



Economics for the IB Diploma

Extended Essay

Assessment Advice

The extended essay in economics

As an IB Diploma Programme student, you are required to write an independent, self-directed 4,000-word essay on a subject of your own choice. An extended essay (EE) in economics allows you to delve deeper into the discipline, by providing you with the opportunity to undertake in-depth research in an area of personal interest that is worthy of study and has academic rigour.

Engaging with and completing the extended essay allows you to:

- develop your research skills
- apply economic theory to a real-world situation or real-world issue
- analyse and evaluate the outcomes of your research.

The extended essay requires you to commit approximately **40 hours** of work, with the support of an EE supervisor at your school. The outcome of the research should be a coherent and structured analytical essay that effectively addresses the particular research question.

To succeed in the economics EE, you must be prepared to do research to extend your knowledge of the theory, and gather meaningful and reliable data that you can analyse in the context of the theory and the focus of the research question. Essentially, this means reading academic literature beyond the parameters of the DP economics syllabus.

Selection of the topic

In selecting a suitable topic for your economics EE, you should identify the area of the syllabus content that is of most interest to you. The essay should be based on core principles of economics as a basis for researching the topic that most appeals to you. You must conduct **secondary research** but can include relevant primary research, depending on the area of economic content chosen. You should apply economic theories, tools and techniques covered in the IB economics curriculum to the chosen topic.

While choosing the topic of the economics EE, you must also ensure that:

- the EE is not historical – the chosen topic and research question must be related to economic information that is no more than **five** years old
- the research question can be answered using economic theories and concepts
- the chosen topic provides opportunities for critical analysis of the information and data collected
- the scope of the essay has a clear focus, while providing opportunities for you to demonstrate economic understanding and critical analysis and evaluation



Economics for the IB Diploma

Extended Essay

- the research question does not lean heavily towards business management or psychology (or any other academic subject).

You should refrain from selecting broad topics, as the EE requires critical- and reflective-thinking skills of a specific topic. However, note that overly focused topics often require specific data that may not be available. Examples of strong and weak topics are shown in the table below.

Unit	Relatively broad topic	Relatively focused topic
Microeconomics	What is the market structure of the bottled water industry in Country A?	What market structure best characterizes the bottled drinking water industry in Town B of Country A?
Macroeconomics*	How do the changes in monetary policy affect consumption in Country X?	To what extent have the central bank's interest rate cuts affected the realty sector in City Y?
The global economy*	How has the fall in the exchange rate of the Indian rupee affected the Indian economy?	To what extent has the recent fall in the Indian rupee affected exports of generic drugs in the state of New Delhi?

* Topics from Macroeconomics may be chosen for the EE, but it is essential that the research question is narrowed to a sensible and manageable focus on a particular part of the economy rather than the economy as a whole. Similarly, for topics related to The Global Economy, it is vital that the research question should relate to a particular aspect of development and/or a limited geographical area.

Framing a research question

Once you have selected a suitable topic, the next step is to frame a succinct and well-focused research question that can be answered within the scope of the EE. It is important that the topic and research question reflect a strong emphasis on economics, and that they do not become directed towards another academic subject. Research questions that do not allow a systematic and meaningful investigation using relevant economic theory usually do not lend themselves well to critical and reflective analysis. Hence, the treatment of the materials researched must reflect an approach that uses economic theory and, therefore, meets the subject requirements of the economics EE.

Here are some examples of suitable research questions (at the time of writing, all were suitable within the five-year rule for the economics EE):



Economics for the IB Diploma

Extended Essay

1. How effective has Moscow Metro's pricing strategy been in reducing the negative externalities of private car use in Moscow, Russia?
2. To what extent has Leicester City Football Club's (LCFC) championship success facilitated economic growth in the city?
3. How successful has the price ceiling on drug-eluting stents been in improving economic well-being in South Mumbai precinct?
4. How successful has the government's implementation of higher indirect taxes on tobacco products been in reducing consumption of cigarettes in New South Wales?
5. To what extent has demonetization affected the residential real estate sector in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region?
6. To what extent can the removal of the sugar tax in Denmark be justified on economic grounds?
7. What is the most significant factor that affects consumer demand for cabbage in Busan, South Korea?
8. To what extent has the rise in tariffs affected the demand for vodka from Tallinn, Estonia?
9. To what extent does Chartwells Compass Group (school catering service providers) operate in a contestable market in Sevenoaks, UK?
10. To what extent has the imposition of the Double Stamp Duty impacted the housing market in Shek Kip Mei, Hong Kong?

Collecting data

You are encouraged to carry out *original* research on any topic within the syllabus (microeconomics, macroeconomics or the global economy). This means the title or research question has not already been answered in secondary sources.

An EE focusing on an aspect of microeconomics could be carried out using primary research in the form of surveys, questionnaires or interviews (face-to-face, virtual or electronic) conducted with university lecturers, journalists, government officials and/or relevant business people. These must, however, be directly relevant to the research question. Note also that there is no formal requirement to use any primary research in the EE.

By contrast, EE topics from Macroeconomics and The Global Economy need more secondary research in the form of drawing data from published academic papers, government publications, statistical databases, newspaper/magazine/online articles, and historical records. An EE based on one of these two sections of the syllabus requires relevant secondary data and information to be collected and used in a clear way to help develop reasoned arguments in response to the research question. Therefore, it is important to avoid presenting a general summary of the secondary sources.

Analysis and evaluation

Effective analysis occurs if the information gathered is examined using relevant economic theories. Throughout the EE, you should integrate relevant economic theories, models



Economics for the IB Diploma

Extended Essay

and tools with the evidence obtained from your research. For instance, you can demonstrate critical analysis and evaluation through sound assessment and judgement of the extent to which the relevant economic theory is useful in the context of the topic and in answering your research question.

You should avoid making knowledge claims using economic theories, models and tools if you are unable to make meaningful links to the chosen topic and research question. The most effective essays apply supporting data or evidence throughout in order to address the specific research question.

Note that Criterion C of the assessment criteria requires you to specifically include conclusions to individual points of analysis. This means you need to include interim conclusions in your work, not only as a separate section at the end of the essay.

You should also demonstrate critical awareness of the validity of the information collected and used. For example, theories and diagrams that are included in the essay should always be supported by critical and reflective thinking. When formulating your arguments, you should also demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the limitations of your own research and the shortcomings of the economic theories and assumptions of the models that have been used. To do this, you can critically assess the extent to which economic theory may or may not explain the realities of the topic being researched. Also, note that critical awareness of secondary information (and primary if used) is required to be demonstrated throughout the essay, not only towards the end.

Structure of the extended essay

While there is no formal requirement for the structure of the extended essay, the following format tends to work well for most students.

Item	What to include
Title page	<ul style="list-style-type: none">the title of the essaythe research question (which must be phrased as a question)the subject for which the essay is registeredword count declaration.
Contents page	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A contents page must be provided at the beginning of the EE.All pages should be numbered appropriately and accurately.
Introduction	<p>The introduction should make clear to the reader the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">the focus of the essaythe scope of the research (including an indication of the sources used)an insight into the line(s) of argument taken.



Economics for the IB Diploma

Extended Essay

Item	What to include
Body of the essay – research, analysis, discussion and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main task is writing the body of the essay, which should be presented in the form of well-reasoned arguments, using fit-for-purpose paragraphs. You have the flexibility to use appropriate sub-headings to indicate the methodology (research), analysis, discussion and evaluation.
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The summative conclusion should include what has been achieved, including recognition of any limitations plus any unanswered questions (those that have not been resolved). It must also answer the specific research question.
References and bibliography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All sources must be cited/referenced and recorded in a full bibliography. You need to use a chosen style of academic referencing, which should be used throughout the essay. Citation and referencing are important in the EE for academic integrity reasons.

Reflections and the extended essay

Being reflective is one of the IB learner profile attributes and it has become a formal part of the assessment criteria for the EE. Reflections are explicitly assessed using the Reflections on Planning and Progress Form (RPPF), which is worth 6 marks. This is a significant number of marks (almost 18%), which can make the difference between two grades in the final assessment.

Reflection requires us to consider what has happened in order to move forward. For the EE, you should consider the ideas and information collected, including your research about specific economic theories and models, in order to formulate your own understanding and interpretation of the topic and research question. For instance, you could reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of your experiences in order to further your own learning and personal academic growth.

As part of the EE requirements, you will need to meet with your supervisor to carry out **three** compulsory reflection sessions. Each of these reflection sessions should last between 20 and 30 minutes and must be recorded on the official RPPF. This form will need to be electronically signed (initialled) after each meeting, and eventually uploaded on IBIS at the very end of the EE process.

The focus of reflection in the EE is on the overall process. For each section of the RPPF, consider the following areas for reflection:



Economics for the IB Diploma

Extended Essay

- The challenges, setbacks and obstacles you faced – how did you tackle these and what did you learn in the process?
- The IB learner profile – which of these applied to you, and how?
- Your learning experiences – what did you learn and did any new perspectives emerge during the process?

There is a maximum of 500 words for all three reflections. These must be written in your own words and relate only to your own learning journey in this process. This is what the IB calls 'student voice'. You should write your reflective comments on the RPPF as soon as possible after each reflection meeting with your supervisor because these thoughts will still be fresh in your mind. Also, you must not go back and change or update your reflections at a later date – the EE examiner wants to know what you were thinking at that particular moment when each reflection was completed.

The assessment criteria

Criterion	Marks	Broad descriptors	Description
A: Focus and method	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic • Research question • Methodology 	This criterion focuses on the topic, the research question and the methodology. It assesses the explanation of the focus of the research (which includes your chosen topic and the research question), how the research will be undertaken, and how the focus is maintained throughout the essay.
B: Knowledge and understanding	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context • Subject-specific terminologies and concepts 	This criterion assesses the extent to which the research relates to the subject area used to explore the research question. It also assesses the way in which your economics knowledge and understanding are demonstrated through the use of appropriate economics terminology and concepts.
C: Critical thinking	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Analysis • Discussion and evaluation 	This criterion assesses the extent to which critical-thinking skills have been used to analyse and evaluate the research you have undertaken.
D: Presentation	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure • Layout 	This criterion assesses the extent to which the presentation of your essay follows the standard format expected for academic writing and the extent to which it aids effective communication.
E: Engagement	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process • Research focus 	This criterion assesses your level of engagement with the research process and completion of the EE. It is applied by the examiner at the end of the assessment of the essay, after considering the RPPF, which includes your three mandatory reflections and your supervisor's feedback comments.



Economics for the IB Diploma

Extended Essay

While most students do not struggle to get 3 or 4 marks for Criterion D, please note the following common pitfalls (for which marks are deducted) from EE examiners:

- missing elements (cover page, table of contents, page numbers, bibliography)
- a contents page with no page numbers
- page numbers not matching the table of contents
- illegible diagrams
- excessive use of irrelevant photos that broke up the flow of the essay
- poorly organized bibliographies
- mixed-up fonts.

Final reminders and points to consider

- The EE should relate to economic information, policies, outcomes or events that are no more than five years old.
- Essays should not be based on future economic events.
- Your essay should be presented as a formal piece of sustained academic writing, completed within the word limit (4,000 words). Note that the contents in this chapter is approximately 3,600 words.
- As an academic piece of work, all the resources used to complete the EE need to be properly cited and referenced.
- The essay must be accompanied by the RPPF document consisting of three compulsory reflections of no more than 500 words in total.
- You will be supported by a supervisor from your school as part of the EE process. The IB recommends three to five hours of supervision, which includes the three mandatory reflection sessions.
- Students should use the following recommended format in their essay:
 - Size 11 or 12 font
 - Arial or Times New Roman font
 - 1.5 or double spacing
 - Page numbering
- The EE must be anonymized. This means you must not include your candidate number, school name or supervisor's name on the title page or anywhere else in the essay.
- Examiners are instructed not to read beyond the 4,000-word count limit (WCL). Going beyond the WCL is therefore self-penalizing. Also, note that issues of academic integrity may arise should a student exceed the WCL.
- The following items are not included in the official 4,000-word count:
 - contents page
 - maps
 - charts



Economics for the IB Diploma

Extended Essay

- diagrams
- annotated illustrations
- tables
- equations, formulae and calculations
- citations/references (whether parenthetical, numbered, footnotes or endnotes)
- bibliography (works cited)
- the reflections on planning and progress form (RPPF).
- Remember that it is not necessary to use or include any primary research. Some students choose to include pages of pie charts or similar, used to summarize their survey results. Such an approach is rarely appropriate for an EE. At the same time, questionnaires or interviews based on speculative and circumstantial responses rarely generate appropriate data, so must not be used.
- Diagrams should not be included if there is no evidence to support their relevance to the research question (remember to apply the PEEL framework to constructing your paragraphs in the essay).
- Data gathered for an economics EE should not be used to fulfil the requirements of the economics internal assessment. This is usually not appropriate to the demands of the task and could be considered as 'double-dipping', a form of academic malpractice.

For more information about the EE, please refer to *Extended Essay for the IB Diploma: Skills for Success*, published by Hodder Education (ISBN: 9781510415126)

All the best for the completion of your extended essay!

