

## World Religions Extended Essay

### Overall grade boundaries

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

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

The basic pattern from last year continued. There was a wide range of work, from the outstanding to very poor. Strong essays were presented on a variety of subjects (essentially all world religions as well as comparative topics) and using a variety of methods (textual analysis, in-depth interview research). The critical factors determining the success of candidates seems to be the formulation of an appropriate research question and the level of supervision received.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

#### Criterion A: research question

Research Question: Narrowly confessional questions are not as common as in the past. Many, however, are still too broad.

#### Criterion B: introduction

Candidates continue to experience the most difficulty in situating their questions in the context of the field of World Religions, largely because very few have formal study in this area.

#### Criterion C: investigation

This continues to be an area of wide variation. Some essays are well researched; others rely exclusively on encyclopaedias, textbooks, and comparable sources or one or two scholarly sources. Access to research libraries is undoubtedly an issue for many.

### Criterion D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Candidates generally showed at least a basic knowledge of the subject they investigated. The difficulty is that in some cases the topic was so broad that they were merely summarizing encyclopaedia or textbook material. Many essays show sophisticated factual knowledge even where analysis and interpretation is limited.

### Criterion E: reasoned argument

This criterion and the next one continue to be the biggest differentiators among essays. While most candidates make some effort at an argument few produce one that takes into account the current state of the question or that addresses relevant counterarguments.

### Criterion F: application of analytical and evaluative skills

Besides difficulty setting questions in their scholarly context this continues to be the area of greatest weakness in the Extended Essays. Candidates have difficulty applying (and to a lesser extent understanding) the methods of analysis, interpretation, and evaluation associated with the interdisciplinary field of World Religions. Essays engaging sacred scriptures are, for example, generally completely unfamiliar with historical critical method, which is the norm for scholarly study of such texts but which is rarely taught even at the undergraduate level.

### Criterion G: use of language appropriate to the subject:

A small but significant number of essays showed significant writing difficulties. Mastery of subject specific terminology generally depends on the level of supervision and formation in the field.

### Criterion H: conclusion

There were more questions this year which lacked a genuine conclusion. This was sometimes even the case where the question was good and there was significant analysis, argument, and knowledge.

### Criterion I: formal presentation

Formal presentation is generally adequate to good, though a few essays had only a minimal scholarly apparatus. Fewer overdid illustrations, appendices, etc. More than a few listed sources they clearly did not consult.

### Criterion J: abstract

Abstracts were most often missing a discussion of method. Many do not understand the difference between an abstract and an introduction.

### Criterion K: holistic judgement

Many essays brought authentic insight and showed real engagement with the subject matter even when weak on one or more of the formal criteria.

### Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

The basic recommendations remain the same. Candidates should be advised to seek an adviser with scholarly training in religious studies or a related field and to gain access to a good library. Formal training in what constitutes a research question, the state of the question in a discipline, method, argument, etc. would also benefit many candidates. It is strongly recommended that students working with sacred texts be given preparation in historical critical method or directed to other topics. Students often assume that the sacred texts of a religious tradition is the best source for understanding it, and then approach the text naively, leading to a large percentage of the weakest essays.

Additionally, attention should be given to making sure that all essays have a clear conclusion.