

May 2018 extended essay reports

Design Technology

Overall grade boundaries

Grade:	E	D	C	B	A
Mark range:	0-6	7-13	14-20	21-26	27-34

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The range covered all grades A to E. Unfortunately, some schools take a very liberal interpretation of technology and push essays without genuine or suitable RQs into DT. These tend to be from schools who do not have a DT class and the essays are narrative or descriptive without genuine investigation. Many essays seemed to be 'shoe-horned' into the subject because they are not clearly best-placed anywhere else in the EE offerings. Topics were submitted that were clearly more about Information Technology or Computer Science, philosophy. Incorrect advice and guidance from supervisors in schools seemed to be sometimes the root of the issue.

Other examples of poor choice were essays involving construction kits which were no more than a pictorial/written record of a lengthy classroom experiment with predictable results or a construction of a functioning model often related to the student's own hobby. In most cases the problem lies with poor choice of Research Question.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: focus and method

The RQ in many cases was too broad and the justification and explanation of the topic unclear. This was the most common fault amongst essays. Poor methodologies or lack of explanation was often seen. The marks for this criterion in most cases were brought down because of limited methodology.

Criterion B: knowledge and understanding

Too many narrative essays lacked justification or reference to reputable sources.

Criterion C: critical thinking

Research when extensive and using first-hand testing, scored well. Analysis likewise with real testing scored well. Narrative or entirely descriptive essays unfortunately were not uncommon and lacked depth and valid triangulation with sources.

Criterion D: presentation

Mainly satisfactory/good only a few essays were problematic with regards to this criterion.

Criterion E: engagement

Many students really provided insightful comments and this is an excellent addition. Even mediocre essays provided the opportunity to learn from the experience and a few students were very frank in their reflections about how they had developed as learners during the process.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

The ideal situation is for a close working relationship between the student and a knowledgeable supervisor. The three mandated meetings help this. Spending more time on arriving at a valid RQ is very important and teaching researching skills is valuable, moving students away from simple narrative essays with only limited research. Supervisors should encourage students to narrow-down their topics and to focus as the most common problem is to research broadly without depth.