

The IB Diploma Programme ‘Core’ Elements

The IB Diploma ‘Core’ elements are viewed as essential to the IB Diploma Programme and permeate all the teaching and learning that takes place. The ‘Core’ is divided into the following three components:

- 1 **Theory of Knowledge (TOK):** a course that invites students to reflect on the nature of knowledge and question the basis and limits of knowledge from their own perspective.
- 2 **Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS):** this enables students to have an awareness of, concern for and an ability to cooperate with others. This is achieved by students taking part in a range of enjoyable and significant experiences as well as a CAS project. These may include learning to play an instrument, improving sporting skills or being a reading mentor. NAS Dubai has a wide range of activities both within and outside of school in order for students to evidence they have met the seven CAS ‘Learning Outcomes’.
- 3 **The Extended Essay (or EE):** this is an essay of up to 4000 words that is the result of an independent inquiry into a topic of great interest to the student.

A Closer Look at the Core

1 Theory of Knowledge (TOK)

Theory of Knowledge (TOK) allows students to reflect on the nature of

knowledge, and on how we know what we claim to know. It is one of the components of the DP core and is mandatory for all students in Year 12 and Year 13. The TOK requirement is central to the educational philosophy of the IB Diploma Programme.

The IB Learner will inquire into different ways of knowing, such as sense perception or reasoning and examine these through different areas of knowledge such as history, ethics or human science to name a few. TOK will also be referenced throughout the IB Diploma Programme by the subjects chosen.

TOK is composed almost entirely of questions, which should be examined through open-ended dialogue. The most central question is “How do we know?”, while other questions would examine evidence allowing the learner to make judgements on the validity of sources. It allows learners to be critical thinkers when reviewing different models and how specific theory can be applied to the real world. Through discussions of these and other questions, students gain greater awareness of their personal and ideological assumptions, as well as developing an appreciation of the diversity and richness of cultural perspectives.

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Assessment of TOK

The TOK course is assessed through an oral presentation (33%) and a 1600 - word essay (67%). The presentation assesses the ability of the student to apply TOK thinking to a real-life situation and should be no longer than 30 minutes in length. This is internally assessed and verified by a review from an IB examiner. For the TOK essay, the IB learner selects one essay title from six prescribed essay titles that are produced by the IB in September prior to submission for examinations in May. Students will develop the title to ask knowledge questions and then apply how knowledge is acquired/developed from different areas of knowledge and ways of knowing in an open-ended manner.

What is the significance of TOK?

TOK aims to make students aware of the interpretative nature of knowledge, including personal ideological biases - whether these biases are retained, revised or rejected. It offers students the opportunity to reflect critically on diverse ways of knowing and on areas of knowledge. Students consider the role and nature of knowledge in their own culture and in the cultures of others from around the world. TOK offers opportunities for students to be aware of themselves as thinkers, encouraging them to become more acquainted with

the complexity of knowledge. Students are encouraged to recognise the need to act responsibly in an increasingly interconnected but uncertain world allowing them to apply their knowledge with greater awareness and credibility.

② Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS)

Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) is at the heart of the Diploma Programme and, with its holistic approach, is designed to strengthen and extend students’ personal and interpersonal learning. CAS is one of the things that sets the IB Diploma apart from other courses at this level. Through the CAS programme, students develop awareness of, concern for, and the ability to cooperate with others. The philosophy is to develop all areas of a student’s potential, to educate the whole person and to encourage the development of individual talents. CAS complements a challenging academic programme in a holistic way and acknowledges the need to become involved in physical recreation, theatre productions, artistic pursuits, community service work and other worthwhile activities.

The CAS Coordinator leads and manages the CAS programme and ensures active student engagement. Over the two - year IB Diploma Programme, students devote their time to CAS experiences on a regular basis, ensuring a balance between the three strands: Creativity, Activity and Service.

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CAS involves students in a range of enjoyable and significant experiences, as well as a CAS project. Throughout the CAS programme, students need to show that they have had real-life experiences involving the following seven Learning Outcomes:

- 1 Identify your own strengths and develop areas for personal growth
- 2 Demonstrate that challenges have been undertaken, developing new skills in the process
- 3 Demonstrate how to initiate and plan a CAS experience
- 4 Show commitment to and perseverance in CAS experiences
- 5 Demonstrate the skills and recognise the benefits of working collaboratively
- 6 Demonstrate engagement with issues of global significance
- 7 Recognise and consider the ethics of choices and actions

Although CAS is not formally assessed and students do not receive points for CAS towards their final IB score, they cannot pass the IB Diploma without it. This reflects the focus on process within the IB Diploma Programme. It is not just about outcomes - what grade a student eventually receives - but about how they

get there and how they develop both as learners and as young people, reflecting on the whole process on a continual basis.

3 The Extended Essay (EE)

One of the most interesting and challenging components of the IB Diploma Programme is to undertake independent research into a topic of special interest to the student and then write an Extended Essay (EE) of up to 4,000 words. The Extended Essay is a compulsory, externally assessed piece of independent research into a topic chosen by the student and presented as a formal piece of academic writing.

The Extended Essay is intended to promote high-level research and writing skills, intellectual discovery and creativity while engaging students in personal research. This leads to a major piece of formally presented, structured writing of up to 4,000 words in which ideas and findings are communicated in a reasoned, coherent and appropriate manner. The IB recommend that approximately 40 hours of work is dedicated to the Extended Essay by each student.

Students at NAS Dubai are guided through the prescribed Extended Essay process of research and writing by an assigned supervisor (a teacher in the school). All students undertake three mandatory reflection sessions with their

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supervisor, including a short concluding interview (or viva voce), following the completion of the Extended Essay.

Extended Essay topics may be chosen from a list of approved IB Diploma subjects - usually one of the student’s six chosen subjects for the IB Diploma or the World Studies option. A World Studies Extended Essay provides students with the opportunity to carry out an in-depth interdisciplinary study of an issue of contemporary global significance, using two IB disciplines.

The aims of the Extended Essay are to provide students with the opportunity to:

- ▶ engage in independent research with intellectual initiative and rigour
- ▶ develop research, thinking, self-management and communication skills
- ▶ reflect on what has been learned throughout the research and writing process.

Students will start their preparations for the Extended Essay in the spring term of Year 12 and they will need to complete the research or data collection ideally before the end of the summer term so that the final essay can be submitted at the start of the autumn term in Year 13. This is excellent preparation for the kind of

thesis students are required to write at college/university and it equips them with research and academic writing skills.

The Extended Essay, including the World Studies option, is assessed against common criteria and is interpreted in ways appropriate to each subject. Students are expected to:

- ▶ Provide a logical and coherent rationale for their choice of topic
- ▶ Review what has already been written about the topic
- ▶ Formulate a clear research question
- ▶ Offer a concrete description of the methods used to investigate the question
- ▶ Generate reasoned interpretations and conclusions based on their reading and independent research in order to answer the question
- ▶ Reflect on what has been learned throughout the research and writing process.

Overview of the Assessment Criteria for the Extended Essay

The Extended Essay is an externally assessed component of the IB Diploma Programme. However, supervisors are required to submit a predicated grade attained by the student's work, using a best-fit approach (with a grade of A to E being awarded).

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The Extended Essay is marked using the following criteria:

Criterion A: focus and method	Criterion B: knowledge and understanding	Criterion C: critical thinking	Criterion D: presentation	Criterion E: engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Topic ▶ Research question ▶ Methodology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Context ▶ Subject specific terminology and concepts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Research ▶ Analysis ▶ Discussion and evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Structure ▶ Layout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Process ▶ Research focus
Marks	Marks	Marks	Marks	Marks
6	6	12	4	6

Total marks available: 34

Students should note that failure to produce an Extended Essay disqualifies a student from achieving the IB Diploma, regardless of performance elsewhere in the programme.



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Theory of Knowledge and Extended Essay Matrix

The Theory of Knowledge (TOK) and Extended Essay (EE) components are awarded individual grades (A to E) and, collectively, can contribute up to 3 additional points towards the overall IB Diploma score out of 45 points. The matrix below summarises how the overall TOK and EE components are calculated:

ToK/EE	A	B	C	D	E
A	3	3	2	2	Failing condition
B	3	2	2	1	
C	2	2	1	0	
D	2	1	0	0	
E	Failing condition				