

May 2018 extended essay reports

General extended essay report

Overall grade boundaries

Grade:	E	D	C	B	A
Mark range:	0-6	7-13	14-20	21-26	27-34

This EE report is to be read in conjunction with the May 2018 subject reports for specific EE subjects. Where specific EE subject reports do not exist (for example, for subjects where cohort sizes are too small to provide constructive feedback without identifying single schools or students), then this report acts as guidance that summarizes the key points made, and issues encountered, by EE principal examiners across all subjects.

Important reminders

Extended essay website

Schools are reminded that the EE website is updated with clarifications periodically. Therefore, if schools decide to download and save as PDF, sections of the guide, it is the school's responsibility to ensure that they are working with the latest version. Schools are recommended to use the html guide for reference, so that they are always viewing the correct and current content.

EE subject reports and assessed student work

Subject reports for the EE will be refreshed every three years. The next set of subject reports will be produced after the May 2021 session. If new approaches and therefore guidance arise in the interim period, Extended Essay report updates will be published, and these updates would need to be read fully in conjunction with the last, full subject report for that session. As the EE task does not change, subject reports are not produced after each session.

After the close of the May session (September 15), the exemplars available on the EE website will be refreshed and expanded where possible.

Anonymizing work

Personal identifiers must not be included in the student's submission. The candidate's personal code (eg sj340) can be used, and this is indecipherable beyond the student's school

staff. Supervisors should take care to refer to the student by name in their comment – instead, they should use “the student” or initials. Similarly, students should not refer to their supervisor (or other staff member) by name in their reflections or in any acknowledgments. Any acknowledgements made by the student should withhold information that could identify the school, or its location.

Response language

All parts of the student’s EE submission (essay and RPPF) must be in the same language – that of EE registration. For example, a History EE in French would be written fully (essay and RPPF) in French. Similarly, a Spanish A EE would be written fully in Spanish, while an Arabic B EE would be written fully in Arabic. This is in keeping with condition 10.3 of the General Regulations. An RPPF written in another language would be awarded a mark of 0 for criterion E. Schools are reminded that it is their responsibility to check that the correct essay and supporting RPPF is uploaded for each candidate, and that both documents are appropriate and clearly visible. Amendments to uploads based on school-identified errors will only be accepted prior to issue of results for the session in question. Instances of maladministration caused by upload errors and identified after issue of results cannot be rectified and taken into consideration in any remark.

RPPFs for language acquisition subjects

As stated above, the essay and RPPF must be written in the same language. As with the requirement for a student to have a sufficient grasp of language before embarking on an EE in that response language, the same applies for the RPPF. Schools must bear in mind the requirements and demands of the RPPF when advising students on response languages. As with the essay itself, the quality of the language is not explicitly assessed – only when inaccuracies impede coherence is there a penalty.

Predicted grades

Coordinators are required to submit a predicted grade for each candidate. These grades must be entered on IBIS by **20 April/20 October**. For the EE, the grades are on a scale of A to E, with A being the highest grade. The EE is externally assessed, so supervisors must not mark the essays and arrive at a number to translate into a grade. Predicted grades for all subjects must be based on the qualitative grade descriptors for the subject in question, which are available on the EE website. Grade boundaries are subject to change, even for fixed tasks. Predicted grade *versus* actual grade accuracy is improved when predictions are correctly based on the descriptors.

Academic honesty and the EE

Referencing and bibliographies are only assessed against criterion D based on their visual lay-out (eg consistent presentation of referencing footnotes) and presence (eg bibliography as a structural requirement). The content and completeness of a reference or bibliography is not assessed, but, insufficient or incomplete references or bibliographies will be raised by examiners as “suspected malpractice” for further investigation by the IB. If there is no attempt

at an attribution in the body of an essay, or if the minimum bibliographic requirements are not met then the IB will record the details and monitor schools accordingly.

Students must be reminded of the importance of academic honesty and the proper referencing of sources. The minimum information requirements for the IB (superseding any reference-style specifics) are outlined on the final page of the *Effective Citing and Referencing* document, available on the Programme Resources Centre. Insufficient references are escalated to the IB to check for authenticity of work, and could cause a delay in issuing marks and grades. Schools that permit insufficient referencing practices are recorded and monitored.

Reliance on external resources

Irrespective of the subject, the extended essay must be a complete piece of independent research, modelled on an academic journal/research paper, which can exist and be understood on its own, without the need to access external links, such as hyperlinks, or accompanying material such as DVDs.

Examiners will not access any material contained in an external source when assessing an essay. Material that is pertinent to the argument being made must be contained in the essay itself to be considered by examiners in their assessment of it.

As with appendices, if information central to the argument is included in the external link, it is treated as though the point has not been made and as such could affect different criteria, for example, criterion C (critical thinking), depending on the quality of the other analyses.

Referencing sources not in the language of submission

An extended essay can use sources in languages other than that of submission where appropriate. In these situations, the IB advises that the sources be used as necessary, and that

When referred to in the body of the extended essay as a quotation, the translation is given and the original quotation is placed as a footnote.

When a source is acknowledged in the bibliography, it should be referenced in its original language. Where there is no official published translation, the student should write a brief summary alongside the source in the language of submission of a) the title, b) name of the author, c) the focus of the work and d) any other relevant details. This way, the examiner can assess the relevance and suitability of the source as required.

The translation of the text should be done by the student if there is no official translation. The supervisor should help ensure as best as possible that the translation is accurate and representative of the original text. If the student finds the translation task beyond their capabilities, then it is advisable not to include that source in his/her research. In selecting sources, the nature of the subject in question needs to be considered—for example, in a language acquisition essay, it is vital that students work mostly with authentic materials in the target language.

Language A: category 3 essays

This option mirrors category 2 in that if it takes on a comparative element, it must be at least one text originally written in the language of the essay, but it can be compared with one originally written in another language but studied in translation.

Language B essays

While students are permitted to blend categories, what will always remain “inappropriate” for the subject and therefore subject to the caps for criteria A, B and C are the use of artifacts listed in the language acquisition chapter as “not appropriate”. For example, “how does social media affect X culture?” “how does unemployment affect X culture?” without anything concrete and tangible that will be the focus of the investigation. Such essays are inappropriate - they will generally be descriptive, speculative essays, and it is a self-penalizing approach from the outset.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Many essays appeared to still be written to the “old” assessment model (pre-May 2018). These appeared obvious as

- abstracts were included, which is fine in theory, but they were not added to the 4000-word limit, therefore often taking students beyond the upper word limit, meaning that the conclusion was often not read and not assessed, which was a self-penalizing approach
- the RPPFs were often descriptive and summarized the introduction, body and conclusion of the essay in the respective first, interim and final reflections, indicative of the reflections having been written at the end of the process, rather than actively during each stage of the process
- the subjects stated on the title page were discontinued as of November 2017 (politics, human rights, peace and conflict studies), therefore they were clearly not written with the 2018 assessment chapters in mind.

All text making up the body of an extended essay must be included in the word count, unless the EE guide explicitly states that any given element is **not** included in the wordcount.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: focus and method

Some essays only had a title, and not a research question posed as a question as per the requirements. Whilst this does not attract an explicit penalty, it is a consideration on balance with the other strands of criterion A which guides the examiner to the selection of the most appropriate mark.

While most RQs were phrased as questions, with a clear and appropriate focus, some were worded awkwardly. Students who did this often disadvantaged themselves as the question

was too broad and lacked the focus necessary for them to keep coming back to, as their essay developed.

Effective introductions are central for criterion A and must include a justification of why the topic was chosen, and why and how the selected sources were chosen. Students missed this opportunity often. Students should think about the question “Why, academically speaking, is it important to answer this question?”.

If, when a student comes to the end of their investigation, they realize that they have answered a slightly different research question, they can refine it prior to final submission. It would also be a worthwhile concluding reflection point to add on their RPPF, as it shows maturity in research skills in acknowledging that their research has taken them somewhere they had not originally intended. As stated on the EE website, “*sometimes students may need to revise their research question; therefore, a research question should always be considered provisional until they have enough research data to make a reasoned argument*”.

Criterion B: knowledge and understanding

The application of sources to support knowledge and understanding is central. Knowledge claims should be substantiated, and demonstrating understanding should be supported by the sources. Simply recounting primary or secondary sources is insufficient. The sources need to be applied to the student’s own thinking.

Where students were awarded lower marks for this criterion, this was often due to a poor selection of sources that could not be effectively applied to demonstrate knowledge and understanding. Most students had a good knowledge of their topic but this was not always linked to the sources, so claims came across as generalizations without academic underpinnings, resulting in a descriptive essay.

Subject specific terminology is often well-used, though reference to theory and concepts is seen more infrequently.

Criterion C: critical thinking

The application of sources to support analysis, argument and evaluation is central here. Sources should be used to support critical thinking.

Essays achieving the higher marks here were often confidently expressed, underpinned by a clear argument which was supported by appropriate and careful research.

The main issue for students with this criterion was the tendency to describe rather than analyse and evaluate. Conclusions were often repetitions of key ideas rather than syntheses that also offered limitations of research and unanswered questions.

Students must ensure they select appropriate secondary sources to support the argument they are making, in the discipline they are writing about. For example, a literary investigation should not have a multitude of sources that are solely historical or sociological.

Criterion D: presentation

There are 6 required elements to the essay, and all would be considered by an examiner when choosing the most accurate mark for the student:

- Title page, which includes:
 - the title of the essay
 - the research question
 - the subject for which the essay is registered (if it is a language essay also state which category it falls into; if it's a world studies essay, also state the theme and the two subjects utilized)
 - word count. Note that if footnotes have been used for anything other than referencing, the word count stated on the coversheet should include the footnotes, with an explicit statement that the stated word count includes explanatory footnotes.
- Contents page
 - Students may wish to use effective subheadings to help with structure
- Introduction
 - As per the EE website, "The introduction should tell the reader what to expect in the essay. The introduction should make clear to the reader the focus of the essay, the scope of the research, in particular an indication of the sources to be used, and an insight into the line of argument to be taken."
- Body of the essay
 - Subheadings can help support the structure of the essay. Some students did this effectively, but some overly-fragment their essays with arbitrary subheadings, resulting in a selection of mini-thoughts on a larger topic without cohesion.
- Conclusion
 - As per the EE website, "The conclusion says what has been achieved, including notes of any limitations and any questions that have not been resolved. While students might draw conclusions throughout the essay based on their findings, it is important that there is a final, summative conclusion at the end. This conclusion(s) must relate to the research question posed."
- References and bibliography
 - These must meet the minimum requirements as summarized on the final page of the Effective citing and referencing document. Regardless of the referencing convention used, the IB have minimum requirements that supersede any other norms.

Other presentation considerations are appropriate use, where relevant, of:

- Tables
- Headers
- Illustrations

Criterion E: engagement

Please be reminded that criterion E is applied to the RPPF alone, and more specifically, the first 500 words of the student reflections only. The essay itself and supervisor comment serve

as context attesting to authenticity of the reflections, but do not impact the mark award. Therefore, if any of the following occur, a mark of 0 is automatically awarded for criterion E:

- The RPPF is not submitted
- The RPPF is written in a different language compared to the essay. All parts of this assessment must be written in the language of registration of the extended essay.

If the RPPF exceeds 500 words, the examiner will stop reading at the 500-word mark. This could be self-penalizing if there is information later in the reflections that address the criterion requirements. Students should be told to have the 500-word limit in mind when drafting their reflection summaries, to ensure that they are as succinct as possible, while meeting the criterion requirements. As per the section of the EE guide entitled *Protocols for completing and submitting the Reflections on planning and progress form*:

In appropriate circumstances, as long as reflection statements are not qualitatively changed, supervisors may oversee and authorize the deletion of content from the first and interim reflections in order to enable a student to include sufficient words in his/her final reflection. It is, however, expected that early in the extended essay process students will receive appropriate guidance regarding the allocation of words to the three reflection statements.

Students should be encouraged, through the questions asked by the supervisor during the reflection sessions, to think critically about the process that they have been through, rather than putting forward a simple description of the actions that have been taken, or summarizing the conclusions of their essay.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

- Careful guidance regarding the appropriateness of a question.
 - When a research question is deemed inappropriate for the subject of registration, from the outset the student is disadvantaged with a cap of 4/6 for criterion A, 4/6 for criterion B, and 3/12 for criterion C. While the full range of marks for criteria D and E are still available, the maximum mark attainable for an otherwise criteria-fulfilling essay is 21, making the higher grades unattainable from the outset. A focused and discipline-appropriate research question is essential.
- Ensuring there is enough material to support an investigation into the proposed topic and research question.
 - Where there is not enough material to support an investigation, the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation tend to be lacking, as claims cannot be supported or substantiated. This means the final essay is usually speculative, as opposed to a well-researched investigation.

Please remember that no EE subject is a residual category for essays that do not clearly belong elsewhere. Each subject has its own academic research, theories, concepts and methodologies, all of which should be a consideration when preparing and producing an essay in any of the permitted subjects.

Where topics straddle disciplines, it would be worthwhile considering the option of World Studies as an interdisciplinary investigation into a topic of global, contemporary significance -

though this too has its own specific requirements as detailed in the relevant chapter of the EE guide.