

General extended essay

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Extended essay

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For grade boundary information, please refer to the Grade boundaries for Diploma programme coordinators document available on the PRC.

Extended essay

General guidance

This general extended essay (EE) report is to be read in conjunction with the May 2021 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.

As stated in the *Assessment Procedures* document, the nature of the EE task does not change and as such subject reports are not produced each session unless new problems arise or new subjects are added. The May 2021 EE subject reports remain wholly applicable until the next set of EE subject reports are produced (May 2024).

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: focus and method

A number of students omit either the research question or the title. While this is not penalised explicitly, both the research question and title are requirements to sufficiently focus the investigation, and as such the omission of one or both would be considered on balance with the other criterion requirements. Supervisors should ensure that students understand the [function of the research question, title and topic](#) which is clearly outlined in the EE guide.

A good number of students successfully formulated research questions that helped them to retain focus throughout the essay. However, there are still students who select broad research questions that are not appropriate for a 4000-word task, and that do not allow them to deal with the criteria to the depth required. There were good examples of effective introductions that served to outline the topic, title, research question, methods to be used and sources to consult. While the focus and method need also to be sustained throughout the essay, the introduction is a good place for a student to state their aims.

Students must ensure that the topic for investigation is academically worthy. The availability of enough **and appropriate, reliable secondary sources should be part of the student's considerations in the very early stages.**

The selection of sources must consider what the student needs to do with the sources – they need to be appropriate for the research question, but they must also be appropriate to use to support knowledge and understanding, and argument, analysis and evaluation.

As a student reaches the end of their EE, it is worthwhile critically revisiting the research question to ensure that the wording of the question remains appropriate. If the essay has answered a slightly different research question, students should be encouraged to revisit the question and make amendments as necessary. The research question should therefore be considered provisional until the EE is complete. It is not advisable however to leave the research question to the end of the process completely, as this results in an unfocused and usually narrative, general essay.

Criterion B: knowledge and understanding

Most students had a reasonable understanding of their topic, though this was not always supported by sources, and as such they often read as generalizations without academic underpinnings. Students must remember to use and apply their selected sources to support their knowledge and understanding. Unsubstantiated claims can lead to lower marks for this criterion.

Subject specific terminology is often well-used, but students should also think about incorporating subject specific concepts and theories too.

Criterion C: critical thinking

Students who did not produce a sufficiently focused research question struggled here, as they tried to answer too broad a question in terms of analysis and evaluation to the depth required by this criterion. Those who did not incorporate sources effectively would likely have received low marks against this criterion. Argument, analysis and evaluation are all speculative and unsubstantiated unless they are effectively supported by selected sources. Schools must help students understand the transition from reporting and description to analysis and evaluation. Too often, students did not evidence these higher order skills, and as such their performance against criterion C would often be impacted. More guidance is available in the EE guide and TSM including [guiding questions](#) to help students understand the demands of the criterion, and an [unpacking of the criterion requirements](#).

Criterion D: presentation

A number of students submit work which is lacking in terms of formal presentation requirements. It is vital that the requirements are shared with students, and these are clearly stated in the [EE guide](#).

Success in terms of presentation consists of producing an essay which is visually appealing, this means properly formatted and neatly set out, fulfilling the requirements of producing a cover page which consists of a title, a research question (phrased as a question) and a word count. Students are also required to make sure an accurately numbered table of contents and pagination are provided as well as a formal conclusion and a bibliography.

Students should note that the provision of a table of contents which goes beyond a very basic structure of 'introduction, main body, conclusion' is **strongly recommended**. The table of contents should set out the main areas being investigated in the essay (indicated by subheadings) along with accurate page numbers for these sections. Subheadings that are noted on the contents page should also appear in the main body of the essay. This approach facilitates the reading and coherence of the essay.

Criterion E: engagement

Criterion E is applied to the student's reflections only. The essay itself and supervisor comment serve as context attesting to authenticity of the reflections, but do not impact the mark awarded. The three reflections combined must be no longer than 500 words. Examiners will not read beyond 500 words, so students should be given the opportunity to edit the reflections at the end of the process to meet the word count, however, the substance of the reflections must not be changed so that they remain authentic reflective summaries.

It is really important that students and supervisors are aware of the [protocols for submitting the RPPF](#), as a mark of 0 is automatically awarded for criterion E whereby:

- The RPPF is not submitted
- The RPPF is written in a different language than the essay

Where a student changes registration language during the EE process, they must ensure that all their preceding reflections are translated into the final language of submission. This applies to retake candidates too where some of their reflections may still be valid and applicable.

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. **Reflections must be based on the student's experience, rather than a simple summary of the guidance that has been given to them by their supervisor.**

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.

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.

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 essays

Effective first submission for assessment May 2021, EEs submitted in studies in language and literature (**language A registrations**) **cannot be based on a text studied as part of a student's course**. Students can base their essays on different texts by the same author.

Please note that the regulation applies to all students without exception, including those retaking the EE **from earlier sessions. It is the school's responsibility to develop internal processes to ensure adherence to this rule** for each of their students. A coordinator or supervisor attests to the adherence to this regulation via the authentication of work via the eCoursework portal. Work should not be authenticated and submitted if the rule has not been followed; doing so would constitute school malpractice.

If a school discovers that a student has overlooked the requirement, then the student must redo their essay regardless of where they are in the process, revisiting any reflection entries as necessary. Please contact IB Answers if an extension is required to facilitate the rewriting.

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.

RPPFs for language acquisition/language B subjects

As stated earlier in this report, 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, that said, where linguistic ability impedes coherence then this could impact assessment of criteria A, B, C and E.

Fieldwork and secondary research

The document entitled *Managing Sciences and Geography Extended Essays without lab work or fieldwork* is available on the EE page of the programme resource centre. This document contains advice on research methods that use secondary data and suggestions of useful web resources.

Retake candidates

Students retaking the EE must ensure that their work is significantly changed. Without significant change, the new session mark is likely to remain the same.

Retake candidates must include an [EE/RPPF](#). Failure to submit the form will result in criterion E being awarded a mark of 0. To permit a six-month or twelve-month retake in a completely different subject, the school must be sure that the process can be followed correctly, including reflection sessions, and that it is not detrimental to the candidate. Depending on the nature of the changes to the EE, the [EE/RPPF](#) may still be largely appropriate or may need revisiting. If the EE is improved only, the student should be given the opportunity to have a new final reflection session. If the changes are substantial, then they may need to revisit earlier reflections and retake the sessions again with their supervisor. Changes in registration are

permitted, but it is at the school's discretion whether they should be supported in the light of the process requirements.

Change of subject

It is the school's responsibility to ensure that each EE is submitted against the correct subject. If a discrepancy between the registration and the actual subject of the EE is identified, the coordinator must contact the IB and request a change to the subject for which the EE is registered. The EE for a candidate should not be uploaded until the registration change is **authorized and the IBIS "eCoursework upload" screen is updated**. Failure to do this will result in the EE being assessed as the original subject for which it was registered.