

BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

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 both between centres and within centres. Some candidates produced excellent, very interesting, well researched pieces in terms of sources and the use of critical thinking/evaluative skills, combined with well substantiated conclusions and recommendations.

The difference in performance between the first language to non-first language English speakers was apparent. While such a range is somewhat expected, there were some noticeable reasons for candidates not performing perhaps as well as they should/could.

The most noticeable issue was the fact that candidates in some centres based their research on primary sources only or mainly. The focus has been changed to 'Candidates should use as the basis of their extended essay secondary data supported, where appropriate by primary research'. The new focus was agreed by senior examiners in order to distinguish the EE from the IA.

Hence, the expectation now is that the candidates produce a more academic research with the main focus on secondary data.

It was disappointing to see that in some centres the new emphasis was not followed despite a clear interest and knowledge of the candidates. Basing the essay on a primary research only affected candidates' performance to various extents in different criteria – C, D, and K.

Please note that under the new focus, it is expected that the candidates use a variety of secondary sources and do not use solely or mainly text books/theoretical internet sites as their secondary sources. Some examples of possible sources are given in the new guide

Several essays were backward looking and resulted in a very descriptive research.

In some centres, the research questions were very similar and identical models were used and applied in a very similar way even. This could also prevent candidates from displaying a more personal insight with individual flair.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A: research question

A good number of candidates had chosen a research question which was sharply focused, making effective treatment possible within the word limit. Some research questions were too broad and lacked focus, making them difficult to be treated effectively.

Some titles were very backward looking and descriptive. The candidates simply described what organisation X has done and/or glorified a decision taken by the management.

The better research questions were forward looking and/or backward looking ones that enabled analysis and evaluation.

Very few titles were entirely inappropriate and resulted in generalised descriptions of an event only loosely related to business and management.

B: introduction

A good number of the candidates were successful in demonstrating the context of the research question. Moreover, these candidates in the introductions clearly explained the significance of the topic and why it was worthy of investigation. Many candidates achieved the top mark for this criterion.

Still, a noticeable number of candidates did not substantiate the need for their research.

Some used personal interest. Perhaps the significance of the research for the organisation should have been the focus.

C: investigation

The excellent/good essays had consulted a good range of appropriate sources and collected sufficient data. Many candidates also did not search for or used conflicting data/ evidence.

As mentioned above the inappropriate focus used by many candidates resulted in less than highly desirable performance here. Primary researches were credited if they actually added value to the secondary research. Consequently, many candidates were not able to reach the top bands as 'a limited range of appropriate sources have been consulted'.

D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

As stated in the guide 'this criterion requires candidates to show detailed knowledge and understanding of the topic being research and its academic context'

Explicit use and explanation of the academic context was often lacking or referred to some definition of the nature of a model like PEST or SWOT given in any text book used by candidates.

Some candidates copied the description/ explanation of theories from a text book in a separate chapter but failed to apply it to their organisation/ their research question. Those candidates who were awarded the top grades were the ones who embedded the relevant theories and concepts throughout.

To achieve 3 or 4 marks, the candidates need 'To demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding, it is likely that the candidates will have to use a range of sources'

E: reasoned argument

This criterion is about arguments and how the candidates express both sides of any relevant arguments. 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 did so. Those candidates who were not able to access the top bands were the ones who were narrative and descriptive.

F: application of analytical and evaluative skills appropriate to the subject

Those who were able to apply analytical and evaluative tools as well as using conflicting arguments were the ones who were awarded high marks for this criterion. More often, the application of models like SWOT, positioning map were un-sourced and therefore unsubstantiated. Critical thinking was lacking in many essays.

It appears that candidates still put the analysis like SWOT/ PEST in the appendices and not in the body. Consequently, marks were lost. Main analysis/findings should be in the body.

G: use of language appropriate to the subject

Most candidates used business and management language appropriately.

H: conclusion

Many candidates produced relevant, substantiated conclusions that were consistent with the evidence presented.

A notable number of candidates produced conclusions that were not entirely consistent with the evidence or unsubstantiated due to lack of critical thinking.

Some candidates provided new information in their conclusions. Consequently, these candidates were not able to reach the top band.

Please note:

For some research questions recommendations are not essential and candidates were not penalised for not providing recommendations.

I: formal presentation

Most of the *candidates* produced essays that merited some marks. Few candidates' presentations were excellent. These essays conformed to the required academic standards.

It was also pleasing to see that most candidates adhered to the word limit.

Candidates should realise that putting interview transcripts and company's data/ documents in Spanish in the appendices (while the official entry language is English) may serve no purpose.

Confusion between 'references' and 'bibliography' still exists. Dates of access of various web sites were all too often omitted. Lack of references throughout the research was also apparent among many candidates.

Some candidates did not source the information in their appendices.

Few candidates, notably from certain centres, produced their research in a report format and /or a document for the management. Unlike the IA, the EE should be treated as academic research.

Some candidates 'boxed' a large text- conclusions and recommendation - in an attempt to reduce the word count. This practice was unacceptable.

J: abstract

Still, a disappointing number of candidates were not able to reach the top of the band. Those candidates were the ones that omit one of the required elements, often the scope/ how the investigation was undertaken. Only one or two *candidates* exceeded the 300 words.

K: holistic judgment

A lot of essays showed the involvement, intellectual initiative, depth of understanding and insight of the candidates to merit marks from the top bands. Perhaps 'considerable evidence of such quality' was missing in most essays. Some of the supervisors enforce such quality in their comments.

It was interesting to note that many supervisors did not comment on the viva voce. While the process is not being assessed, it can still be very useful.

Some supervisors did not put any comments. This practice is not encouraged by the examiners.

candidates who:

- Used primary sources/ research only
- 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
- Were supervised for more than the required hours
- Used no more than the text book to define/ explain some models

were judged to demonstrate 'some' or 'little' evidence of intellectual initiative, depth of understanding and insight.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

- Conduct and comment on the viva voce.
- Ensure that the essay titles are sharply focused and therefore within the scope of the 4000 word limit.
- Advise candidates regarding what is meant by good evaluation i.e. more than just summarising previous arguments/comments or making a brief recommendation
- Candidates must not put their main analysis in the appendices. Appendices do not have to be read by the examiner.