



INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE ORGANIZATION

Diploma Programme
Extended Essay

Review Report

February 2002

For the attention of all teachers

*Extended Essay
Review Report
February 2002*

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Questionnaire

In the centre of the report for removal, completion and return to IBCA.

Review Meeting

1 Introduction

This report summarizes the key proposals for a revised guide to, and assessment of, the extended essay arising from the first meeting of the review group held in Cardiff on 16–18 November 2001. The report gives details of the issues discussed and the proposed new guidance and assessment.

It is anticipated that the new extended essay guidance will be available from February 2004 for first examinations in 2006.

1.1 Participants

Jacqueline Harris	Diploma assessment manager	
Adele Lewis	Curriculum and assessment secretary	
J Blink	Economics	Austria
T Chow	Chinese B	Canada
S Damji	Chemistry	Canada
D Dawson	Librarian	Australia
A Dickinson	History	UK
E Door	Mathematics	UK
B O'Farrell	Biology	Germany
J Rignall	English A1	UK
G Rodríguez	Spanish A1	Argentina
T Williams	Theatre Arts	Belgium

1.2 Consultation

This report is being circulated to all schools for consultation. The consultative process is a central feature of review within the IBO. Comments and suggestions from schools play an important part in the review process. You are strongly encouraged to comment on the revisions to the extended essay proposed in this report.

Please return your questionnaire by **Friday 5 April 2002** to:

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Review Proposals

1 Key Issues

The review group discussed the key issues concerning the extended essay and these are summarized below.

What is the purpose of the extended essay?

- The group emphasized the need to define clearly the purpose and value of the extended essay for both students and teachers. It is important to state the aims and assessment objectives and to show clear links between the purpose and aims, and the assessment objectives.
- The group queried whether the IBO is giving the right message to schools when it argues the importance of the extended essay and then states that only 40 hours should be devoted to it, and it is worth relatively few points towards the diploma. Information gathering and communication skills are crucial in the 21st century and it was suggested that the diploma should be worth more than 45 points to give value to these skills.
- The similarities and differences between internally assessed work for a subject and the extended essay were discussed. In many cases, internal assessment is about collaboration and group work whereas the extended essay is about independent research.

Should the transdisciplinary subjects have extended essays?

- Everyone was in agreement that the new SL transdisciplinary subjects should be included in the approved list of extended essays. However, it was felt that this should not happen until their structure was more stable and they had undergone review after the initial pilot phase.

Should there be interdisciplinary extended essays? If so what?

- Although the notion of interdisciplinary subjects seems attractive they present many challenges and the group were cautious about their introduction for many reasons, including: writing appropriate assessment criteria, appointing suitable supervisors and appointing suitable examiners.

How do we counteract plagiarism?

- The issue of plagiarism is a difficult one and many suggestions were made. The group agreed that the onus should be on the school but that guidelines should be given to schools on how to tackle it. Other suggestions included: careful monitoring and supervision of essays; not assessing unsupervised essays, ie when supervisors state that zero hours of supervision have been provided; making it compulsory for the supervisor to write a few lines confirming authenticity; checking all essays using either search engines or software; rewarding citations in the criteria; demanding a short viva voce; submitting a log book with the extended essay detailing the research process.

What are the principal responsibilities of the supervisor? Should the IBO provide more guidance?

- The group was unanimous that more guidance should be provided by the IBO, and not just for supervisors but also for schools. Schools should be clear about their responsibilities to both candidates and supervisors. It should be compulsory for supervisors to complete a section on the cover. However, this should not be called “comments”, but should be renamed to reflect the information required.

Are the general assessment criteria applicable to all subjects? Is the 2:1 ratio appropriate? Should descriptors be developed for the holistic judgment criterion?

- The weighting of the assessment criteria was discussed and the group reaffirmed the 2:1 ratio. The group felt that the general assessment criteria work well but one or two criteria are artificial for some subjects. Criteria B and C were criticized: criterion B should be revised as many people have difficulty with the term “approach” and criterion C should be amended to avoid overlaps with subject criteria. All agreed that it is important that the general criteria are not divorced from the subject but are used within the context of the subject that is being assessed. The group recommended that when the subject guidelines are being developed a section should be included to explain how the general criteria should be applied for each subject.
- The research question criterion was the focus of much discussion as it is not appropriate for some subjects, in particular, the experimental sciences, where a topic under investigation may not have a precise research question but may give rise to sequential hypotheses or may be looking at particular processes.
- There was general agreement that the holistic judgment criterion needs to be more tangible and should be expanded.
- The general assessment criteria were revised to reflect the discussion.

2 Nature of the Extended Essay

The review group discussed the nature and purpose of the extended essay. The following paragraph summarizes the key points of the discussion. However, the group debated whether there was a need for this section, as much of what is expressed below is covered in the aims and assessment objectives.

The extended essay is defined as an in-depth study of a focused topic within a subject. Its purpose is to provide candidates with a unique opportunity to engage in personal research in a topic of their own choice. This will lead to a major piece of writing in which they communicate their ideas in the form of reasoned argument. 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 in compliance with IBO guidelines. Many of these general issues, such as the way in which information is handled, the level of analysis and the quality of argument, are assessed through the general assessment criteria. This is reflected in the relative weighting of 2:1 between the general and subject assessment criteria.

3 Aims

The group discussed the aims of the Diploma Programme extended essay in terms of the:

- learning experience the extended essay offers to candidates
- development of research skills
- preparation for future specialism

and proposed the following aims.

The extended essay provides candidates with the opportunity to:

1. pursue independent research on a closely focused topic of their choice
2. develop research skills
3. develop the skill of critical thinking
4. engage in the type of work they will encounter after the Diploma Programme
5. present the results of their research in a logical and coherent manner and according to an accepted format
6. experience the excitement of intellectual discovery.

4 Objectives

The group agreed that it was essential to state the assessment objectives and these should be derived from the aims of the extended essay. The following objectives are proposed.

Candidates will be expected to:

1. choose a subject and identify a topic
2. define a precise focus/aim for their research
3. select appropriate resources and materials
4. analyse and/or interpret the information using a methodology appropriate to the subject
5. present their ideas in a logical and coherent manner
6. formulate a conclusion consistent with the research
7. present a synopsis of their extended essay in the form of an abstract
8. present the extended essay in a format appropriate to the subject
9. acknowledge sources of information according to an accepted format.

5 General Guidance

There was not time in the first meeting to revise all the sections and the group thought this might not be necessary. The following section represents the key areas identified by the group as needing to be incorporated into the section on supervision.

Section 1: Supervision

The purpose of this section is to identify and explain the responsibilities of the school and the role of the supervisor. (This first draft lists the type of guidance that should be provided to candidates by schools and supervisors; future drafts will include a full explanation of the role and responsibilities.)

1.1 Responsibilities of the school

It is the responsibility of the school to:

- explain to candidates the importance of the extended essay in the overall context of the Diploma Programme
- ensure that each candidate has a supervisor within the school
- provide the candidate with advice and guidance on the skills of research
- provide supervisors with the general and subject-specific information and guidelines for the extended essay
- provide supervisors with the extended essay subject reports
- provide general and subject assessment criteria to each supervisor and candidate
- set internal deadlines for the stages of producing the extended essay.

1.2 The role of the supervisor

Candidates will be faced with many other commitments during the Diploma Programme and the demands of the extended essay may appear daunting at times. An important role of the supervisor is to offer encouragement, support and reassurance during the preparation and writing of the extended essay.

Supervisors are expected to:

- read recent extended essay reports for their subject
- be familiar with both the general and subject-specific assessment criteria
- spend between three to five hours with each candidate
- ensure that candidates determine the subject for their extended essay before choosing the topic
- discuss the choice and topic of the research question with the candidate and help formulate a well-focused research question within a subject from the approved extended essay list
- ensure 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
- advise candidates on
 - access to appropriate resources (such as people, a library, a laboratory)
 - techniques of information/evidence/data gathering and analysis
 - writing an abstract
 - methods of acknowledging sources
- read and comment on the first draft of the extended essay but **not** edit the draft
- monitor the progress of the essay to ensure that the extended essay is the candidate's own work; if malpractice, such as plagiarism, is suspected, the supervisor must write a report and present this to the IB Diploma Programme coordinator
- complete the supervisor's report on the inside front cover of the extended essay cover document
- submit a predicted grade.

6 General Assessment Criteria

The following is a draft revision of the general assessment criteria. It is the intention of the IBO to provide advice on how to apply the general assessment criteria within the guidelines for each subject. For each general assessment criterion, reference will need to be made to these guidelines. The proposed general assessment criteria have been expanded to nine to include a separate criterion for citations, and descriptors have been developed for the holistic judgment criterion.

A Research question

The extent to which the focus of the essay is expressed and specified. In many subjects the aim of the essay will normally be formulated as a question and therefore this criterion is called the “research question”. However, certain disciplines may encourage or permit different ways of focusing the research task. Refer to subject-specific guidelines for further details.

Achievement level

- 0 The research question is not established in the early part of the essay **or** does not lend itself to a systematic investigation in an extended essay.
- 1 The research question is established in the early part of the essay but is not clearly outlined **or** the focus of research is well-defined but is too broad in scope to be treated effectively within the word limit.
- 2 The research question is clear and established with precision in the early part of the essay, making effective treatment possible within the word limit.

B Selection of information

The extent to which the information used in the essay is appropriate and is drawn from a suitable range of sources.

Achievement level

- 0 The essay contains little or no evidence of appropriate information.
- 1 The essay uses inappropriate information, or the information is not drawn from a suitable range of sources.
- 2 The essay uses appropriate information which is drawn from a suitable range of sources.

C Analysis

The extent to which the information, materials, sources, data and evidence are analysed in the essay.

Achievement level

- 0 There is no attempt at analysis.
- 1 There is some attempt at analysis.
- 2 Analysis is undertaken but not always thoroughly or correctly.
- 3 A competent analysis is undertaken.
- 4 An excellent analysis is undertaken.

D Reasoned argument

The extent to which the essay presents ideas in a logical and coherent manner and develops a reasoned argument in relation to the research question.

Achievement level

- 0 The extended essay is incoherent and illogical and makes 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 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 and omissions.
- 3 Ideas are presented in a logical and coherent manner and a reasoned argument is developed in relation to the research question.
- 4 The extended essay presents ideas lucidly and in a logical and coherent manner. It succeeds in developing a reasoned and convincing argument in relation to the research question.

E Conclusion

The extent to which the essay incorporates a conclusion which is relevant to the research question and is consistent with the reasoned argument presented in the essay .

Achievement level

- 0 Little or no attempt is made to provide a conclusion which is relevant to the research question and which is consistent with the reasoned argument presented in the essay.
- 1 A conclusion is stated which is relevant to the research question and is consistent with the reasoned argument presented in the essay.
- 2 An effective conclusion is clearly stated; it is relevant to the research question and consistent with the reasoned argument presented in the essay.

F Abstract

The extent to which the abstract presents a synopsis of the essay within the word limit .

Achievement level

- 0 The abstract exceeds 300 words **or** one or more of the following is missing: the research question, the scope of the research, the conclusion.
- 1 The abstract is within the word limit and contains the research question, the scope of the research and the conclusion, but they are not all clearly stated.
- 2 The abstract is within the word limit and contains the research question, the scope of the research and the conclusion, which are all clearly stated.

G Formal presentation

The layout and appearance of the essay including the formal elements: contents page, page numbering, title page, bibliography, and word count.

Achievement level

- 0 The essay exceeds 4000 words, or is poorly presented, or two or more of the formal elements are missing.
- 1 The essay is within the word limit, is adequately presented, but one of the formal elements is missing.
- 2 The essay is within the word limit, is well presented, and contains all the formal elements.

H References and bibliography

The extent to which there is a consistent form of quoting and documenting the sources used; whether the sources are acknowledged according to an accepted format, specifying the author/s, title, date of publication and publisher.

Achievement level

- 0 There is no referencing or bibliography, or some sources that have been extensively used have not been acknowledged.
- 1 Referencing is insufficient and/or the bibliography is inadequate.
- 2 Referencing is sufficient and the bibliography is adequate but there are some inconsistencies and omissions in the format.
- 3 All sources are appropriately acknowledged. References and bibliography consistently follow a standard format.

I Holistic judgment

An overall assessment of qualities including intellectual initiative, depth of understanding, insight and inventiveness. The supervisor's report may be taken into account for this criterion.

Achievement level

- 0 The essay shows no evidence of the qualities listed above.
- 1 The essay shows little evidence of the qualities listed above.
- 2 The essay shows some evidence of the qualities listed above.
- 3 The essay shows considerable evidence of the qualities listed above.