

EXTENDED ESSAYS (General Report)

Overall grade boundaries

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

Introduction

This report is the first of its kind – its purpose is to give an overall picture of the extended essay submissions for this session. It highlights common administrative issues and strengths and weaknesses of essays across all subjects. All documents referred to in this report can be found on the OCC.

Administrative issues

Schools are reminded that the extended essay is an externally marked component for which the IB requires a predicted grade from the supervisor. This predicted grade should be based on the common grade boundaries as above. These grade boundaries are fixed for the life of the current extended essay course.

In a few instances, a suggested mark and the supervisor's pencilled comments on the essay were submitted to the examiner. Essays should be submitted for marking to the examiner clean and unmarked.

All essays should be submitted in the covers sent by IB Cardiff for the appropriate session. In two cases essays were submitted using old cover sheets (pre-2009 session).

Supervisor's report

The range of supervision time seen on the supervisors' reports varied from 0 hours to 15 hours. Clearly 0 hours is inadequate in terms of time spent with the student and 15 hours is excessive as the extended essay is intended to be an individual piece of student research work. The recommended hours as outlined in the guide are between 3 and 5 hours. If a supervisor records 0 hours of supervision on the report and there is no supporting comment giving reasons as to why this was so, the school is contacted by IB Cardiff to ask for an explanation as to how it was possible to authenticate the essay.

Supervisors who add contextual/background information about the student's commitment to the process of writing the essay greatly assist the examiner in reaching a judgement on the holistic criterion K. More and more supervisors are including in the supervisor's report some of the questions they asked during the *viva voce* together with the candidates' responses. This is

very helpful to the external examiner, particularly when it comes to awarding marks for criterion K.

Research questions

Many essays were problematic from the start because they either have a poorly phrased research question or the research question is not appropriate for the subject in which it is registered. Many research questions do not lend themselves to a systematic and analytical approach.

Supervisors should encourage students to choose the extended essay subject they would like to present their essay in **before** they choose the research area and question. If the student is not studying the subject they are presenting their essay in, the supervisor should ensure that the student has accessed the appropriate subject guide and extended essay guide chapter for that subject.

IB Cardiff will not give advice about which subject a research question fits into because it is the responsibility of the school and supervisor to make the correct choice. Framing a precise research question which lends itself to investigation in the registered subject is of paramount importance. Essays that are registered in an inappropriate subject will normally be given no more than 2 marks in criteria C,D and E and 0 marks in criterion A.

The research question must be in the introduction of the extended essay. Wherever else it appears in full in the essay (for instance the abstract) it should always be phrased in the same way to avoid confusion.

Research methods

Fewer candidates than in past sessions appear to be involved in data collection at an outside institution (especially in the sciences), which is a good trend. If an outside institution is used for laboratory work or similar, the supervisor should explain in their report or a supporting letter exactly what the nature of the support was. Schools are reminded that the supervisor at the school must be in overall control of the progress of the essay and that supervision should not be undertaken outside the school community.

Some students are being allowed to work under conditions that are not safe: for example when handling pathogenic bacteria. Supervisors are responsible for following national or local guidelines but may also find some guidance on health and safety and risk assessment in appropriate subject guides.

There were a few essays submitted in a range of subjects that breached ethical guidelines. It is important to ensure that students embarking on experimental work in the sciences follow the guidance in the *IB animal experimentation policy*. This must involve the supervisor and candidate having an informed discussion about the implications of the research before it begins and making a decision as to whether the experiment is likely to breach the regulations. If interviews or surveys are being conducted, the student should ensure that in conducting their research they are aware of the guidance given in the *Ethical practice poster* and any

subject guidelines issued on the conduct of surveys or fieldwork (these can be found in the appropriate subject guides).

Presentation

The presentation of essays was generally good but schools are reminded not to bind essays in their own binders but to use the extended essay cover sheet only.

Information from secondary sources and primary sources needs to follow a standard bibliographic format and be cited correctly in the extended essay. Candidates should avoid creating strings of footnotes giving page references to the same text whose full details are repeated on every occasion. Annotated bibliographies are not a requirement and are not recommended as they add to the burden on the student. CDs/DVDs should not be submitted to the examiner with the essay.

Visual material must be clearly presented so that all of the text on an image is visible. Sources for all such material must be provided so that it is clear if the material is from secondary research or the visual material was created by the candidate.

Some candidates are using the IA structure from the corresponding IB subject in their essay. Supervisors should stress to their students that the extended essay has its own distinct requirements and that it should be written to comply with the appropriate criteria, not with IA requirements in the same subject. If the essay follows the same structure as the IA, this can raise the question as to whether the student has re-used material presented for the IA.

It will depend on the subject as to whether chapter headings are appropriate but as an analytical research essay the extended essay should be structured in such a way as to enhance the flow of the argument. Quotations need to be properly introduced and set in context if they are to be an effective support to the argument.

The whole text of the essay must be written in the language in which it is submitted. If students have researched texts that are originally published in a language other than the one they are writing in, they should either use a recognised translation of the work or if one is not available, translate the quotations themselves into the language of their essay and include them in the text of their essay. Footnotes or endnotes of the quotations in the original language should also be added.