GERMAN 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

Topics researched this session were, as usual, varied and interesting, with the majority of the explorations falling into category 2B. There were a few candidates who had researched very personal topics well and were also able to work scientifically at a high academic level, while some simply narrated quite superficially, and without meeting the aims of the EE. Altogether these essays were very interesting to read and mirrored the breadth of engagement. It was particularly encouraging that there were quite a number of genuine second language learners amongst the cohort, for whom such an essay must be a considerable challenge. While not explicitly assessed, the linguistic ability of the candidate in question must be strong enough to convey complex thought processes and arguments.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: research question

On the whole questions were clear and well phrased, however there is still room for refinement with regards to category 2B EEs.

Criterion B: introduction

The introductions were often clear and interesting, but the academic context is rarely fully explained, nor the significance of the investigation for the understanding of language and culture. It would be helpful if supervisors could emphasize this aspect of academic research and explain it to candidates.

Criterion C: investigation

Most essays show evidence of thorough research. However, there is still quite a lot of reference to Wikipedia, even though the guide explicitly warns of this. Even if print sources

are not always available it should be made clear that 'uncensored' internet material should be treated with care and is not really a suitable source of information in research, particularly when it the sole source of information.

Criterion D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Most essays show evidence of very good knowledge and understanding. The guide explicitly warns of marking such essays against university levels and thus there is an automatic limit to expectations. However, there must be no real factual errors, which was indeed rarely the case.

Criterion E: reasoned argument

Ideas should be presented logically and coherently – that is usually automatically the case if the essay has been well-planned and structured clearly. If however, there are no sub-headings and the essay is presented as one block of text, the logic cannot always be seen.

Criterion F: application of analytical and evaluative skills

Here one could also find a link to the thesis – if the research question is clearly phrased then the analysis and evaluation is already clear. If not, this criterion can be problematic.

Criterion G: use of language appropriate to the subject:

Communication was usually clear. Technical terminology is not always very different from normal conversational German, and therefore there were few problems.

Criterion H: conclusion

In most cases the conclusion was clearly referring to the points made in the essay and was presented consistently with the formal requirements.

Criterion I: formal presentation

Most essays got the formal elements right; only in some instances were quotes not referenced correctly. One essay did not have an abstract; another did not include a table of contents.

Criterion J: abstract

This remains a problem for some candidates. An abstract is only meant to be a short overview of the argument, and the three necessary aspects (question, approach and conclusion) can be presented in few sentences. In some cases surplus information was given, or even replaced the necessary elements.

Criterion K: holistic judgment

The supervisor comment explicitly assists the examiner in awarding marks for this criterion, and therefore its importance is reinforced. Reading the essay in isolation sometimes does not

allow full clarity of the individual candidate's achievement. This is not an objective and absolute criterion.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

The most important recommendation for the supervisor has to be to remember that candidates are writing their first proper research essay and really do need advice and help from the supervisor. This is mainly the case for research and quotations – there are still essays in which there are next to no quotations, some that use Wikipedia without explaining and some with bibliographies containing nothing but web pages that are randomly copied and pasted. Candidates are always confused by this and need help with finding their way through the multitude of rules and guidelines.

Once again a few essays were submitted in which the research question did not fit the criteria for category 2B. Quoting from the EE guide (first examinations 2013), page 30:

"**B: Essays of a general cultural nature based on specific cultural artefacts**

The essay should be an analysis of a more general cultural nature but specific to a country or community where the language is spoken. Topics that are too broad and could apply to many cultures (like globalization, the death penalty or eating disorders) are inappropriate.

Essays of a general cultural nature must be based on specific cultural artefacts. Cultural artefacts in this context are understood to include a wide variety of phenomena, ranging from works of fine art to newspapers, magazines and cartoons, to films, television programmes and popular music".

In the Diploma Programme Coordinator Notes, supervisors are regularly reminded how to define a cultural artefact. This is supposed to be something created, e.g. a newspaper article, Graffiti, beer mugs, legal texts, clothing, cake recipes or Mercedes (as manifestation of German culture). Those that are not suitable are vague and general historical or social topics such as 'Wiedervereinigung'. Candidates can lose a significant number of marks for such an oversight, as the research question would be deemed unsystematic with subsequent caps in other criteria, which are detailed in the wording of the assessment criteria.