

# Supplement

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## § 1 PREPARING FOR THE IB EXAMINATION<sup>1</sup>

The form of assessment in Higher Level Economics is 80% by final public examination, and 20% by internal assessment. At Standard Level the proportions are 75% and 25%. To perform well in these assessments the student needs to focus on the methods of examination early in the course and to practise examination skills as an integral part of the learning process. This section of the book, whilst not a substitute for IB official documents, offers candidates practical help and guidance in doing this as effectively as possible.

### SOURCES OF GUIDANCE

To prepare for the examination you, the student, must be absolutely clear as to what is expected. A number of valuable sources of information from the IB are available to help you:

- I *The Syllabus* – your teacher should have a copy of this and will have been working through it during your course. If this textbook has been your course text then your job is very much easier – as it follows the 2005/2011 syllabus – both at Higher and Standard Levels. If you have used a different textbook you need to know which parts of the book are in the syllabus, and which are not. If you have studied in a school or college without interruption to your course it is most likely your teacher will have done this for you. However, some regard for the overall syllabus as published by the IB Organization (as laid out in this text), will help you to put the whole of your course into perspective, and to understand the relationships between the different sections and topics.
- I *The Objectives* – at the front of the syllabus is a list of objectives for the IB course. This will repay careful study. You should expect the examination to test these objectives. An interpretation of those objectives appears as Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Objectives of the economics course

- 1 To understand economic concepts and theories.
- 2 To be able to apply economic theories.
- 3 To use economic concepts and theories to analyse information.
- 4 To evaluate economic concepts and theories from different perspectives.

As a teacher I had only one objective for the students in my classes and that was to be able to think like an economist by the end of the course. This embraces the more specific objectives in Figure 1. It can be thought of as acquiring a mental toolbox which can then be used to tackle economic problems.

- I *Past Examination Papers* – sets of these can be obtained from the IB Office in Geneva and are an invaluable study tool.<sup>2</sup> – They help you very directly by showing you the style of the examination, the nature of the questions, and the level of understanding required. The amount of time allowed to write short answer questions and data response questions has recently changed and as yet (June

2003) none of the new type of exam papers are available for inspection. Multiple choice questions will no longer be used in examinations from 2005 onwards. However they remain a very important learning tool and are included throughout this text for that reason. The most recent past papers give the best guide to what the following years examinations will be like. Whilst the syllabus is fixed until 2009, the subject of economics is likely to change in the intervening years. However any new emphasis is likely to show up in the exam papers.

- *Examiners' Mark Schemes* – the IB publishes these for use in teacher training workshops. Your teacher may have some. They are valuable because you can see exactly what the examiners are looking for, and therefore precisely what you should be aiming to demonstrate. The Marking Criteria for Essays is one of the most useful parts for a student. The ideal essay characteristics that you should be aiming for are listed in Section 2.

■ Figure 2 – Writing a good essay

Your essay should show that you

- 1 are familiar with basic economic principles
- 2 can apply relevant economic theories
- 3 can analyse using relevant economic theories
- 4 can evaluate

- *Chief Examiners' Reports* – these are a commentary on the strengths and weaknesses shown by candidates in previous exams. It gives an idea of examiners reactions to the exam scripts they mark. A great deal can be learned from these, *eg* almost every year the Chief Examiner reports that many students do not give enough attention to diagrams. Make sure that you do.

## PREPARING NOTES FOR EXAMINATIONS

A comprehensive set of notes is one of your most valuable assets in the run up to the examination. These are likely to consist mainly of class notes, class essays, and tests. They may be supplemented by notes taken from reading your text throughout the course, other reference books and articles you have collected. Check that there are no gaps in your notes. Although there is some choice in many of your exam papers, you are expected to have covered the whole course. It is highly risky not to revise certain topics. Many examination questions which appear at first sight to be about a single topic, in practice often require an understanding of a wide range of economic principles.

Style of note taking is a matter of personal preference *eg* whether to use linear or spider diagrams. In all cases, however, learning can be markedly improved by reviewing notes after classes, tidying them up and highlighting important points.

For exam preparation it is well worth while editing your notes, producing brief summaries. These summaries will aid memory and help you to practise recall. The mental effort of producing them is one of the main benefits. It will force you to concentrate your mind, and to get to grips with the

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central points in each topic. Being able to reproduce these main points as part of your essay plan is the most significant step in writing a high quality examination answer. The more times you work over your notes and actively work on them, the better you will understand the material. Try to rewrite your summaries without looking at them. Getting someone else to do it for you by buying a set of revision notes will not be nearly as effective. You need to do this yourself to become fully familiar with the material. As an example Figure 3 shows brief revision notes for price elasticity of demand.

Figure 3 – Revision Notes: Price Elasticity Of Demand

<b>Definition</b>	the extent to which quantity demanded changes as price changes
<b>Measurement</b>	percentage change in quantity demanded/percentage change in price or $\frac{\Delta q}{q_1} \div \frac{\Delta p}{p_1}$ or $\frac{\Delta q}{q_1} \times \frac{p_1}{\Delta p}$
	Elastic, unit elastic, inelastic. PED $\neq$ slope. PED and TR.
<b>Determinants</b>	substitutes, time, proportion of income spent on the good, habit forming
<b>Examples</b>	inelastic – food, elastic – tourism; inelastic to elastic: All food, dairy food, all cheese; Camembert cheese, brand 'X' Camembert cheese.

## PREPARING A STUDY PLAN

Managing your time efficiently in the run-up to the IB examination is of crucial importance. Preparing for six subjects presents you with the problem of economic scarcity, the scarcity of your own time. A suggested strategy for preparing a time management plan is as follows:

- 1 Draw up a blank time-table of a complete seven day week. Enter all of your time-tabled classes and activities. Construct this time-grid to cover all of your waking hours, *ie* evening hours, pre-breakfast hours and weekend hours. Make sufficient photocopies to take you up to the examination weeks.
- 2 Fill in one complete week's timetable showing exactly how you spent your time. Be honest with yourself. Enter your leisure activities, meal times, time spent socializing and so on. It is important to know exactly how you currently spend your time. Fill it in at the end of each day for a week. You may be in for some surprises!
- 3 Identify your targets, the IB grades you need, or hope to achieve.
- 4 Prioritize your tasks. Identify the most important tasks ahead of the less important ones, and

allocate your time according to importance. You need to allocate time to study, to leisure; to course-work, and to revision; to Higher, and to Standard subjects. You may need to spend more time on a weak subject to ensure a Diploma pass, than you do on a strong subject.

- I Make a week-by-week plan in the run-up to the examination. Apportion your time realistically. Set targets that you can achieve, which means allowing time to relax as well as to work. It is important that you achieve your targets. If they are unrealistically high and you fail to achieve them as a result, it is likely that you will become demoralized.
- I Don't miss targets and deadlines that you set yourself. Once you start missing, it is easy to let your whole study plan slip.
- I Identify any time-wasting activities, *ie* activities with a high opportunity cost of your time. Try to cut these out of your timetable.
- I Set up your workspace efficiently. Have all your notes and references to hand to minimize search time.

## § 2 FORMS OF FINAL EXAMINATION ASSESSMENT

The IB uses an externally assessed end of course examination together with internal assessment during the course. The final examination itself makes use of three different forms of assessment.

There is in addition the opportunity to write an Extended Essay in economics.

### EXTERNALLY ASSESSED EXAMINATION

The three types of assessment are as listed below. They are:

- I Essay Question
- I Short Answer Questions<sup>4</sup>
- I Data Response Questions

### ESSAY QUESTIONS

Candidates are required to answer one question from a choice of four. The questions are based on all five sections of the syllabus. Each question has two parts and may relate to more than one section of the syllabus. Each part must be answered, so make sure that you do. It is important to analyze each question carefully to identify what it is getting at. Key words should be identified and thought about carefully. Key words that commonly appear in essay questions are listed in Figure 4.

**Figure 4 – Key Words used in Exam Questions**

Account for	Give a reason for something.
Analyze	Break a concept down into its component parts, or essential features, in order to examine relationships.
Analysis	An examination and identification of the components of a whole.
Assess	Determine the importance of something.
Calculate	Give a precise answer where there is only one possible, eg PED.
Compare	Describe two situations, then present similarities and differences.
Define	Set out the meaning of a term. State precisely the meaning of a concept.
Describe	Give an account of something. An explanation is not required.
Discuss	Consider, or examine. Make a detailed and careful investigation of two sides of an argument.
Distinguish	Make clear an understanding of similar terms.
Evaluate	Determine the significance of something.
Examine	Inspect closely.
Explain	Give the reason for or the cause of something. A description is not sufficient, an explanation of why something has occurred is required.
How?	By what means? In what way?
Illustrate	Show clearly, provide with visual material, clarify by means of an example.
Outline	Give the important features of the topic. A brief treatment is expected.
To what extent?	Give a balanced judgement on a situation where there is some difference of view.
What?	An instruction to make something clearer.
Why?	Give reasons for the existence of something.

Examiners choose words very carefully and each key word is significant. For example, ‘Why do governments manage foreign exchange rates?’ is a different question from ‘How do governments manage foreign exchange rates?’ As you are likely to be taking your examination in a second language you should exercise special care. Mother-tongue speakers, however, also frequently answer the wrong question. Examiners are allowed only to award marks for answering the question asked, so however brilliant your answer, it will gain no marks if it is to a different question.

Pay particular attention to economic terms in the title, *eg* 'elasticity', 'unemployment', 'informal-sector'. Defining terms is almost always expected by the examiner as a part of the answer.

The real key to writing a good essay is to plan it carefully. Use the same procedure for writing a Short Answer Question from number 2 to number 9 (see over). For a long essay a reasonable time to allow for planning is 5–10 minutes. Any time much less than 5 minutes is likely to prove costly. Students that begin writing too soon frequently misread the question, poorly structure their answer, and miss out important points. The student may realize this in checking the answer ten minutes from the end of the examination, and add a rushed paragraph. Alternatively the student may realize it after the examination is over and when discussing the question paper with other students. Student A, 'Did you do the question on monopoly?' Student B, 'Monopoly? There was a question on monopolistic competition but not on monopoly.' 'Oops! See you at the retake!'

Figure 5 summarizes some of the main dos and don'ts of essay writing.

 Figure 5 – Dos And Don'ts of Essay Writing

<b>Do</b>	<b>Don't</b>
Answer the question given	Ignore the key words
Plan your answer	Start writing before planning your answer
Analyze the question	Give too many ideas away in your first paragraph
Brainstorm your answer	List points
Answer all parts of the question	Ignore the later parts of question
Define all key terms	Use slang
Divide into logically arranged paragraphs	Try to summarize everything in your conclusion
Include an introduction	
Develop points in full	
Use diagrams	
Draw diagrams with a rule	
Fully label diagrams	
Include a conclusion which directly addresses the question	
Use examples and illustrations where appropriate	
Write legibly	
Ensure that each 'sentence' really is a sentence	
Discriminate between relevant and irrelevant points	

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS (NB HIGHER LEVEL ONLY)**

Paper 2 HL consists of six questions. You are required to answer three of them. The questions cover all five sections of the syllabus. They invite mini essay-type answers and typically address a single theory, or economic concept, asking you to apply it to a particular issue. For example:

- 1 Explain the shape of the short run cost curve.
- 2 In what circumstances might monopoly benefit society?
- 3 What is the difference between economic growth and economic welfare?

A suggested procedure for answering this type of question:

- 1 *DIVIDE* your hour into three equal periods. Whilst waiting for the exam to begin, or as soon as it begins, write down on scrap paper the times you will begin writing the second, and third questions. (This is because exams often do not begin exactly on the hour). This will save you from doing it later when you are concentrating, and prevent you from making the serious mistake of over-running your time allowance.
- 2 *READ* the question carefully. What is it asking?
- 3 *PLAN* your answer on scrap paper before writing. Use 3 to 5 minutes to plan each question. Practise doing this to realize what 3 minutes feels like.
- 4 *BRAINSTORM* the question *ie* write down quickly key words and points. Do not edit, organize, or delete until this is fully completed.
- 5 *READ* the question again. Are you answering the question asked?
- 6 *ORGANISE* your ideas. Draw arrows linking points. Number points in order of treatment.
- 7 *CHECK* the question one more time. Are you answering exactly what is asked? For example, it is a mistake to answer 'how' if the question asks 'why?'
- 8 *CHECK 'DED'* *ie* Define, Example, Diagram. Ask yourself:
  - a *Define* – have I defined the major terms? This is always important when writing about economic topics. It may even be a major part of a short answer question.
  - b *Example* – have I used examples to illustrate my answer? This is often useful.
  - c *Diagram* – have I used appropriate diagrams? Very often important in economics. Indispensable in questions where, in explaining it, your teacher or your textbook has used diagrams.
- 9 *MONITOR* your time carefully, that is 20 minutes per question, with a very rigorous adherence to this time. A common, and serious mistake, of candidates unused to this type of question is to spend 25 to 30 minutes on the first and 'favorite' question, or the first two questions. The third question is then rushed. The last answer becomes one or two sentences, a list of points, or is missing entirely. Full marks will be awarded for an excellent 20 minute answer to a question. You cannot score more by writing several pages. You can however fail to score anything by not writing the third answer. Your teacher will almost certainly arrange some practice sessions, so that you gain experience dividing up your time rigorously.
- 10 After the first examination day is over recall what topics appeared in Paper 2. Then ask yourself what major topics were not examined. That could be a clue as to what to expect in Paper 3 on the second examination day.

## DATA RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Candidates are required to answer three questions from a choice of five. The five questions are structured and cover the whole syllabus. Data is presented as a mix of statistical, diagrammatic and written formats. If the answers to the questions are included in the data then the question is properly called a 'data response question'. In some questions however the answer is not in the data. These questions are more properly called 'stimulus response questions'. The purpose of the data is to generate interest, or stimulate the candidate. IB questions are typically a mixture of the two types. Questions are usually divided into four parts. The first two part sub-question usually involves definitive or specific interpretation of the data. The following three sub-questions usually relate to the data, with the last being a free-response sub-question, rather like a short answer question.<sup>5</sup>

The questions are on an incline of difficulty. The first sub-question tends to be straightforward *eg* define GDP per capita, define elasticity of supply. The last sub-question often asks for information additional to the passage presented. Students may be asked to appreciate the limitations of the given information and to suggest alternative sources of useful and appropriate information.

Data response is a high level skill. Learning to do this well will prove useful to you in almost any career you embark upon. It does require practice however, and you should work hard at this throughout your course. The practice you obtain with Internal Assessment articles will help a great deal.

### A suggested procedure for answering this type of question

- 1 Divide your two hour period evenly into three. Ensure you spend 40 minutes on each of the three questions you choose. Do not write longer on your first or 'favorite' question. You cannot gain more marks to compensate for those that you *will* lose on the third question.
- 1 Spend several minutes looking at all five data response questions carefully to discover what they are really about. It is easy to launch into one question quickly, only to realize later that another question would have been better. These questions often cover several topics – not just the one in the title of the data. Make sure you are able to answer all parts of the chosen question.
- 1 The mark allocated to each sub-question indicates how much time you should spend on it. A few words, a sentence or two at most is expected for two marks. A mini-essay, say half a page to a page, will be required to do justice to a question with 8 marks.
- 1 Answer the question set. Answer it fully, answer each part and answer it in the manner asked. Failure to do this is one of the major causes of poor examination results, even by candidates who are strong in the subject.
- 1 Answer the question in your own words. Do not copy out or paraphrase the passage given. This shows no understanding on your part and examiners give no credit for it.
- 1 If the question asks you to use 'evidence' from the passage, you do need to use it. However, depending on the number of points allocated, you may well be expected to develop the data, using additional information, and certainly always using your own words.

## INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Students are required to submit a part of their coursework to be assessed for the final examination grade. Internal Assessment, as it is called, counts for 20% of the overall IB grade at Higher Level and

25% at Standard Level. The requirement is to produce a portfolio of four short commentaries based on a news media extract, linking economic theory to a real world situation. Three of the four commentaries must have as their focus a different section of the syllabus.<sup>6</sup>

Extracts can come from a variety of sources but typically would be from regular newspapers and magazines, that is, written for non-economists. The student then demonstrates (i) the *linkages* between the extract and economic principles, and (ii) the *insights* economics gives to understanding the article better. Articles in specialized financial and economics columns and magazines are generally best avoided as the journalist would have already undertaken this task.

Internal Assessment aims to promote economic awareness, to develop the student's ability to relate the IB course to the real world. The requirement is a way of focusing attention on events more current than in text books or in examination papers. It can also encourage a study of issues which are of particular interest to the class, to the country or the region. Although it may prove a little difficult initially the student will soon find that the activity can add enormous interest and excitement to the course. A portfolio of work is compiled as a normal classroom activity during the course. This work is submitted to the teacher at regular intervals over the two years. The work cannot be revised or corrected once submitted, and thus should show a progressive maturing of understanding and ability over the whole two years. Thus it is most likely that early work will look unsatisfactory to the student when looking back. This is fully expected by the examiner and the portfolio will be judged as a whole rather than the individual commentaries in isolation.

The portfolio is graded according to five criteria:

- 1 The fulfilment of rubric requirements
- 2 How appropriate the portfolio is, together with its organisation and presentation
- 3 The use of economic terminology
- 4 The analysis and application of economic concepts and theories
- 5 Evaluation.

Although teachers are required to assess the work initially, an examiner will see a selection of portfolios and moderate the marking to ensure consistency between schools.

### **Advice to teachers<sup>7</sup>**

The Internal Assessment is the same for HL and SL candidates. Students are required to submit a portfolio of four commentaries, each 650-750 words, based on published extracts from the news media. At least three must relate to a different section of the syllabus. There must be four different sources for the extracts.

- I While Internal Assessment should be introduced reasonably early in the course, teachers should bear in mind that *each* commentary in the portfolio must satisfy the criterion for a particular level. This is a significant innovation for the 2003 syllabus. For this reason work one or two practice extracts through with all students in class to get them going.
- I Draw attention to the criteria of assessment. Emphasise that students are required to apply

economic theory, and evaluate articles. Contrast this with paraphrasing and summarising.

- 1 Give all students a personal handout containing the official guidelines from the IB, the marking criteria, some sample extracts of good and bad pieces of work and possibly an exemplar portfolio.
- 1 Spend some time making sure that students understand the criteria, and the importance of selecting extracts that enable them to score well. They should be pieces that require a diagram, clearly relate to theory in the syllabus, and give them a chance to demonstrate their command of economic terminology and understanding of how economic theory can be applied.
- 1 It is important to select articles that are fairly brief, or if they are not then the relevant sections of longer pieces should be highlighted.
- 1 Encourage students to read widely around the subject of economics and to apply textbook theories to real world situations. They must find their own extracts, and work independently in writing their commentaries.
- 1 Encourage the use of articles from lay sources *eg* daily newspapers as against financial papers and economic journals. ‘Letters to the Editor’ can be a rich source of extracts that enable students to demonstrate their understanding of economic theory.
- 1 Have the students hand in work at regular intervals so that their pieces relate to the part of the course currently being covered. The writing of them should form part of the study – it is not an additional task.
- 1 Students are allowed to submit a first draft to their teacher for advice before submitting the final copy. It must not be reworked after this.
- 1 Encourage the use of precise diagrams, carefully labelled.
- 1 Early on check that students are attaching the source article to their own work, give the title of the extract, the source of the extract, the date of the extract, the date of their own commentary, the word count and the section of the syllabus to which it applies.
- 1 Students may write more than four commentaries and submit their best four as the portfolio.

### § 3 THE EXTENDED ESSAY

The Extended Essay is a unique aspect of the IB, with its requirement to pursue original research and to write it up. It can be a grind: vexing, frustrating, daunting and forbidding. It can be (and much more often is) absorbing, challenging, intellectually stimulating and enormously satisfying. It anticipates a style of work that some of you may not encounter again until your third or fourth year at university, but which experience shows that students of your age are capable of approaching with freshness, verve and great originality.

#### **Aims of the Essay**

Writing the essay will give additional insight into your chosen subject (economics in this case), through careful library research, the collection and classification of data and also through the necessary background study which is essential to making valid judgements. The methodology and discipline of economics must be practised and to ensure this you work under supervision.

The extended essay is intended to be of the kind that could be submitted for publication in an

academic journal, *ie* a polished, well organised piece of work. It must, therefore, have the formal shape of an essay or article. It must be provided with functional documentation, paragraphing, indexes, foot-notes and bibliography. The essay must lead logically to a worthwhile conclusion.

The writing of the essay gives you an opportunity to practise adult attitudes and educated virtues *eg* impartiality, the substantiation of general statements, the tolerance of other peoples' views and their achievements.

You should practise sophistication in the language you use. The completed essay should make rewarding reading.

Make the most of the opportunity that the essay presents. Choose a limited topic, explore it thoroughly, and write it up clearly and concisely. Do not be dismayed if your research opens up more questions than it answers; that is often the nature of good research. Be aware of this and learn when to stop.

Time management throughout the extended essay period is crucial. Figure 6 shows the time structure for one IB school.<sup>8</sup>

 Figure 6 – Extended Essay Timetable

<b>Spring Term</b>	
Late January	Starter session. Hand-out of general information.
Next few days	Subject teachers to talk during lesson time about doing Extended Essays in their subject.
Following few weeks	Consider possible topics – with aid of subject tutors, parents, contacts, friends, group tutors, etc.
Early March	Submit form ES/4 with proposed subject, area of research, etc. to Supervisor.
Easter Holiday	Preliminary research – checking sources/feasibility of proposed topic.
<b>Summer Term</b>	
Mid-late April	Discuss progress with Supervisor. Check on plans.
End April	Morning for appointments with supervisors/ extended research. Continue research.
Early June	Afternoon for further work with supervisors.
Summer Holiday	Continue research. Write preliminary draft.
<b>Autumn Term</b>	
Early September	Afternoon – third half day – further supervision. Continue revising / improving draft.
October week before half-term	No homework to allow time for final touches to the essay.
Last 2 days before half-term	No lessons in order to finish the essay.
Early November, day after half-term	0900 hrs. Submit completed essay to Supervisor.

## Sources

Examples of secondary sources in economics are books involving interpretation and reference documents. They are useful in cases where they exist to ensure that the research is on sound lines and the interpretation of the topic has not already been disproved. The advice of teachers or other experts should be sought on suitable secondary sources.

In general, the number of sources should be limited. You should not be over ambitious in your reading. Be realistic about your choice of sources. If your research fails because you are unable to consult the intended primary sources, leniency will not necessarily be shown by the examiner marking the essay. If in doubt, consult your supervisor.

Remember that the aim of the essay is that you should form your own opinion on the topic researched, and not rehash that of someone else.

## Length

Do not put in marginally relevant material just because you are short of words. In general, a tightly written 3000 words will create a better impression than the same material padded out to 4000 words.

## Supervision

The Supervisor's report is an important part of the assessment as it can greatly influence the Examiner's opinion of your essay. Throughout the period of preparation of the essay your Supervisor will be watching the way in which you approach the topic for initiative and intelligence, in making use of outside sources, for evidence of malpractice, for depth of analysis and for clear and concise conclusions.

## Acknowledgements

Many students make use of people as sources – for advice or for assistance in other ways. For this reason, and out of courtesy, it is appropriate to thank them at the end of the essay. Name the people who have assisted you and also their place of work; *eg* I wish to thank the following who provided me with information and assistance:

Musa Ndzimandze, Chairperson, Coboco, Atlantic College.  
Ajitsingh, Street Moneylender, Metro Manila, Philippines.

This also establishes the credentials of the people you have consulted.

How to choose a topic:

- a Decide upon the subject in which you wish to submit an essay. Those of you who are proposing to go on to higher education should seriously consider writing an essay in your likely field of study. If certainly gives you something to talk about at an interview!
- b Think about (i) your own particular interests within this field. You will have to spend a lot of time on the subject chosen, so think carefully. (ii) Whether you have access to particular information or people within any one area of the field. Among the best essays are those in which students

have access to papers not previously studied. Originality in use of sources is always regarded favourably. (iii) Where you will be when you will be writing the essay. The bulk of the work is likely to be done over the summer. Where will you be? Is there a topic which could be conveniently studied to make use of the resources available (*eg* libraries, museums, specific people) at the time when you will be writing the essay?

- c Talk your thoughts over with the tutor in your selected subject.
- d Your topic should not be too ambitious. For most of you, the extended essay will be the first piece of independent research work you have carried out. It is therefore essential that the topic is carefully defined and is appropriate to your level. Tutors who may appear discouraging about your choice of topic are more experienced and more aware of possible pit-falls!
- e Topics should be very specific. Vast topics can only be covered superficially and this is not the aim. Such topics as ‘The export trade of Brazil’ are far too broad. The Assessment Criteria for Extended Essays published by the IB states that the research question should be clearly and precisely stated and sharply focused so that it is susceptible to effective treatment within the word limit. Among the successful topics chosen in the past have been:

The price elasticity of demand of water melons in my school.

The effect of temperature on ice cream sales in a Danish village.

The measurement of the multiplier in Singapore.

- f Topics should not wander outside the confines of the subject concerned. An Economics essay which involves History or Business and Organisation is likely to become superficial.
- g If the topic chosen is a development of subject areas covered elsewhere in the programme, the essay should not be a regurgitation of class work, nor a summary of basic course material. You should go into the subject matter in considerably more depth and show evidence of personal research.

### **How to come up with an Extended Essay Title**

The hardest part in writing an extended essay is coming up with a research question. Once that hurdle is over, whilst there is hard work ahead, it is clear what has to be done. Getting the title is critical. Here is a suggested procedure which many of my own students have used.

- 1 Write down your interests – in two lists. On the left write down all those areas of economics that interest you. These may be topics you have covered already and you found interesting in class *eg* market operations, maximum prices, aims of firms or alternatively an area of economics yet to be covered *eg* exchange rates, the role of women in development. You might initially brainstorm this *ie* think hard and write down ideas as they come to you. However most students will probably also revert to their textbook for ideas. Initially write down everything that interests you. Don’t think any further about the topic, do not try to assess it yet. Do not censor or edit your list either. You can do that later when everything that initially seems interesting is written down

On the right hand side list areas of your own personal interest. These could involve your hobby, future career, University study, your own country. Again no censorship yet. That comes in stage

two. Your list will be personal to you. It could literally include anything, mountain bikes, beauty magazines, Thailand, birth-control, hotel management, family life, foreign trade, art, sport, refugees ... anything.

- 2 Go through your lists again, deleting weak interests, high-lighting strong interests, adding any further ideas.
- 3 Link an idea from the left hand side with an idea from the right hand side. The table in Figure 7 makes some such connections:

 Figure 7

<b>Economic Interest</b>	<b>Personal Interest</b>
price discrimination	hairdressing
elasticity	beer
foreign trade	Taiwan
market failure	global warming
cost benefit	engineering career
unemployment	pop music
market operation	hotel management

- 4 Form a research question involving both sides of your favoured topic *eg*
  - Do hairdressers price discriminate between men and women?
  - What is the cross-price elasticity of demand between two brands of lager?
  - Is unemployment high amongst pop singers?
  - Will hotel prices rise during the next Olympic Games?

Try one or two of the others for yourself. The idea is to come up with a question. It should be just that, a question. You absolutely should not consider the answer to it. That will be the task of the research. You should have no idea of the answer, or at least have an open mind. It is a mistake to consider essays in those areas only where you feel you know a lot, or in areas where you can get information easily *eg* your father's company. That is not research, you need to start with the unknown.

- 5 If the title is framed as a question it is then clear how to set about answering it. If the title is left as a statement it is often difficult to know where the boundaries lie, what to include and what to omit. For example 'The black market for pop-concert tickets' has no clear direction. Change the statement into a question. 'How does the black market for pop-concert tickets operate?' is much better. You now guide yourself into explaining how it actually works. The question might even be further focused *eg* – 'How does the black market for pop-concert tickets operate? A study based on the U2 concert, Wembley Stadium, July 2006'.

- 6 Do try to restrict yourself to just one question. Students tend to worry whether they will have enough to write about. In practice the problem is usually trying to reduce and restrict the initial question. You will be surprised how little 4000 words is once you start to write.

### **Layout of the Essay**

As an example one possible format you could consider for the presentation of your essay is given below:

Abstract

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The study area (background information)

Aims/objectives

Hypotheses

Methodology of data collection

Chapter 2

PRESENTATION

Presentation of data collected

Chapter 3

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Problems encountered

Appendices

Questionnaire

Bibliography

Footnotes

The very first thing to do upon deciding your extended essay is to open a file. Put in all your notes. Record details of all sources of articles and book references. It will save you hours of looking for them again at the end of your essay. Divide your research into smaller parts *eg* you could use the presentation format suggested above. Take a clean sheet of paper and write the heading of each part on the top.<sup>9</sup> You can then withdraw one part at a time and work on it. This makes the whole task more manageable. It can be off-putting to face yourself with the whole essay every time you go to work on it.

### **Assessment of Extended Essays**

Your tutor will show you the Assessment Criteria which the examiners will use to judge your work. This will repay your study time handsomely. By studying what the examiners are looking for you will learn what to write and how to do your research. Two thirds of the criteria are based on general research and apply to all candidates in all subjects, the others are subject specific. Each is divided into

a number of points, from 0 to a maximum of 2 to 4, for each of twelve criteria. By highlighting the highest possible points score which can be obtained in each of the criteria, you can see what the IB regards as excellent. These then are the specific attributes you should aim for yourself. For example on criterion E, the conclusion:

*‘The conclusion is clearly stated, is relevant to the research question and is consistent with the argument or explanation presented in the essay. If appropriate, the conclusion clearly indicates unresolved questions and new questions that have emerged from the research.’*

This is the best guide you could possibly have to see what you should be aiming for in your conclusion. As a further example, criterion K, to what extent does the candidate effectively use the language of economics?

*‘The essay demonstrates consistent and precise use of economic terminology, including exact definitions where appropriate.’*

# Notes

- 1 Advice in Section 6 is personal, *ie* it is not official IB advice or IB sanctioned advice.
- 2 Your school is likely to hold them.
- 3 June 2003.
- 4 Short answer questions are at Higher Level only.
- 5 Advice given here should be checked against current official IB requirements.
- 6 Advice given here should be checked against current official IB requirements.
- 7 Chris Taylor, St. Peters College, Adelaide, Australia.
- 8 I am grateful for this, and much of the general essay advice to Nick Lee, IB Co-ordinator at St. Clares, Oxford, England.
- 9 Or open a new file on your word processor.