

Initial guidance on research and writing

Supervisors are recommended to advise their students on how to conduct research and write the extended essay, paying particular attention to the following key areas.

When researching the extended essay, students should follow the steps below.

- 1 Choose an available Diploma Programme subject for the extended essay for the session in question (subject to any restrictions imposed by the school).
- 2 Read the following materials: the assessment criteria, relevant subject-specific chapter of the *Extended essay guide*, the IB's ethical guidelines and other associated policies where relevant, such as those relating to animal experiments.
- 3 Set up the Researcher's reflection space (RRS) and use this as the key planning and reflection tool for the extended essay process.
- 4 Choose a topic and undertake some background reading on it.
- 5 Formulate a preliminary research question. Try to incorporate an IB command term in the research question if possible.
- 6 Draw up an outline plan for the research and writing process. This should include a timeline.
- 7 Begin to identify how and where they will gather source material for their research.
- 8 Identify which system of academic referencing they will use, ensuring that this meets the minimum requirements for the IB.
- 9 Set deadlines for themselves that are realistic and take into consideration the school's own internal deadlines.
- 10 Plan a structure for the essay. This may change as the research develops but it is useful to have a sense of direction from the start.
- 11 Undertake some preparatory reading in light of the proposed research question. *If students discover that it will not be possible to obtain the evidence needed in the time available, the research question should be changed. This should be done sooner rather than later: students should not lose time waiting and hoping that something will turn up. Students should go back to stage 3, 2 or 1, and choose a new research question that can be answered.*
- 12 Carry out the research. *The material collected should be assembled in a logical order, linked to the structure of the essay and clearly focused on the research question posed. Only then will students know whether they have enough evidence for each stage of the argument so that they can proceed to the next. Students should be prepared for things to go wrong. Sometimes they may discover something later in the research that undermines what they thought had been established earlier. If that happens, the research plan needs to be revised.*