

ENGLISH 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

This session, Category 3 literary topics seemed only slightly more popular than Category 1 and 2 essay topics. Marks represented the full range from excellent to elementary with a healthy percentage of essays achieving 'excellent' and 'good.' Nonetheless, there are still a number of inappropriate topics submitted or topics with a poor approach, which severely limits the awarding of marks in a number of criteria. The academic register of the majority of essays was generally clear and appropriate.

There were few Category 1 essays submitted. The most successful of these focused purposefully on a particular language use, for example the specific rhetoric used by a particular group for targeted discriminatory purposes. Another such topic compared the language used in leading newspapers to reflect certain countries' positive or negative public attitudes toward possibilities for international agreement on global warming. There are many more possibilities in the Category 1 area that could be explored and that could serve many candidates well given the natural focus of linguistic analysis.

Category 2a essays that are "socio-cultural in nature with an impact on the language," as described in the Extended Essay Guide, tended to be very broad in approach.

Essay topics chosen under Category 2b varied greatly in how clearly the topics aligned with the description provided in the Extended Essay Guide. Artefacts or cultural icons may be thought of as symbols of the culture and might be approached somewhat like an anthropologist might analyze the artefacts she/he finds to determine the social attitudes and practices of a particular civilization.

Though this category deals with essays of a general cultural nature, the caveat is that these must be based on specific cultural artefacts. Thus, broad topics like Australia's treatment of aboriginals will not succeed unless framed by particular government policies and/or documents that would serve as concrete examples reflecting Australian attitudes. There were a number of media based topics that suffered from the lack of focus such as "Do media campaigns create excessive consumption habits?" The advantage of the artefacts approach is that it avoids broad topics or that could apply to any culture rather than focusing specifically on these as seen in the English-speaking world.

In Category 3, there were many strong essays that were relevant and treated appropriate works. Many of the most successful essays focused on the development of one or more characters within one work or compared characters or themes in two works of a similar nature. Weaker essays dealt superficially with plot or character description with not much in the way of focused argument. It is important to remember that all works in Category 3 essays must originally have been written in English.

While the vast majority of essays consider novels or plays, film or television programs present a challenge when submitted as Category 3 essays unless the screenplay or script is the primary source for analysis. Comparing a novel with its film version is unlikely to be successful.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A: research question

The majority included the RQ appropriately in the introduction or early in the essay. It is important that a sharply focused RQ clearly fit one of the category descriptions (Extended essay guide pages 39-43). It would be very useful for candidates to explicitly identify exactly which category the RQ is related to either on the title page, or within the introduction.

B: introduction

Successful candidates attempted to explicitly integrate the research question, circumstances relevant to the question, and a sense of the significance and worth of the subject under investigation.

C: investigation

The primary text remains central for Category 3 essays. For Categories 1 and 2, the best essays made good use of a variety of primary and secondary sources to support the main argument. The weaker essays often were limited to dubious Internet sources and lack of awareness of differing points of view on the topic.

D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Candidates must endeavour not only to quote from reliable sources, but also to explain and integrate these ideas with their own. Listing facts or other's opinions does not illustrate understanding, but critical thinking and appropriate connections between ideas does.

E: reasoned argument

This criterion is key to a successful essay and is greatly aided by a clear RQ. The best essays had a cogent purpose. Claims were clearly set out and a consistent line of thought logically presented.

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

The highest marks were awarded to essays that smoothly integrated evidence from primary texts, and where appropriate from secondary texts, with insightful explanation. Merely paraphrasing does not suffice. At times, very interesting arguments lacked relevant supportive evidence and thus were not rewarded under this criterion.

G: use of language appropriate to the subject

The majority of essays demonstrate a solid use of English, though some candidates would do well to proofread more carefully. Language in this context includes the proper use of the terminology of the subject. For example, knowledge and appropriate use of appropriate literary terms, or the jargon normally associated with the media or other subject is necessary to receive the highest marks.

H: conclusion

Most conclusions were at least consistent with the information presented. Often candidates merely restated the main points without further consideration.

I: formal presentation

The basic presentation of essays this session was generally acceptable. There are a few areas like the abstract, the table of contents, and the bibliography (or works cited), which are clearly described in the guide but too often not carefully considered in the essay. In addition, citations should contain proper quotation marks and must be relevant. Reliance on long selections of text is not effective or desirable. Reference formats must be consistent. Styles may vary but candidates should keep to one style throughout the essay. The Works Cited page (or bibliography) should include only works that have been cited in the paper. Works that may have been consulted or influenced ideas but were not cited may be acknowledged in the introduction.

J: abstract

The best abstracts succinctly summarized the essay using the three relevant factors; the research question, the scope or how the question was dealt with, and the conclusions reached. Opinions or personal connections are not appropriate. The abstract should be placed directly after the title page. It is not part of the body and thus need not be included in the table of contents.

K: holistic judgment

In combination with the overall impression the essay has made, examiners rely on the supervisor's comments on how the candidate engaged in the EE process. Reference to the essay process and significant outcomes of the viva voce are always useful. When no comment is written, the candidate is often disadvantaged.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

It is important that supervisors and candidates review the assessment criteria as provided in the Guide before and during the essay process. Also, reading the most recent Subject Report will help both.

Perhaps the most crucial of the supervisor's responsibilities is to provide early guidance on the choice of the research question. It is particularly important to avoid broad cultural topics under Category 2. The consideration of the use of an appropriate artefact will focus the essay properly and lead to a more satisfying investigation.

Candidates may find it useful to explicitly state the category to which the RQ belongs.

It is good practice to consult with school librarians on possible sources for a given topic and for advice on presentation styles. Though IB does not specify any one format, schools would do well to choose a standard format, for example, MLA or APA, to be used in all Group 2 essays.