

HUMAN RIGHTS

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The general level of human rights extended essays submitted in May 2010 is similar to that of May 2009. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that there is a lower percentage of works that do not reach the standards of the International Baccalaureate.

On the other hand, the fact that many students are not aware of the basic requirements for an extended essay for human rights is still an issue, as all examiners have pointed out. We still stress that students and supervisors must read the guide prior to choosing the subject and topic for the extended essay.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A: research question

Many extended essays comply with this point formally in that the research question is described properly within the abstract and the introduction. The number of extended essays that do not fully deal with the subject of human rights, however, is still cause for concern.

B: introduction

The introduction is not an issue in good extended essays. In those below average, however, it is still being confused with the abstract or not separated from the rest of the extended essay, as there is no distinction between any other sections. Sometimes the research question is not even included.

C: investigation

The issue from May 2009 is still present. Most students just use internet sources which are not always appropriate, and forego sources about human rights theory, or human rights in general. Generally speaking, their mistake is to limit their research to the topic at hand, ignoring sources about the theory and practice of human rights in general.

D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

There is little to no theoretical background in the extended essays about human rights, with the exception of some excellent ones. The rest rarely display a theoretical background for the chosen topic or, if present, is limited and not sound.

E: reasoned argument

The majority of extended essays tend to be narrations or descriptions, which does not comply with the standards of the International Baccalaureate.

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

Lack of objectivity has caused many extended essays to fail in this criterion.

G: use of language appropriate to the subject

Examiners have different opinions about this criterion. It tends to be consistent with the rest of the criteria, in any case. Students who do well in the other criteria will use the proper language, because they have researched properly and have taken their time structuring the extended essay as per the preset rules.

H: conclusion

The conclusion tends to be consistent with the topic detailed in the extended essay, even in the weaker essays. It would help if the conclusion were to be introduced by the title "conclusion", as in many cases it is not clear where it starts.

I: formal presentation

The same observations of the 2009 report stand, with no improvement in this criterion. Many weak essays are *saved* by this criterion from being awarded extremely low marks.

J: abstract

Some students confuse the abstract with a summary or the introduction, as in the previous year. Other students just introduce the research question, how they managed it, and the conclusion. Even if this follows the formalities that the criterion requires, there is no harmony in the writing.

K: holistic judgment

Very few extended essays were given high marks in this criterion.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

As well as repeating the advice given in the 2009 report, there are other recommendations that should be considered when supervising. Students of the Diploma are preparing themselves to become world citizens. It is important that they expand their horizons, leaving the prejudices of their own city/province/country behind. Students should have an international perspective with regards to universalism or cultural relativism. This international perspective will not exist if students analyze the constitution of their own country without considering international standards. Furthermore, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not the only universal standard. It was approved in 1948 and was the kick start in developing the so-called “International Human Rights Law”, which is wider, richer and more interesting to research as a source of international standards about human rights. The United Nations website explains to which countries each of the treaties are applicable, and to what extent. I believe that limiting the analysis of human rights to the Universal Declaration is a very short threshold for the research and development power of Diploma students.

We have noticed this year a high number of supervisors who praise bad works. Some of them even suggest marks for the essay that they are supervising. We do not believe this is appropriate, as the role of the supervisor is to be the “earth lead” for their students, not to provide them with false expectations.

Further comments

I believe that, in general, this year’s essays were better than those from last year, although the amount of essays that are below average is worrying.

Notwithstanding, I am glad to know that so many young people are concerned about the situation of human rights, and I hope this may reflect in their future professional development, regardless of their chosen area.

It is always an honour to be a part of the educational process of future generations of professionals.