as well as issues such as abortion.

Is my essay going to be more than just a review of the relevant literature? Such an essay is unlikely to score well. In history this might mean going to primary sources and doing your *own* analysis on what was written. In science it could mean doing your own experiment.

Can I narrow my topic still further to a specific research question? This question must be such that it can produce both argument and analysis . Some topics may not lend themselves to this treatment. For instance, in mathematics, it is sometimes hard to find an area where the result is arguable.

Have I looked at the IB assessment criteria for my topic? Can I write about my topic in such a way that all the criteria are satisfied? The general assessment criteria are worth 24 points and the subject specific criteria are worth 12 points.

Extended essay supervisor - Your extended essay supervisor does just that . . . supervises your work while assembling the extended essay. His/her primary role is to see that you are doing and turning in your own work. Secondly, however, the advisor is someone who can help you with narrowing down your topic and framing your research question. He or she can answer questions about format and citations. Some students prefer to work with an "outside" mentor, a university professor or family friend for example, to guide them through the process. This is encouraged; however, a Fairview supervisor must still be assigned. The supervisor in this case will assume only the basic requirements for the extended essay.

Getting the extended essay supervisor you want is relatively easy: start with presenting him/her with a great research proposal . . . and approach that person with deference and respect. It should be very clear to your supervisor-to-be exactly what you want to work on, and he/she needs to see that you've looked at a few preliminary sources. Be sure to approach your supervisor-to-be early on in the writing process; extended essay supervisors are very busy people. Remember that no teacher is required to take on extended essay student advisory responsibilities - we do this out of our sincere desire to help students achieve the diploma.

Keeping your supervisor is all about keeping your promises. Regular contact with your supervisor will demonstrate a serious commitment to the endeavor. On the other hand, if you fail to contact your advisor about your progress, then he/she might have reason not to trust you. If he/she does not trust you, then he/she might not believe that you are submitting your own work. If your supervisor believes that you are not submitting your own work, then you cannot pass the extended essay requirement and you cannot get the diploma.

Summer extended essay work - Summer time is a great time to make significant advancement in your research. Even if you have a summer job, carving out time for quality research and substantive writing can be done without too much difficulty. The amount of competing interests for your time during the school year is incredibly high. You are strongly encouraged to use your summer between junior and senior year as a time for serious advancement in your extended essay project.

Almost done, but not quite

Here are some simple suggestions on how to proceed with your new adventure. Every person is different in how they approach a challenge, but these ideas have proven to be universally beneficial. Remember, have fun with all this!

- **Start early** - Get going on your extended essay as soon as the project is presented to you in ToK (second semester, junior year). It is quite possible to have a full draft before heading home for summer break.
- **Pick a topic you love** - It cannot be stressed enough how important it is to write about something that makes a difference to you personally. Most of the students who crash and burn over the extended essay make the mistake of writing about something that "sounded good" but that had no real meaning for them.
- **Stay in contact with your supervisor** - Your supervisor can help you with any problems that emerge during the development of your paper. Cooperating with your supervisor will instill confidence in the process. Ignoring your supervisor (or his/her advice) will undermine the overall effort. Remember, your supervisor **must have a high level of confidence** that you actually engaged the process. Give him/her opportunities to build that confidence and trust.
- **Baby steps** - Despite what some IB seniors will tell you, no one can write an extended essay in one sitting (or even a few sittings). It's much better to do small sections over a longer period of time than it is to do too much at the last minute. Bursts of activity are fine; just don't procrastinate to the end where your best-effort surge doesn't get you finished (or finished well).
- **Build your bibliography as you go** - When you find a useful source, get the publication information immediately. Later on, when you're creating the works cited page or the bibliography, you'll have the data you need at your finger tips.
- **Cite your sources** - Your advisor can give you more specific directions for citation, but there are four cases in which you must cite: (1) direct quotations, (2) indirect quotations, (3) statistical information and (4) to include interesting facts which may not be entirely relevant to your argument. Create citations in your rough draft - it's much easier than trying to find them later on.

IB Extended Essay Definitions You Need to Know

Extended Essay An in-depth study of a limited topic within a subject. The purpose of the extended essay is to provide candidates with an opportunity to engage in independent research at an introductory level. Essay length must be 3500 - 4000 words (10 or more pages).

Subject Area IB specifies the subject areas in which you may choose to write an extended essay. See the "Guidelines for Choosing an Extended Essay Topic" for a list of possible subject areas.

Topic The particular area of study within the chosen subject area. The topic should be limited in scope so that you can provide in-depth analysis. Choose something that is interesting to you, something on which you can give personal input, and something that will provide you with an argument.

Research question This is the specific issue you will be investigating. It is a good idea to formulate an actual research question to help you narrow your topic focus.

Supervisor Your supervisor must be a Fairview teacher of your choice. He or she can provide advice of a subject-specific nature, help you define a suitable topic, and suggest appropriate research resources. Your supervisor must verify to IB that the work you do on your extended essay is your own. This verification is one of the reasons your supervisor must see your essay as it develops. The supervisor will submit a report to IB on your extended essay, and submit a predicted grade.

Mentor This is any "expert" on your topic who can help you with the material of your essay. He or she will probably not be a Fairview teacher, but could be. Your mentor may spend more time with you discussing your project, and giving you guidance, than your supervisor. Such a person can be invaluable, and you are strongly encouraged to look for such help.

Timeline IB recommends that you spend about 40 hours on your extended essay. You will be provided with a calendar so that you can complete the extended essay in a timely fashion. If you are falling behind for any reason, you need to let the extended essay coordinator know.

Final Version This is the version of your essay which will be turned into IB. It will be due on a given date. Before that time you will have produced several drafts of your essay, so that the final version should be extremely polished.

Plagiarism The IB Extended Essay guide calls this malpractice, and will automatically disqualify you from getting the diploma if this occurs. Always give full credit to other people's ideas and writing.

Dual Submission The same piece of work cannot be submitted to meet the requirements of both the Extended Essay and another assessment component of a subject contributing to the Diploma.

Above all, have fun with the project! Please contact your supervisor or the IB coordinator with any questions you may have.

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