

EXTENDED ESSAYS

General Report

Overall grade boundaries

Grade:	E	D	C	B	A
Mark range:	0-7	8-15	16-22	23-28	29-36

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to give an overall impression of the EE submissions. For subject specific reports, please navigate to the respective subject page of the OCC and scroll down to the “Extended Essay” section. Note that subjects without their own OCC page such as School Based Syllabus subjects appear on the EE page itself.

This report highlights common administrative issues and strengths and weaknesses of essays across all subjects. All documents referred to in this report can be found on the OCC. The OCC should be a reference point for all supervisors of EEs as it contains information central to their duties, as well as an invaluable EE forum for peer advice whereby IB appointed faculty members are able to offer guidance.

Administrative issues

Too many schools are too often routinely allowing EEs to be submitted for assessment that have breached ethical guidelines or the animal experimentation policy. These breaches are reported to the regional office each session, and regular contravention is monitored. For those breaching ethical guidelines or the animal experimentation policy, there is no impact on the assessment of the essay in questions; however, schools are officially notified of the issue after the session. Contentious EEs that could be considered a breach of a guideline or policy should explicitly address how the policies have been considered and adhered to in the EE itself.

Some EEs are submitted to examiners already marked and annotated by a school supervisor. Please note that the EE is a piece of external assessment, and clean copies must be submitted for marking.

Assessment criteria

A number of candidates seem to overlook key requirements as detailed by the assessment criteria available in the EE guide. Some do not submit an abstract, which would mean a mark of 0 for criterion J, and some surpass the 4000 word limit which automatically means a mark of 0 for criterion I. These are easy points that are lost due to not carefully considering the EE requirements.

Research questions

Research questions must be focussed in a way that allows for a systematic investigation in the subject of registration, and with the 4000 word limit in mind. Broad questions are to be avoided, as are questions that have clear and well known and accepted yes/no responses. Note that embarking on an EE that is not systematic for the subject (for example, an 'historical' event from within the last ten years, a group 1, category 1 EE based on a text not originally written in the language A of submission) are subject to automatic caps for criterion A, D, E and F. Therefore an unfocussed and undiscussed research question can potentially be self-penalising. The full range of marks are available for all other criteria, though criterion K is likely to be awarded lower marks. Supervisors must ensure that the rules surrounding the subject of registration as detailed in the EE guide are taken into consideration.

The impact that the research question has on the assessment is the reason why the IB will not comment on the appropriateness and strength of research questions. The EE forum on the OCC is where advice can be sought.

Supervisor's report

The supervisor's comment is really valuable in outlining strengths of the candidate's research journey that may not be fully evident in the body of work that they have submitted as their EE. The examiner will, where appropriate, take into consideration the supervisor's comment when awarding marks against criterion K. It would therefore be advisable that the supervisors have the wording and requirements of that criterion in mind when they are drafting their supporting comments. As a piece of external assessment, predicted grades should not be noted in the supervisor's comment.

The EE as a discrete task and assessment

Supervisors are urged to ensure that the EE is being treated as the discrete task that it is designed to be. Submitting an EE that is based on an IA task risks poor marks on many EE-specific criteria. These are marks that are needlessly lost.

Of note too is that the EE is an IB construct in terms of its assessment, and it is the assessment criteria that are paramount. It should not be considered as a piece of generic academic research, as its excellence in this regard can only be rewarded in light of satisfying the specific criteria. It must be remembered that the criteria have been created in order to fairly assess a candidate working at pre-university level, through a 4000 word investigation. High performing candidates, while they should not be stymied, are subject to the same caps for the skills they evidence, and excellence is rewarded against each criterion as per its

wording. There are criteria that require component parts to feature, such as criteria B, H, J that are sometimes overlooked, and marks cannot be attributed to those criteria to make up for excellence in analysis/argument/evaluation of the subject being demonstrated elsewhere, for example. The marking of such essays that are perceived as generally excellent pieces of research in their academic fields, are not marked holistically. Essays must cater for the technical demands of the EE as stated in the guide and throughout the criteria. What is outlined as mandatory by the EE guide is paramount.

When supervisors assign predicted grades, they should be with the EE task in mind, and supervisors should be able to fully support the grade in light of the EE requirements and assessment criteria. Teachers and supervisors may wish to consider the approach examiners take, which is to apply the criteria wholly distinctly, aside from where otherwise stated, for their own, internal, grade predicting purposes.

Minimum word count

The nature of the EE task is defined by the criteria and the level of detail required to satisfy them to the varying degrees. The IB does not stipulate a minimum word count for the task. The EE task including its assessment criteria were designed as requiring 4000 words to maximize the potential of addressing the criteria and the higher mark descriptors. While there are some subjects that are an exception, and where word count is detailed within the EE guide, an essay significantly under the word limit would be self-penalizing as it would affect the degree and depth to which the higher order requirements particularly, can be addressed through the criteria.

Returned essays

Many schools raise concerns about comments written on the extended essays, when they are returned as part of an enquiry upon results process. Please note that it is no longer a requirement for examiners to write comments on an EE, because the consistency of commenting cannot be monitored. Questions arise when comments are made that *could* imply that it was the only consideration in the allocation of marks for a given criterion. This is usually not the case. Examiners are informed to comment if they so require for their own purposes. Therefore, where there are comments present on an EE, it is advisable that these should not be the basis for alerting the IB to a discrepancy. Any discrepancies should be based on the criterion descriptor which supports the mark allocated, as that mark and descriptor is the formalized assessment outcome, and not any comments.