

Interpreting the EE assessment criteria

Criterion A: Focus and method

(Strands: Topic, Research question, Methodology)

The research topic is best defined in the form of a sharply focused question stated early in the essay and on the cover page. The purpose of the research investigation must be outlined in the introduction and should clearly fit one of the three required categories for language acquisition EEs. The methodology used, or the approach to the topic chosen, should also be addressed early in the essay. The student's personal experience or personal opinion is rarely relevant here.

For **category 1 (language) and category 2 (culture and society) essays**, the introduction must make clear how the chosen topic is specific or of special interest to the target culture and/or language. Overly broad topics on society, social movements or general media issues should be avoided.

For **category 3 (literature) essays**, the research question is an analysis of a literary type and all texts considered must be originally written in the target language. It is not necessary that the setting or subject matter be directly related to the culture. For example, *Romeo and Juliet* is set in Italy. It is, however, also possible to approach a category 3 essay considering the cultural context of the society for which it is written.

A clear and precisely stated research question, evidence of a well-informed logical treatment of the topic and an appropriate approach or method of study all contribute to constructing a well-planned essay.

If the topic or research question is deemed inappropriate for the subject in which the essay is registered, no more than four marks can be awarded for this criterion. This applies to language B essays that are based on inappropriate texts or artefacts.

Criterion B: Knowledge and understanding

(Strands: Context, Subject-specific terminology and concepts)

Students must consult authentic reference materials, mainly, but not exclusively, written in the target language, depending on the category of essay being undertaken. Students need to demonstrate an ability to use appropriate material from their sources and references in order to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the topic within its cultural context. Students should strive to integrate primary and secondary material to inform the wider context and implications of the question. For all three essay categories, when considering the wider context, historical or biographical background need only be included if directly relevant to the research question. Students should strive to make relevant cultural connections where appropriate.

For **category 1 (language) and category 2 (culture and society) essays**, this knowledge must be based at least partially on primary sources. Primary sources can be chosen from, for example, specific cultural artifacts such as advertisements, song lyrics and legal documents, or from a variety of texts such as poems, graphic novels, and brochures or pamphlets.

For **category 3 literature-based essays**, all primary texts analysed must have originally been written in the target language. While secondary sources may help provide a framework, the quality of the student's understanding of the primary text(s) forms the main focus of the analysis.

The use of language must be appropriate to the topic and category chosen. For example, a category 3 essay should contain reasonable use of expected literary terminology in the analysis of the work(s).

Effective communication in language acquisition EEs includes reasonably correct use of vocabulary, sentence structure and grammar, as well as the selection of a register and style appropriate to the chosen topic. However, the mark awarded for criterion B is not a mark for grammatical accuracy. Whether a style is appropriate or not depends on common practice in the specific target language or culture. For example, it would be reasonable to expect more use of the passive voice in a German B extended essay than in a French B extended essay.

If the topic or research question is deemed inappropriate for the subject in which the essay is registered, no more than four marks can be awarded for this criterion. This applies to language B essays that are based on inappropriate texts or artefacts.

Criterion C: Critical thinking

(Strands: Research, Analysis and Discussion and evaluation)

Students should give their essays depth by developing an argument based on the research that results in relevant, meaningful conclusions that are consistent with the evidence presented. Personal views or assertions should not simply be stated, but need to be supported by evidence and reasoned argument. Critical thinking in this context will show knowledge and use of persuasive analysis and argument to support the interpretation or point of view expressed. Second-hand interpretations or viewpoints that are derived solely from secondary sources, or are purely descriptive or narrative in nature, will not be rewarded.

For **category 1 (language) and category 2 (culture and society) essays**, a mere compilation of facts, a description of events or a list of features will not suffice.

For **category 3 (literature) essays**, students must be aware that straightforward description of a literary text through plot summary or narration of the action does not advance an argument and should generally be avoided (although, where a little-known text is under discussion, a brief description may be appropriate).

Appropriate research should involve interrogating primary and secondary sources in light of the research question, so that the views of others are used to support the student's own argument and do not serve as a substitute for that argument. Students are encouraged to look critically at the secondary sources that they read. For example, it may be helpful for a student to challenge a statement by a critic instead of simply accepting it.

For **category 3 (literature) essays**, the relevant information to support the argument of the essay should mainly come from the primary text, although consulting a range of secondary sources may also be helpful.

If students make use of internet-based sources, they should do so critically and circumspectly in full awareness of their potential unreliability.

If the topic or research question is deemed inappropriate for the subject in which the essay is registered, no more than three marks can be awarded for this criterion. This applies to language B essays that are based on inappropriate texts or artefacts.

Criterion D: Presentation

(Strands: Structure, Layout)

This criterion relates to how closely the EE conforms to accepted academic standards for the way in which research papers should be presented. It also relates to how well these elements support the reading, understanding and evaluation of the essay.

Students may provide a section and subsection structure to their essays with appropriate, informative headings. This will be dependent on the particular stylistic conventions of individual languages and category of essay chosen; thus, students need to be aware of the appropriate format for their chosen subject.

Use of charts, images and tables

Any visuals must be prudently selected and used only if clearly relevant to the topic being discussed.

Students should be careful not to think that images and charts speak for themselves. Any illustrative material used within the body of the essay to help clarify an argument needs accompanying discussion or analysis in order to be effective. If analysing an advertising campaign, for example, the student may find it useful to include the image within the text for easy reader reference and to aid the flow of the essay.

Students must not include illustrative material in the appendices if they are relevant to the analysis, discussion or evaluation of the essay—they must be contained within the body of the essay. There should be no addition of superfluous material as appendices as examiners will not refer to this material.

Any material that is not original must be carefully acknowledged, with specific attention paid to the acknowledgment and referencing of quotes and ideas. This process is applicable to audiovisual material, text, graphs and data published in print and electronic sources. If the referencing does not meet the minimum standard as indicated in the guide (name of author, date of publication, title of source and page numbers as applicable), or is not consistently applied, the work will be considered as a case of possible academic misconduct.

A bibliography is essential and has to be presented in a standard format. Title page, table of contents, page numbers, etc must contribute to the quality of presentation.

The essay must not exceed 4,000 words of narrative. Graphs, figures, calculations, diagrams, formulae and equations are not included in the word count. Students should be aware that examiners will not read beyond the 4,000-word limit, or assess any material presented past this point.

Criterion E: Engagement

(Strands: Process, Research focus)

This criterion assesses the student's engagement with their research focus and the research process. It will be applied by the examiner at the end of the assessment of the essay, and is based solely on the candidate's reflections as detailed on the [RPPF](#), with the supervisory comments and extended essay itself as context.

Students are expected to provide reflections on the decision-making and planning process undertaken in completing the essay. Students must demonstrate how they arrived at a topic as well as the methods and approach used. This criterion assesses the extent to which a student has evidenced the rationale for decisions made throughout the planning process and the skills and understandings developed.

For example, students may reflect on:

- the approach and strategies chosen, and their relative success
- the *Approaches to learning* skills they have acquired and how they have developed as a learner
- how their conceptual understandings have developed or changed as a result of their research
- challenges faced in their research and how they overcame these
- questions that emerged as a result of their research
- what they would do differently if they were to undertake the research again.

Effective reflection highlights the journey the student has engaged in through the EE process. In order to demonstrate that engagement, students must show evidence of critical and reflective thinking that goes beyond simply describing the procedures that have been followed. Reflections must provide the examiner with an insight into **student** thinking, creativity and originality within the research process. The **student** voice must be clearly present and demonstrate the learning that has taken place.