

English B extended essay

Grade boundaries

For grade boundary information, please refer to the **Grade boundaries for Diploma programme coordinators** document available on the PRC.

Extended essay

The range and suitability of the work submitted

There was a wide range of essay topics, but not a range of categories. Category 2B (cultural artefact to reflect the Anglophone culture and society) and category 3 (literary analysis) were by far the most popular.

The literary essays were generally appropriate and well written. A problem here was the use of young adult literature, which may lack depth of issues and literary techniques, and also often lacked secondary resources to support the analysis.

Category 2B essays were often unsuitable as there was no clear cultural artefact, or there was no specific link with Anglophone, as opposed to western or international, society and culture.

Student performance against each criterion

Criterion A: focus and method

Focus - The topic and the research question (RQ) are vital as they convey the focus of the essay. In many cases the RQ was inappropriate for an English B essay, in particular for category 2B (as has been the case in all previous examination sessions). Unsuitable topics are penalised by the capping of marks in criteria A, B and C.

Method - A serious concern is the use of unsuitable, non-academic resources for the research. Students often used sources that lacked authority such as study or course notes (e.g. Cliffnotes, Litcharts, Gradesfixer, 123HelpMe, etc.), general knowledge sites (e.g., medium.com, thought.co), encyclopaedias, dictionaries and even wiki sources such as Wikipedia. Some literary topics (category 3) listed only the primary source, the literary work, in the bibliography. There were often many websites such as popular media and news sources, which could be considered appropriate sources in some cases but the goal of the EE is also to prepare for university research where students should be engaging with academic journals and research literature.

All of these situations lower the marks in Criterion A.

Criterion B: knowledge and understanding

Knowledge was often generally clear, though there was a tendency to description. Understanding, however, was not so clearly shown, as many students only conveyed information without applying it to support a coherent argument.

Criterion B requires “the use of specific terminology and concepts . . . demonstrating knowledge and understanding”. This, together with appropriately formal, academic register, is required to achieve a high mark. Many students wrote remarkably informal essays.

Criterion C: critical thinking

Most students scored between 5 and 9 marks here. Few essays were sufficiently planned and focused, lacking coherence in the argument and flow. In a literary essay, for instance, a detailed description of the author's biography and context was irrelevant to the actual argument. Narration and description are the weaknesses here.

Criterion D: presentation

Generally the presentation was accurate and followed a standard format.

Criterion E: engagement

Reflections were often too descriptive, with many references to the supervisor's advice, rather than the student's own decision-making based on experience and reflection. For this reason, many students did not score much more than 2 or 3 marks here.

Recommendations for the supervision of future students

Comments here echo those made year after year for English B EEs. It is disheartening that many centres seem to ignore the subject report, and so their students lack useful advice. Some points worth repeating are here below.

- Selecting a topic

Ensure that the students understand and follow the requirements for the four categories of English B EEs (categories 1, 2A, 2B and 3). It is very disheartening for examiners to have to apply caps to a good essay, simply because the RQ is not appropriate. It is obviously far more disappointing for the student who researched and wrote it.

- Research resources

Encourage students to choose topics that have ample secondary sources available. This ensures a rich foundation for their arguments and provides diverse perspectives that enhance their essays' depth and credibility. Again, the reminder that all resources should be of academic quality, and literary texts must have secondary resources available; if not, do not choose that text to analyse.

- Many students refer in their reflections to choosing a topic in which they have an interest. This is useful, but if that topic is inappropriate for English B or lacks resources for research, the fact that they enjoyed writing it does not raise the ultimate mark received.

Further comments

The EE is a very important part of the IB Diploma. In the launch and progress of the essay in the school, the significance of the EE supervisor, the IB coordinator and the school librarian cannot be overstated. It is vital that they should be familiar with the requirements, in order to guide the students. Too many students include in their reflections the comment that their supervisor approved of their chosen topic, when it is quite clear that that topic is completely inappropriate.