

HISTORY

This is a supplementary report following the May 2010 session and should be read in conjunction with the May 2009 extended essay report.

Overall grade boundaries

Grade:	E	D	C	B	A
Mark range:	0 - 7	8 - 15	16 - 22	23 - 28	29 - 36

General comments

The following comments pertain to **candidate performance** and **areas where supervisors could aid candidates** in effectively meeting the requirements of the various criteria for the History Extended Essay.

Comments regarding the specific sections (**A-K**) and areas of **strengths** and **weaknesses** are followed by more specific comments regarding the writing of the essay.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A: research question

The great majority of essays were appropriate to the study of **History** in terms of chronology (i.e. should not focus on events in the last 10 years) and suitability (i.e. dealt with issues which focused on the **human** past and avoided triviality)

There were still cases where candidates needed to **clearly articulate** the research question and to follow the instructions in EE Guide where it states quite clearly that the place for a clearly articulated question is '**in the introduction**'. While putting the research question on the cover sheet is obvious, the placement of the question in the introduction does not only satisfy the requirements of the criterion but also allows for a natural (and hopefully smooth) transition to the demands of criterion **B** where the specified question can be commented upon in terms of indicating context and worthiness of the topic/focus of investigation.

B: introduction

There appeared to be a tendency for candidates to focus on **either** 'context' (sometimes with too much background) **or** 'worthiness' - but it is important to cover both for full marks here.

C: investigation

While many of the essays seen did show evidence of an appropriate number and range of sources and well structured work, there were still cases where school textbooks and internet sites of dubious value were being used as the basis for the work. If the candidate has managed successfully to identify relevant **areas of investigation** at the outset, it is often helpful to then use these areas to produce sub-topic or chapter divisions in the main body of the essay. This indicates not only evidence of planning but presents a 'path' for the argument to develop along for the candidate.

D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Performance here obviously varied widely. In the better essays there was an attempt to move beyond the general and to provide evidence of examination of a relevant and sophisticated knowledge base - and then in terms of development of argument, to show clear understanding of the nature and importance of the selected knowledge.

Where the evidence base was weak, or sources inadequate in terms of number or quality, the candidates necessarily had much difficulty in reaching the upper levels of the marks available for criterion D.

E: reasoned argument

The majority of candidates were able to construct a reasoned argument in terms of a logical and coherent structure but for the argument to be convincing- especially in the case of essays which used a 'To what extent...?' approach 'other factors' and contrasting opinions need to be identified and dealt with. Essays that relied on descriptive/narrative treatments of the selected topics fared poorly in terms of this particular criterion.

F: application of analytical and evaluative skills appropriate to the subject

The analytical and evaluative skills that form the basis of awards here are amongst the most problematic areas for students. Obviously the better essays revealed a high level of attainment in these areas as candidates made critical commentary, based upon solid historical evidence **and** were able to evaluate evidence/sources being used **in an integrated manner within the essay!**

A worrying development in terms of **evaluation** is the fact that individual supervisors and entire centres have instructed candidates that it is appropriate to adopt an Internal Assessment approach here to evaluation. This led to candidates writing discrete sections, labelled 'Evaluation' and then proceeding to evaluate (usually) two sources for origins, purpose, value and limitations. This is not an Internal Assessment investigation and evaluative skills should be integrated within the main body and not dealt with in this way – **or in the form of an annotated bibliography.** (See below for more on this latter point.)

G: use of language appropriate to the subject

On the whole there seemed few problems in relation to clear communication of the information. Sweeping generalisations abounded only in the very weak essays and candidates for the most part appeared aware of the need to support claims being made and to use vocabulary and subject specific terminology in keeping with the nature of an History Extended Essay.

H: conclusion

Virtually all essays were provided with a conclusion but please remind candidates that the judgements reached and pronounced upon here must be consistent with what has gone before. Introducing new material here is not appropriate.

I: formal presentation

Formal presentation on the whole has shown signs of improvement but it is still the case that marks are lost needlessly by candidates who are not well versed and practised in the use of an appropriate bibliographical and referencing system. There are 4 marks available for this section and it is quite rare to see the award of the four marks. This should be an area in which all candidates should be able to pick up a decent award –if they are sufficiently prepared and then conscientious in applying what they have been taught in relation to the presentation of references, bibliographies etc..

J: abstract

The Abstract is done last by candidates and perhaps candidate fatigue may explain the failure of so many to achieve the full marks here. Three areas need to be present and clearly stated (within a 300 word limit). The scope is usually the element which is most poorly done. Candidates are **not** required to give a précis of the essay but have to explain what themes or areas of investigation are to be undertaken in order to allow them to reach a balanced judgement on the question they have chosen and hopefully identified at the beginning of the Abstract.

K: holistic judgment

Please, as supervisors, provide comments on the cover sheet. It can prove useful for examiners in the allocation of marks for this 'holistic judgement' criterion.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

The foregoing coverage of sections A-K should indicated areas in which supervisors can aid in the preparation of future candidates. Below is a summary of main points already alluded to as well as some comments on practices which should either be discouraged -or which centres should be aware gain candidates no advantage.

- Candidates need training in presentation skills. They need to be acquainted and comfortable with the use of an accepted bibliographical and referencing convention.
- These skills are skills that should form part of the general educational programme of students long before undertaking an EE and arguably could be introduced at a pre-IB level so that students are familiar with requirements.
- The Extended Essay in History is **not** the Internal assessment component and the treatment of evaluation as recommended in the IA (in a discrete section) is **not** what is expected in the Extended Essay where comments should be integrated into the essay.
- Some centres encourage candidates to provide an **annotated bibliography**. Please be aware that since the **bibliography does not form part of the word count**, any **evaluation of sources** by candidates in this section is irrelevant and **cannot be considered for purposes of awards in relation to 'evaluation'**.
- In the **Abstract** avoid a précis and provide the themes/areas for investigation for 'scope'.
- The research question belongs in the introduction- as indicated in the EE Guide. Even if it has been written on a title page, it should be **integrated into the introduction** where it allows for a smooth transition to identification of 'context' and 'worthiness' (as required by criterion B)
- It stands to reason that essays which are 3,000 words or less are unlikely to achieve satisfactory levels of attainment in many of the criteria.