

May 2017 extended essay reports

Arabic B

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

As every year there was a variety of topics related to the Arab world, however most of the topics were related to category 3: literature, with most focused on famous literary works or poetry. Some essays compared two literary works focusing on one common aspect. As for the poems, many candidates traced one theme in famous poems. Some topics were related to category 1: language, and while the topics were interesting, they were not always handled in an academic manner. As for category 2 essays: essays of a general cultural nature based on specific cultural artefacts, essays were very broad and could be applied to any culture, such as media or women in the Arab world. In addition, topics were not always related to language form or use as stated in the EE essay guide, and accordingly, did not score high marks as they were not able to meet the EE requirements. Many of the EEs took the form of a descriptive report more than being investigative, and this kind of descriptive EE did not allow the development of research questions.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: research question

Many of the questions were well formed, yet some of them were too broad and not sufficiently focused. It is important to gear students towards sharply focused topics or questions. Also, it was noticed that some essays presented more than one question.

Criterion B: introduction

Many candidates lost at least one mark in this criterion, because they do not mention the significance of the topic. Many of the introductions were presented as a narration of historical background or personal interest or experience, accordingly, it was not clear how or why the topic was of special interest to the Arabic world.

Criterion C: investigation

This is one of the more problematic criterion for students where it is obvious that an essay lacks clear planning. In literature essays, some students relied on secondary resources as a main source of information rather than the primary texts, very few candidates challenged a statement by a critic – instead, they simply agreed with it. Also, most of the students did not adopt secondary sources as a framework for their critical analysis. Not all candidates were able to develop their own argument or present a critical point of view.

Criterion D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Many candidates may have had a good understanding of the topic, however the problem was in how the information was used, applying and developing it in the right sections of the essays. Some students were not able to show the relation between linguistic features of a text and social and cultural context.

Criterion E: reasoned argument

In some cases, the research question was poorly stated, accordingly it is difficult for the student to develop a logical and reasoned argument. This is seen clearly in the literature essays where candidates narrate and describe the plot, finding no opportunity to develop an argument.

Criterion F: application of analytical and evaluative skills

This is another problematic criterion, as some essays lack any attempt at analysis and accordingly, the essay is merely a summary or a paraphrasing from a selection of secondary sources. In such cases, the candidates are unable to develop an argument to support their research question. Not many candidates scored highly against this criterion.

Criterion G: use of language appropriate to the subject:

Most students were able to score high marks on this criterion, as mentioned before, students have sufficient linguistic abilities to perform very well on their EEs.

Criterion H: conclusion

This criterion is problematic in some essays. Some students presented new information and did not conclude in a way consistent with the information presented in the body of the essay.

Criterion I: formal presentation

Students often scored high marks in this criterion as they followed the requirements detailed in the guide.

Criterion J: abstract

In most EEs the abstracts are improving, though some students forget to include the required elements (question, approach and conclusion). These aspects need to be presented clearly.

Criterion K: holistic judgement

EEs that are focused and address the criteria are usually able to convince the reader and demonstrate the elements detailed in the holistic judgement criterion.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

- Supervisors must make the candidates aware of the importance of choosing a topic which attracts arguments and analysis in order to help them to develop a workable research question. General topics such as “women in the media” or “ illegal immigration in the Arab world” should be avoided
- Students and supervisors are reminded to evaluate the reliability of all sources especially those from the web and to use a variety of sources
- The supervisor comment is a very important and useful reference for examiners in the process of assessing the extended essay, particularly criterion K. The comments need to be clear and not subjective in order to assist the examiner in reaching a fair mark.