



The IB Extended Essay

Joseph Koszary and Paul Hoang share their insights and tips to help you understand and navigate the recent changes to the Extended Essay.

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New guide for the IB Extended Essay

By Joseph Koszary & Paul Hoang

Introduction

As someone who has served as an EE coordinator, examiner, and supervisor, I've grown deeply familiar with the previous incarnation of the [Extended Essay](#). Like many of you, years of accumulated experience have made supporting students through the process feel second nature.

However, change is on the horizon. As the final cohort taking the previous version of the EE moves toward the end of the process, it's increasingly important for us to engage with the upcoming updates. I am in the privileged position of having had early access to the new guide and thus more time to focus on the changes. Through these posts, I'm going to share insights and ideas that will help guide your understanding along, as well as give a taste of what is available in the [recently published textbook](#) from Hachette Learning.

Summary of major changes

This is an exciting moment for the EE. The last major revision, back in 2018, already feels like a product of a very different educational landscape. Whether we consider technological upheaval such as the rapid evolution and availability of AI, the continuing development of pedagogical theories and practices, or global events that have had enormous repercussions in the classroom and beyond, it is clear that the context in which students learn is continuing to change at a rapid pace. In response, the Extended Essay is evolving to remain aligned with the IB's mission: to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who are prepared to navigate—and contribute to—a complex and rapidly changing world.

If I were to characterise the broad changes made, I would say they are an evolution rather than a revolution of the EE. They are in the direction of flexibility rather than rigidity, easing away from prescriptive rubrics and overly defined categories that can sometimes limit students' inquiries.

A few of the major changes coming are summarised below.

Previous version	May 2027 onwards
Total number of marks is 34.	Total number of marks is 30.
Criterion C 'Critical thinking' marked out of 12.	Split into Criterion C 'Analysis and line of argument' marked out of 6 and Criterion D 'Discussion and evaluation' marked out of 8.
Criterion D 'Formal presentation' marked out of 4.	Merged into Criterion A 'Framework for the essay' as the strand 'structure' which contributes to a total mark out of 6 for the criterion.
Criterion E 'Engagement' marked out of 6, based on three written reflections produced after each of the corresponding three mandatory reflection sessions on the Reflections on Progress and Planning Form (RPPF).	Criterion E 'Reflection' marked out of 4, now based on one reflective statement written on the Reflection and Progress Form (RPF) after the viva voce, with a focus on the growth of the learner and an emphasis on skills development and transfer.
World Studies Extended Essay (WSEE) for exploring complex global issues through an interdisciplinary lens.	World Studies Extended Essay (WSEE) for exploring complex global issues through an interdisciplinary lens A new Interdisciplinary Pathway for the EE allowing for more flexibility in how subjects are combined.

Further changes beyond those listed above have been made and are explored in the textbook, such as the new student-friendly style to the guide, the new document of support materials, and various tweaks to the specific subject areas of the EE. There is also more clarity around academic integrity and integration of AI, something that will also be expanded on in a future blog post.

The Change that Excites Me Most

The change I am most excited by is what I consider the 'big idea' of the new revision of the component: the interdisciplinary pathway.

Complex Issue of Global Concern <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closest to legacy WSEE • Reflects complicated, multi-faceted realities of the world. 	A Question of Personal Interest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two subjects allow more insight • Allows movement beyond constraints of single-subject EE, following the 'idea' rather than the subject.
Deeper Understanding of Issue/Problem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring an issue no longer needs to be constrained by subject boundaries • Concepts and methods in particular. 	Insight/Theory/Method Applied to Other Subject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using theories and methods from one subject on the 'content' of another • Most likely between 'similar' subjects.
Explore Boundaries of DP Subjects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative explorations of ideas using often novel links between subjects 	

In many ways, it is an expansion of the possibilities afforded by the previous version's World Studies EE. While the WSEE was more specifically focussed on an issue of 'contemporary global significance' and had various requirements such as a local and global context, the new interdisciplinary pathway for the EE affords more range in a student's inquiry.

The pathway opens up far more opportunities for interesting research questions that combine subjects in new and exciting ways. Students now have more flexibility in combining subject lenses by drawing upon any relevant knowledge, concepts, theories, perspectives and/or methods from each of their two chosen subjects. Consequently, they can now use two subject lenses on more varied research questions that previously fell outside the scope of a WSEE.

The IB Extended Essay, AI Tools and Academic Integrity

By Joseph Koszary & Paul Hoang

It has been fascinating watching the speed at which AI has developed and, quite understandably, the speed with which it has been eagerly adopted by students. The Extended Essay is particularly vulnerable to the abuse of these AI tools, but the very same tools are also offering exciting new opportunities in developing EEs.

It became apparent very early on that an adversarial relationship with AI was never going to be a realistic option, and the IB's embrace of AI has seemed the most pragmatic choice for students and staff. It is, after all, a tool: one that will be an increasingly important part of our students' futures and one we would be remiss in fighting.

This means that an understanding of academic integrity is important now more than ever, and it needs to be a philosophy and mindset towards academic work that underpins how our students engage with the EE. A school culture of being a principled and ethical learner will help bring clarity to any potential grey areas of misuse as these tools continue to develop. For example with my students, I put a particular focus on integrity meaning doing the right thing even when no-one is looking. This is particularly important when dealing with a project that takes place over such an extended period of time and with such a high degree of independence.

Below are some further ideas on how to help your students maintain a healthy relationship with AI tools:

- Academic Integrity Permeating the School: academic integrity should be explicitly engaged with throughout the school and be a clear and normalised expectation. There needs to be time given to a conceptual and ethical understanding of academic integrity alongside the more technical and practical understanding of how to apply it
- 'Breadcrumbs': students should document and reflect on the process of developing their EE in their RRS (Researcher's Reflection Space) in order to show clear progression of their thinking and research
- Cite AI: students should be explicitly taught that any work produced by AI needs to be credited in the body of the essay and referenced in the bibliography (including the prompt given to the AI tool and the date the AI generated the text)
- Oral Discussion: regular check-ins with students where they discuss their learning journey, their findings and their arguments can help ensure that work produced is their own and they are not offloading the process to AI
- Model Academic Integrity: teachers should provide sources and bibliographies on their own resources when appropriate, and cite their own use of AI

- Clear Policies and Consequences: the IB has some 'red-lines' included in the IB Academic Integrity policy, but much of the application and internal policies are left to the schools. Your school should have a clear set of expectations and consequences on the use of AI rooted in the IB's Academic Integrity Policy.

More on this can be found in the Academic Integrity chapter of Hachette Learning's [Extended Essay textbook](#), and I also expect the guidance from the IB to continue to evolve as time goes on. For direct updates from the IB, the below sources are a great place to start:

- The [IB Academic Integrity Homepage](#) contains information and updates regarding academic integrity and AI
- On the homepage, you can find the [IB Academic Integrity Policy](#) itself – pay particular attention to appendix 6 where they outline their stance on AI tools.
- The '[Why ChatGPT is an opportunity for schools](#)' article by Dr Matthew Glanville, Head of Assessment and Principles and Practice at the IB, provides insight into the direction the IB are heading with AI tools
- The '[IB and Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) Tools](#)' document contains a neat FAQ in a single PDF poster
- The '[Evaluating 13 scenarios of artificial intelligence \(AI\)](#)' in student coursework' document goes into more depth in what is and is not appropriate usage of AI in scenarios you are likely to encounter as a teacher.

The IB Extended Essay: An Interdisciplinary Opportunity

By Joseph Koszary & Paul Hoang

Perhaps the biggest change to the EE is the broadening out of the World Studies Extended Essay into the Interdisciplinary Extended Essay. This is now a much more flexible option (there is even a handy flowchart created by the IB) and makes it much less likely the rubric will get in the way of an interesting idea that can be developed into an effective Extended Essay.

This extra flexibility is incredibly exciting and allows the component to be even more curiosity-led than before. As an English teacher, I've supervised numerous EEs that have had large overlaps with subjects like History and Psychology, and have often needed to guide students back to a far more 'literary' focus that compromises their original interest in the idea. I now look back on those EEs and think about what would have been possible had the Interdisciplinary pathway been an option.

As with the WSEE before it, there needs to be a clear justification for the two subject lenses and there is also no requirement for primary research. Students simply need to integrate one or more of the following from each subject lens: knowledge, concepts, theories, perspectives or methods.

This opens the door to far more varied and subtle combinations of subjects. One example from the IB that caught my attention was investigating the relationship between the poetry of Bobby Sands and his political impact in Ireland. Whereas before the political and historical aspects of the writer would be approached more as context and deeper poetic message in a Language A EE, this EE could now be entered in combination with History to allow for a far more meaningful and in-depth integration of the historical and the political. The impact his poetry had on the political events of the time no longer remains largely extraneous context, but becomes central to the essay itself in a way a historically-minded student may find far more engaging.

I am expecting that in the years to come, as coordinators and supervisors get more comfortable with the new pathways, the number of interdisciplinary EEs will continue to grow and the boundaries between subjects will become far more permeable. This is much more in keeping with the spirit of the IB and better prepares students for the complex problems they will inevitably encounter in their futures.

[The Hachette Learning textbook](#) features a more in-depth, step-by-step approach to the Interdisciplinary Pathway that can be used to guide students and supervisors through the process (see Chapter 9).

The IB Extended Essay: Extended Essay Tips

By Joseph Koszary & Paul Hoang

The Extended Essay is multidisciplinary by nature, but there are many tips that transcend the subject boundaries and help ensure it is a success regardless the subject lenses being used. A wide collection of these 'Expert Tips' can be found in the [textbook 'Extended Essay for the IB Diploma'](#). Below is one such tip adapted from chapter 1: understanding the assessment criteria.

Evaluation and Metacognition

The IB Diploma fosters metacognitive skills, and this is most apparent in the Extended Essay through its emphasis on evaluation and reflection. This was assessed under Criterion C 'Critical Thinking' in the previous incarnation of the EE, but has now been given even more prominence in the new version of the EE as Criterion D: 'Discussion and Evaluation'. It is also an important element of the Reflective Statement, a 500 word reflection submitted as part of the RPF (Reflections and Progress Form).

For those who are unsure, metacognition is in essence 'thinking about thinking'. It is typically divided into two main components...

Metacognitive Knowledge: This is the awareness of your own thinking processes and having a clear understanding of how you learn best (declarative knowledge), how to carry out specific tasks (procedural knowledge), and when and why to use particular strategies (conditional knowledge).

Metacognitive Regulation: This is the management of your thinking processes, including evaluating the outcomes and effectiveness of your strategies, planning and setting goals, and judging success.

Both are important in evaluating your *Extended Essay*, and you will often find yourself explicitly critiquing your essay in the essay itself. This demonstrates a sharp critical mind and shows academic rigour in your response. The following points outlines some key considerations for evaluation in the EE.

- **Evaluation should be integrated throughout your essay**, not just reserved for the conclusion. Discussing the scope of your essay in your introduction, critically assessing the strengths and weaknesses of your analysis and secondary sources in the main body, and weighing the merits of different positions as you analyse all come under the umbrella term of 'evaluation'.
- **Consider the strengths and limitations of your research materials** – what is effective about your exploration and where do its limitations lie? This can apply to any primary and secondary research that you have conducted to address the research question.
- **Engage critically with your secondary sources.** Show an understanding of the explicit and implicit perspectives and arguments presented by the authors of secondary sources. Critically engaging with sources will help you maintain academic rigour.
- **Evaluate the success of your essay.** When evaluating your overall essay, discuss whether or not you were ultimately able to answer the research question effectively and whether your research methods were well chosen.

The IB Extended Essay: Structuring an Extended Essay

By Joseph Koszary & Paul Hoang

With 4000 words and a development period that often spans a year or more, the Extended Essay can be daunting for students. In particular, I have frequently seen students complete the investigation stage, look over their reams of primary and secondary sources, and then struggle as they try to bring structure to their ideas and the information they have gathered in the form of a coherent essay plan.

A major part of creating this coherency is a clear understanding of an effective structure and how it is assessed. It is explicitly addressed in the 'structure' strand within the new criterion A: framework of the essay. Additionally, how they guide the examiner through this structure is assessed to some degree in criterion C: analysis and line of argument, and criterion D: discussion and evaluation.

Reassuringly for students, at the most basic level there is the classic three-part structure of an introduction, main body, and conclusion. This is explicitly recommended in the new IB guide and is something students will undoubtedly already be familiar with. [Our new textbook](#) expands on how this form can be refined for Extended Essays.

Below is a sample of what is suggested for the introductory section of an EE, and a simple template I send out to the students I am supervising to help them fulfil the basics of an effective EE introduction.

Planning and Structuring Introductions

Students need to pay particular attention to the introduction, and it can also be helpful to require them to write it out in full at the planning stage. This not only helps them clarify their thoughts and the purpose of their essay, but it also provides you with insight into their writing style and any potential issues they may face with register and formality.

Below is a simple template that can be sent out to students to help the sketch out the basics of their plan before writing it in full. Each element of the introduction not only helps them think clearly about their broader EE, but also ensures they fulfil the assessment criteria and maximise their potential grade.

Introduction: The Basics

Argument outline

Write an outline of your argument/thesis and a brief preview of what you think your conclusions will be here.

Methodology

Briefly explain how you have gone about investigating your RQ here

Academic Context and Worthiness

Write about the academic context of your RQ and why you think your RQ is worth investigating here

Scope

Explain what you are your covering in your EE and what have you decided not to cover here

Evaluation

Write a brief preview of what you will say about the strengths and weaknesses of your investigation

For more information about the new textbook for the IB Extended Essay, [click here.](#)