

Interpreting the EE assessment criteria

Criterion A: Focus and method

(Strands: Topic, Research question, Methodology)

The topic and context of the economics extended essay must be clearly established at the beginning of the essay. This should include the theoretical area of economics to which the essay relates with a clear indication as to how the topic fits into this area and why it is worthy of investigation.

If the topic relates to a specific event, issue or policy, it should date from within the last five years. It should not concern a future or hypothetical event.

Students must express their topic in the form of a research question. The question must be specific, sharply focused and capable of being discussed effectively with the help of economic theory and within the word limit.

The question should not be “double-barrelled”, ie made up of more than one question.

The research question should be genuine, requiring research to find an answer. That is, the answer to the research question should not be obvious.

Students must demonstrate that they have selected a suitable range of appropriate and relevant sources. This includes secondary research into the case study itself and relevant economic theory, including current or recent academic analysis in the area.

Students can choose to undertake primary research, such as interviews with relevant people with pertinent knowledge and background, or surveys and questionnaires. Surveys and questionnaires must be carefully planned and only elicit information that is relevant to the research question. The results must be based on an appropriate range of respondents and be statistically significant. Primary research is not a requirement.

In the early part of the essay, there should be an explicit methodology outlining the steps of the research and the nature of the data collection.

Five-year rule

If the topic relates to a specific event, issue or policy, it should date from within the past five years. It should not concern a future or hypothetical event.

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 economics essays that breach the 5-year rule.

Criterion B: Knowledge and understanding

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

The essay must demonstrate an effective understanding of relevant economic theory and the way that this theory and the data gathered may be used to address the research question. All data and theory used in the essay should be clearly relevant and appropriate to the research question.

Students need to demonstrate a sound understanding of economic theory through appropriate and accurate application of relevant models. As much as possible, the application of the models should be based on specific real-world information acquired about the topic.

Knowledge and understanding may be effectively shown through appropriate use of economic terminology. Definitions should not be included as footnotes.

Knowledge and understanding may also be effectively shown through accurately drawn and labelled diagrams along with appropriate explanations. Students should not use generic diagrams from secondary sources. They must place the diagrams into the context of the essay by using relevant labels and numbers.

To illustrate that there is knowledge and understanding **in context**, background theory and terminology should be integrated at all times with the relevant research, and not presented as a separate section. Diagrams should only be included if they are supported by the evidence that makes them relevant.

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 economics essays that breach the 5-year rule.

Criterion C: Critical thinking

(Strands: Research, Analysis and Discussion and evaluation)

“Research” refers to both research into relevant economic theory and information collected about the topic. The research used must be consistently relevant to the research question. The inclusion of material that is not clearly relevant to the research question will detract from the analysis and limit the ability of the student to score well against this criterion.

The student is expected to construct the discussion by weaving together economic theory and real-world evidence to present a well-supported answer to the research question. The points contained in the analysis must at all times be supported by specific, relevant material chosen from the student’s research. A clear and logical argument may be made by regular reference to the research question. Essays that are largely descriptive in nature do not show evidence of analytical skills and will not do well against this criterion.

All data in the form of diagrams, charts, tables, images and graphs must be analysed within the essay, as close as possible to the data itself. No data should be included if it is not being used to answer the research question, and no analysis should be left up to the reader.

When formulating their argument, students must demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the limitations of their own research and the limitations of the economic theory they have used. They should critically assess the extent to which economic theory may or may not explain the realities present in their case study. Such evaluation should not be contained in a separate section of the essay or solely in the conclusion but should be integrated into the text where it can effectively support the analysis.

Conclusions must be stated and be consistent with the evidence and analysis presented in the essay. Students may draw conclusions throughout the essay in response to the arguments presented. There must be a summative conclusion of the student's response to the research question. Questions that have arisen as a result of the research may be included at the end as evidence of critical awareness.

Five-year rule

Failure to follow the five-year rule will limit the grade in this criterion to a maximum of 6.

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 economics essays that breach the 5-year rule.

Criterion D: Presentation

(Strands: Structure, Layout)

This criterion relates to the extent to which the essay conforms to accepted academic standards in relation to how 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. Subheadings should not distract from the overall structure of the essay or argument presented.

Any graphs, charts, images or tables from literature sources included in essays must be carefully selected and labelled. They should only be used if they are directly relevant to the research question, contribute towards the understanding of the argument and are of a good graphic quality.

Large tables of raw data collected by the student are best included in an appendix, where they should be carefully labelled. Too many graphs, charts and tables distract from the overall quality of the communication.

Only processed data that is central to the argument of the essay should be included in the body of the essay, as close as possible to its first reference.

Any tables should enhance a written explanation and should not themselves include significant bodies of text; if this is the case then these words must be included in the word count. Students must take care in their use of appendices as examiners are not required to read them. All information with direct relevance to the analysis, discussion and evaluation of the essay must be contained in the main body of the essay.

Any material that is not original must be carefully acknowledged, with specific attention paid to the acknowledgment and referencing of quotes and ideas. This acknowledgment and referencing 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), and is not consistently applied, 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, formulas and equations are not included in the word count. Students should be aware that examiners will not read beyond the 4,000-word limit, nor assess any material presented thereafter.

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.