

HISTORY

Overall grade boundaries

Grade:	E	D	C	B	A
Mark range:	0 - 7	8 - 15	16 - 22	23 - 28	29 - 36

General comments

In spite of the very large numbers of candidates choosing to write their extended essays in history the session went well, with candidates and supervisors, as well as examiners, adapting successfully to the new programme and criteria. A few centres used old EE coversheets. It was very impressive to see the number of supervisors who wrote comments, but some examiners reported that supervisors wrote little or nothing in their report.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The choice of topics varied, as it always does, but by far the majority were worthy of research and study, and were genuine history. However it was disappointing to see the continuation of three different research questions or titles; one on the front cover, a different one in the abstract, and a third version in the introduction.

Very few essays submitted exceeded 4,000 words, but there were too many that were very short, more like the length of a class essay. Some of these short essays were, it appeared, regarded too highly by their supervisors. Others it was obvious had been written reluctantly, and in a very short time, using internet sources, all of which were accessed on the same day. But it must be stressed; these were the exception, as the vast majority did represent hard work and effort, both in research and writing.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A: research question

As noted above, there are still problems with research questions — or lack of them. Supervisors should note that it is now a requirement that the research question is clearly stated in the introduction.

B: introduction

Surprisingly, there were problems here which prevented the award of the 2 available marks: it was often difficult to see where the introduction ended, unless the heading was used, and another heading or at least a space followed.

Context and significance were not always clear in introductions that tended to be a narrative of background. It is important for candidates to show why the topic is worthy of investigation.

C: investigation

Most candidates, even weaker ones, were able to show evidence of planning, and the collection of some relevant data. The use of 'a sufficient or imaginative range of sources' was more problematical. Allowance must be made for the difficulty of obtaining sources, especially in this era of credit problems, and the internet is very useful for primary documentary sources, but essays based entirely on unevaluated general internet sources, for example Wikipedia, did not score well here. Relevant material was not always effectively selected but instead placed in long appendices.

On the other hand there were excellent essays, based on recently published academic sources, including articles.

D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Most candidates were able to score reasonably well here, because they did know something about the subject that they were writing about. However many essays were lacking in evidence and relevant references. Depth of knowledge and understanding, usually apparent in and accompanied by analysis, scored well.

E: reasoned argument

This criterion is connected to the research question. It is much easier to construct an argument when a sharply focused question is being answered. Top candidates were able to discuss their research question with coherence and logic. Strong candidates developed and expanded their argument while weaker ones used generalizations or wrote narrative accounts of events. Too many essays, especially those based on a thesis, encourage narrative or descriptive answers and make an analytical argument difficult.

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

Most essays showed some indication of analytical skills but the weaker essays often separated out narrative and evaluation including the evaluation of sources used in a separate section (as in the internal assessment).

G: use of language appropriate to the subject

As there is no technical language in history, notice must be taken of suitable vocabulary, for instance not using "create" in all its different interpretations, such as "instituted", "founded" etc. and not writing unsupported generalisations, especially exaggerated ones, with "all", "everybody", "dramatically", to mention a few. Also examiners do take care not to penalise non first language writers. However, this criterion is not as easy to excel in as it might seem.

H: conclusion

In contrast to the introduction most candidates did score 2 marks here. However there were three weaknesses: the introduction of new material; the use of the conclusion to analyse the whole essay; and writing a conclusion to the topic rather than the essay. But most candidates correctly concluded their essay in a manner consistent with the evidence used.

I: formal presentation

Essays without references, or bibliography, or those that exceeded 4,000 words scored 0 here. Minor infringements lost 1 mark for each. Most candidates scored 2 or 3 marks.

J: abstract

Abstracts continue to cause problems; too many candidates précis the topic/subject area rather than addressing the three required elements, the research question, the scope of the essay (that is main areas researched—and sub headings in the table of contents do help), and the conclusion.

K: holistic judgment

Many supervisors and students find this criterion difficult. Probably the average mark for it is, and should be 2. Main stream topics with insight and depth of understanding are not excluded from scoring 4 marks, because the topic is well known.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

- Obviously teachers, candidates and examiners must study the new *Extended essay guide* well, and note the slight variations from the past.
- More advice and help is needed about producing a sharply focused question.
- Group sessions on referencing and bibliographies, as well as research techniques, and finding sources are useful.
- Only one draft should be thoroughly examined and criticised, but oral advice can be given at any time, as long as the supervisor is not over-supervising the candidate.
- The supervisor's report provides an opportunity to explain the background to the candidate's work (for instance commenting on the process and quality of the research). Reference to the viva voce (if one has been held) is also most helpful
- School internal deadlines should be published and obeyed.