Business and Management EE

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

The range and suitability varied considerably both between centres and within centres. Some candidates produced very topical, interesting, well researched academic pieces. Those highly graded essays demonstrated the use of varied sources and the use of critical thinking /evaluative skills combined with well substantiated conclusions

It was very disappointing to see that quite a significant number of candidates in many centres, despite similar comments before, did not follow the specific requirements of Business and Management. Based on the supervisor's comments, it was apparent that some teachers/ supervisors have not fully grasped the requirements and expectations of the EE as a thorough academic piece of research. The most noticeable issue observed by many examiners was the fact that students in some centres still based their research mainly or largely on primary sources. The guide states that 'students should use as the basis of their extended essay secondary data supported where appropriate by primary research'.

It appears that still too many candidates produce expanded Internal Assessment pieces both in context, rigour, research methods and presentation. This is self-penalising on the part of candidates, as the EE and IA are discrete assessment pieces, each with their own requirements. Writing one of them to the other's specification will limit how well a candidate will be able to do from the outset.

Other general issues:

Several essays were far too broad to deal with systematically in the 4000 words allocated to the task. EEs with broad research questions tend to cover a lot of content but in a superficial manner.

Several essays used Business models regardless of the appropriateness of these models. There should be consideration in the use of models to justify what it is that is being explored.

In some centres the research questions were very similar, and similar models were used and applied in a very similar way even where the appropriateness of such models was questionable. Such prescription on the part of a supervisor prevents candidates from embarking on a creative process, where their personal insight, flair and passion is witnessed throughout.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: research question

A good number of candidates had chosen a research question which was relevant, topical, sharply focused and therefore systematic as a topic that could be effectively treated within the word limit. Generally, the stronger research questions were forward looking ones that researched in a balanced manner relevant various topical issues. A significant number of research questions however were too broad and lacked focus, making them difficult to treat effectively in 4000 words. Some titles were backward looking and descriptive. In such EEs, candidates simply described what organisation X has done to become successful

Many candidates chose questions that took the following format "To what extent…..has x impacted x?". This was often done before ensuring that the extent of a factor under investigation can actually be isolated and measured for a substantiated answer/conclusion.

Research questions that involve the measure of effectiveness/success must be qualified with how effectiveness will be measured and evaluated. Otherwise, the question is far too broad.

The most significant issue that needs immediate attention on behalf of supervisors and candidates alike is the choice of one's topic/research question. Too many examples are more suitable as a piece of Internal Assessment rather than a 4000 word piece of academic research, which is what the EE is.

Criterion B: introduction

A good number of candidates were successful in demonstrating the context of the research question in the introduction. Moreover, these candidates clearly explained the significance of the topic and why it was worthy of investigation. Those candidates achieved the top mark for this criterion. Some candidates however still refer to their personal interest as opposed to academic worthiness. There were a few candidates who made no attempt to explain the worthiness/importance of the topic whatsoever. The EE guide details exactly what needs to be included in the introduction in order to achieve the marks available for this criterion. Some candidates produced an introduction that was drafted with the IA requirements in mind, and detailed sources and anticipated difficulties.

Criterion C: investigation

As in previous sessions, the excellent and good essays had consulted a good range of appropriate sources and collected sufficient data. In most cases, the candidates did not challenge validity/reliability of the information. An IA like approach taken by a significant number of candidates, based on an inappropriate focus from the outset resulted in somewhat

lower grades.   Primary researches were credited only if they actually added value to the secondary research. On most occasions the primary research did not add value, and sometimes it even reduced the quality of the research. Some students used web-based sources in isolation, some of which must be used cautiously. While such sources can be appropriate, they should be used in conjunction with academic sources available widely to candidates.

Criterion D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

As stated in the guide, this criterion requires students to show detailed knowledge and understanding of the topic being research and it academic context. In some EEs, the research was not precisely located in the academic context and often the theoretical framework was missed. Opportunities to show depth of understanding were often lacking. Some candidates, albeit not as many as we would have liked to have seen, were able to incorporate some relevant subject models, supported by a sound theoretical coverage in a highly appropriate manner. Those students were able to achieve the higher marks and grades. However, explicit use and explanation of the relevant academic context was often still lacking. Some candidates only provided brief explanations or mere definitions of the nature of a model like PEST or SWOT, which is just textbook summation.

Criterion E: reasoned argument

This criterion is about arguments presented in a logical and coherent manner, ideally expressing both sides of any relevant argument within a secured theoretical knowledgebase.

The candidates who reached the higher bands were the ones who made a very clear and logical link between the research question, the data collected and arguments presented and the conclusions. Many succeeded at doing this. Those candidates who were not able to access the top bands were the ones who were narrative and descriptive in their approach, which was usually linked to an unfocussed research question.

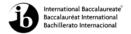## Criterion F: application of analytical and evaluative skills

Those candidates who presented conflicting arguments and used critical thinking combined with an appropriate use of theories/concepts as well as relevant data were the ones who were able to reach the top bands. Some candidates did so with a high level of competency.

Criterion G: use of language appropriate to the subject:

Quite a few essays used terminology specific to Business and Management which helped sustain the impression of strong academic research. Weaker essays had limited use of specialist terminology which at times lacked precision and accuracy.

Criterion H: conclusion

Many candidates produced relevant, substantiated conclusions that were consistent with the evidence presented. Some candidates produced conclusions that were not entirely consistent with the evidence presented, or were unsubstantiated due to lack of critical thinking. However, few students produced conclusions at the beginning of their research and the rest of their

essay was largely an attempt to support it with varying degrees of success. Some examiners reported of few cases where the conclusion was not presented, and some candidates provided new information in their conclusions.

Criterion I: formal presentation

Main analysis/evaluation/use of models should be presented in the body of the EE. Candidates should not assume that the appendices are to be read. Therefore, all relevant information/data/uses of tools/techniques should be presented in the body if the candidate wants it to be assessed. Some candidates refer to theoretical coverage printed in the appendices as if it is the role and obligation of the examiner to read the theories. It is not. Some candidates, notably from certain centres, produced their research in a report format. The EE should be treated as an academic piece of research based on a journal entry. Candidates should attempt to show evidence of the use of sources in the body of the EE, and not just produce a long list of internet sources and text books with minimal evidence of their use and application in an integrated manner.

Criterion J: abstract

Many candidates were awarded the top marks for their abstracts. Good essays had presented a good overview of the research in the abstract and had stated all three elements required. Those candidates who were not able to achieve the top of the mark band were the ones who omitted some of the required elements such as scope, for example. Only very few students exceeded the 300 words.

Criterion K: holistic judgement

A lot of essays showed some degree of the involvement, intellectual initiative, depth of understanding and insight of the candidates, but perhaps not sufficient enough to merit the top marks. Many of the essays were judged as routine due to lack of intellectual initiative due to the following:

a) Uncritical use of resources and sources

b) The presentation of one sided arguments often acting as a PR for the organisations

c) Over reliance on the organisations on documents/PR

d) Followed a very prescribed format and/or used and apply the same subject models in the same manner as their peers in the same centres

e) Were supervised for more than the required hours (the length of supervision varied considerably, up to 10 hours were declared by some supervisors)

f) Used no more than the text book to define/explain some models

Candidates however were assessed holistically and were not doubly penalised. The supervisor report should bear in mind the wording of criterion K when drafting their comment,

so that it has the best opportunity to assist the examiner in assessing what may not be concretely demonstrated in the EE itself by the candidate.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

Supervisors should familiarize themselves with the specific requirements of the subject on top of the generic criteria.

Supervisors need to ensure that the essay titles are sharply focused and therefore within the scope of 4000 word limit. Overly ambitious RQs normally end up as superficial and non-rigorous analysis/evaluation.

Supervisors must advise candidates on the nature of evaluation, that is to say that it is more than just summarising previous arguments/comments. Stick to the recommended hours of supervision.

It is not advisable for candidates who do not take the subject to carry out research in Business and Management. While there are some exceptions, candidates who were not really familiar with the subject models and terminology, were not awarded high marks.

Supervisors should not annotate the essay. The IB requires a clean copy to be submitted. Annotations distract the examiners and are not permitted as with other pieces of external assessment.

Supervisors should not put their perceived grade for the EE as part of the supervisor's report.

Supervisors should attempt to distinguish the EE from the IA. Not doing so significantly reduces the highest marks that a candidate can achieve for their EE.

The reasons that many candidates still were not able to reach the top bands were:

1. The relative value and importance of arguments presented were lacking. Many essays were largely one sided.

2. Lack of evaluative skills and the use of critical thinking throughout the essay.

3. A lack of empirical and well-grounded theoretical support.

Despite comments in two previous reports, it appears that many candidates still:

a) Use the PEST/ SWOT models uncritically and inappropriately. These models are strategic planning tools and are more suitable for a forward looking research question rather that those referring to the past.

b) Provide findings which were presented with the use of PEST/ SWOT models that often were extremely superficial/unsubstantiated.

c) Demonstrate confusion between internal and external factors.

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d) Do not incorporate the finding in the PEST model into opportunities and threats.