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ITGS

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

Candidates addressed a wide range of research questions involving topics appropriate to ITGS: the impacts related to social networking, computer games, and the use of computers in particular situations (i.e. schools, businesses). Research questions addressing the ethics of downloading entertainment material were also popular. Other areas chosen by candidates included internet regulation, robotics, cyber-terrorism and telemedicine. Only a few candidates selected topics that were inappropriately focused on an IT technology or were not ITGS-related.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A: research question

The importance of the research question must be emphasized. The research question is one of the main factors that determines the success of an ITGS extended essay.

Most research questions were stated reasonably well and received 1 mark. Very few received full marks. A 'yes/no' question is not a suitable research question. The fact that many candidates wrote reports on topics rather than developed arguments may result from the research question being imprecise and poorly formulated.

Examples of sharply focused research questions include:

- What are the effects of teleworking on the productivity of employees in the XXX Bank in XXX? (XXX represents a specific name or location.)
- How does online gaming in PC-bangs affect South Korean teenagers aged 13 to 19?
- How has the increased use of Face book affected the lives of students in XXX High School?
- To what extent does MySpace music help an independent artist in XXX to gain popularity and increase sales?

B: introduction

The quality of the introduction was variable. Many candidates wrote vague introductions that only partially explained the significance of the topic or failed to set the research question in an ITGS context. Many seemed to be unclear about the requirements here. The introduction

should state clearly the research question, the significance of the topic and the direction of the research. The significance of topic and why it is worthy of investigation should be supported by evidence.

C: investigation

Many extended essays had an adequate number of entries in the bibliography, but did not use all of the sources listed to develop their argument. Candidates did not always use a standard approach in citing references in the body of the extended essay or in listing entries in the bibliography.

Candidates do not seem to know how to use accepted processes for primary research (i.e. investigations, interviews and surveys). A major omission was that candidates rarely described their investigation or explained how it was carried out in the body of the extended essay and abstract. Too often secondary research and primary research were inadequate, too superficial or not clearly focussed on the topic. In some instances, candidates seemed to have carried out extensive primary research with evidence in the appendix, but did not present their findings in the essay.

D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Many candidates scored modestly here. In many cases, candidates demonstrated knowledge of social and ethical considerations, but the use of IT terminology and knowledge of IT concepts rose only slightly above the level of general knowledge. Some candidates instead of explaining the actual background to their research question, mistakenly presented a history of the topic which is completely off course. For example, candidates often presented the history of the Internet, instead of the explaining the actual IT background of the specific Internet issue.

E: reasoned argument

Marks for this criterion tended to be low. Developing a well-planned reasoned argument is a difficult skill and very few candidates are able to show a logical development throughout their essays. Arguments were often lacking in coherence or relevance to the research question. Insufficient research, the lack of substantiation and reference to resources were common problems. In some cases dated or unreliable secondary resources were used.

Primary research should be conducted after secondary research is completed. Some candidates failed to use the results from their primary research even though the results were recorded in the appendix. Instances referring to specific IT tools should be accompanied by screenshots.

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

Marks for this criterion tended to be low. Far too often secondary sources and primary research were taken at face value with little or no attempt to evaluate or analyse findings.

Quotations only provide a basis for an argument and should be used sparingly. It is the analysis and evaluation that follows that contributes to the argument.

Analysis and evaluation can emerge from the comparison of sources, the comparison between secondary research and primary research (i.e. investigations, interviews, and surveys). However, it must be emphasized that in order for analysis and evaluation to take place, the proper methods must be used to collect primary data.

G: use of language appropriate to the subject

Only a minority of candidates scored highly here. ITGS terminology and concepts (i.e. IT and social and ethical considerations) were often addressed at the level associated with general knowledge. The ITGS framework was most commonly missing with some candidates failing to address all parts of the ITGS triangle. It seems that with the change in the extended essay criteria, some candidates falsely focused only on IT aspects of the research question and did not address the entire ITGS triangle.

H: conclusion

Overall, this section was somewhat disappointing. Most candidates fail to appreciate the difference between simply making concluding remarks to an essay and presenting the conclusion of a well-reasoned argument or investigation relating to a specific research question. The research question should be answered. Some candidates erroneously introduced entirely new material unrelated to previous analysis or arguments.

I: formal presentation

Bibliographies often lacked essential attributes, such as authors' names and publication or access dates. Candidates who had devised their own experiments or surveys generally included appropriate data and a summary of results in the appendix. Interviews were correctly cited in the bibliography, but the description of how the interview was conducted was missing in the body of the extended essay. Full transcripts were often missing in the appendix.

References were variable, with a number of candidates failing to provide clear references in the text. In many instances, there was not a one-to-one correspondence between the entries in the bibliography and the sources cited in the essay. The components of the extended essay (i.e. abstract, table of contents, bibliography and appendix) should appear in the correct order.

The source of visual evidence (i.e. screenshots, graphs and charts) needs to be clearly indicated. Visual evidence needs to be explained in the paragraphs before or after the images. In some cases, the visual evidence was illegible.

One would expect ITGS students to use good layout skills within an ITGS paper. All visual evidence within the paper should be legible, be properly cited and explained within the text. Appropriate graphs and charts are used to represent findings. Table of contents and bibliography should be correctly formatted.

J: abstract

Many candidates failed to score here. The main reason was that candidates did not include all four parts: the research question, how the investigation was carried out, and the findings of the research and the conclusion. The abstract should contain only information that is contained in the extended essay. Many candidates attempt to include new information in the abstract that did not appear in the extended essay.

K: holistic judgment

There were a few high marks with candidates demonstrating high levels of initiative or insight. Some candidates seemed to follow a "recipe" for developing the extended essay. Some candidates made little attempt to formulate a well-stated research question with an original perspective and even fewer candidates were able to address those issues in a thorough and creative way supported by both secondary and primary research.

Some supervisors did not provide any comments or evidence on the extended essay cover. These are taken in consideration when assessing criterion K.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

It seems, from the organization of many essays, that candidates produced work that aimed to meet the previous criteria for extended essays. Hence, omissions in meeting the various assessment criteria led to marks being lower than they would have been if the candidates focused clearly on the current criteria.

There were instances where candidates discovered too late that they could not carry out their planned primary research. Supervisors need to investigate in advance with the candidate, in cases where candidates need to obtain research data from external organisations, that they will have access to the relevant personnel.

Specific recommendations:

- The new criteria need to be clearly explained and made available to the candidates before they embark on the development of their essays.
- Supervisors need to take more time guiding the candidates, particularly in advising them on formulating a sharply focused research question appropriate to ITGS.
- Supervisors need to meet with the candidates at various stages of research and development to provide guidance on secondary research processes, citing sources and the bibliography, and conducting primary research. Secondary research needs to be completed before undertaking primary research.
- Supervisors need to read a draft of the extended essay and provide feedback to the candidate on aspects of the ITGS essay that do not meet the assessment criteria or do not follow accepted practices for secondary and primary research or violate academic honesty.
- Only original copies, no photocopies, of extended essays should be submitted.
- Supervisors should refer to the special threads and the discussion forum on the OCC to access information and post questions regarding the ITGS extended essay.
- Whenever possible, teachers should attend ITGS workshops where the processes required for the ITGS extended essay and examples are discussed.