

Core requirements: Extended essay, theory of knowledge and creativity, action, service subject brief



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The IB Diploma Programme, for students aged 16 to 19, is an academically challenging and balanced programme of education that prepares students for success at university and life beyond. Students take courses in six different subject groups, maintaining both breadth and depth of study. 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.

About the IB: For over 40 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 able to contribute to creating a better, more peaceful world.

The **IB subject brief** illustrates the key components of the core requirements in the IB Diploma Programme.

- I. Extended essay
- II. Theory of knowledge
- III. Theory of creativity, action, and service

The IB core elements of extended essay, theory of knowledge and creativity, action, service are described below.

I. Extended essay

The extended essay of some 4,000 words offers the opportunity for IB students to investigate a topic of special interest, usually one of the student's six Diploma Programme subjects, and acquaints them with the independent research and writing skills expected at university. It is intended to promote high-level research and writing skills, intellectual discovery and creativity—resulting in approximately 40 hours of work. It provides students with an opportunity to engage in personal research on a topic of choice, under the guidance of a supervisor.

This leads to a major piece of formally presented, structured writing of no more than 4,000 words, in which ideas and findings are communicated in a reasoned and coherent manner, appropriate to the subject. It is recommended that students follow the completion of the written essay with a short, concluding interview—*viva voce*—with the supervisor. In countries where normally interviews are required prior to acceptance for employment or for a place at university, the extended essay has proved to be a valuable stimulus for discussion.

Extended essay assessment

Students are expected to demonstrate the ability to do the following:

- plan and pursue a research project with intellectual initiative and insight
- gather and interpret material from sources appropriate to the research question
- structure a reasoned argument in response to the research question on the basis of the material gathered
- present their extended essay in a format appropriate to the subject, acknowledging sources in one of the established academic ways
- use the terminology and language appropriate to the subject with skill and understanding
- apply analytical and evaluative skills appropriate to the subject, with an understanding of the implications and the context of their research.

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.

II. Theory of knowledge

The interdisciplinary theory of knowledge course is designed to develop a coherent approach to learning that transcends and unifies the academic areas and encourages appreciation of other cultural perspectives. The theory of knowledge course is in part intended to encourage students to reflect on the huge cultural shifts worldwide around the digital revolution and the information economy. The extent and impact of the changes vary greatly in different parts of the world, but everywhere their implications for knowledge are profound. Theory of knowledge encourages critical thinking about knowledge itself and aims to help young people make sense of what they encounter. Its core content focuses on questions such as the following.

- What counts as knowledge?
- How does it grow?
- What are its limits?
- Who owns knowledge?
- What is the value of knowledge?
- What are the implications of having, or not having, knowledge?

Theory of knowledge activities and discussions aim to help students discover and express their views on knowledge issues. The course encourages students to share ideas with others and to listen to and learn from what others think. In this process students' thinking and their understanding of knowledge as a human construction are shaped, enriched and deepened. Connections may be made between knowledge encountered in different Diploma Programme subjects, in creativity, action, service experience or in extended essay research; distinctions between different kinds of knowledge may be clarified.

The aims of the theory of knowledge course are to:

- develop a fascination with the richness of knowledge as a human endeavour, and an understanding of the empowerment that follows from reflecting upon it
- develop an awareness of how knowledge is constructed, critically examined, evaluated and renewed, by communities and individuals

- encourage students to reflect on their experiences as learners, in everyday life and in the Diploma Programme, and to make connections between academic disciplines and between thoughts, feelings and actions
- encourage an interest in the diversity of ways of thinking and ways of living of individuals and communities, and an awareness of personal and ideological assumptions, including participants' own
- encourage consideration of the responsibilities originating from the relationship between knowledge, the community and the individual as citizen of the world.

Theory of knowledge assessment

The theory of knowledge assessment model contains two components, both of which should be completed within the 100 hours designated for the course. Presentations are an integral part of the course.

Type of assessment	Format of assessment	Weighting of final grade (%)
External assessment	Essay (1,200 to 1,600 words) on a prescribed title	65
	Essay on a title chosen from a list of 10 titles prescribed by the IB for each examination session	
Internal assessment	One 10-minute presentation to the class	35
	The theory of knowledge presentation requires students to identify and explore the knowledge issues raised by a substantive real-life situation that is of interest to them.	

The two assessment tasks, the essay and the presentation, are seen as complementary opportunities for students to show the extent to which they have achieved the theory of knowledge course objectives. Students should be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- analyse critically knowledge claims, their underlying assumptions and their implications
- generate questions, explanations, conjectures, hypotheses, alternative ideas and possible solutions in response to knowledge issues concerning areas of knowledge, ways of knowing and students' own experience as learners
- demonstrate an understanding of different perspectives on knowledge issues
- draw links and make effective comparisons between different approaches to knowledge issues that derive from areas of knowledge, ways of knowing, theoretical positions and cultural values
- demonstrate an ability to give a personal, self-aware response to a knowledge issue
- formulate and communicate ideas clearly with due regard for accuracy and academic honesty.

Both assessment tasks have at their centre reflection on knowledge issues but this reflection is demonstrated

differently in each. The emphasis in the theory of knowledge presentation is on demonstrating an understanding of knowledge at work in the world.

Diploma points matrix for extended essay and theory of knowledge

Performance in the extended essay and in theory of knowledge is assessed using IB assessment criteria. Using the two performance levels and the diploma points matrix, a maximum of three diploma points can be awarded for a student's combined performance in theory of knowledge and the extended essay.

III. Theory of creativity, action, and service

Creativity, action, service is at the heart of the Diploma Programme, involving students in a range of activities that take place alongside their academic studies throughout the IB Diploma Programme. The component's three strands, often interwoven with particular activities, are characterized as follows.

- **Creativity**—arts and other experiences that involve creative thinking
- **Action**—physical exertion contributing to a healthy lifestyle, complementing academic work elsewhere in the IB Diploma Programme
- **Service**—an unpaid and voluntary exchange that has a learning benefit for the student

Creativity, action, service encourages students to be involved in activities as individuals and as part of a team that take place in local, national and international contexts. Creativity, action, service enables students to enhance their personal and interpersonal development as well as their social and civic development, through experiential learning, lending an important counterbalance to the academic pressures of the rest of the IB Diploma Programme. It should be both challenging and enjoyable—a personal journey of self-discovery that recognizes each student's individual starting point.

Activities should provide:

- real, purposeful activities, with significant outcomes
- personal challenge—tasks must extend the student and be achievable in scope
- thoughtful consideration, such as planning, reviewing progress and reporting
- reflection on outcomes and personal learning.

Creativity, action, service evaluation

Creativity, action, service is not formally assessed, but students need to reflect on their activities and be able to demonstrate that they have:

- increased their awareness of their own strengths and areas for growth
- undertaken new challenges and developed new skills
- planned and initiated activities and worked collaboratively with others
- shown perseverance and commitment in their activities
- engaged with issues of global importance
- considered the ethical implications of their actions.

Learn more about how the IB Diploma Programme prepares students for success at university by going online to www.ibo.org/universities or email us at recognition@ibo.org.