

May 2012 extended essay reports

CHINESE A1

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

In general, candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the demands of the extended essay and followed the regulations regarding the treatment of their respective topics. The common strengths of these studies were the candidates' understanding of the topic and their presentation of their arguments in the manner required of a piece of academic writing. Nevertheless, some essays displayed weaknesses in certain areas which prevented them from accessing higher marks. The choice of research question in particular proved crucial in determining the final result of their research.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: research question

The majority of the candidates selected a suitable topic both in terms of the nature and the scope, which could be treated effectively within the designated word limit. Some candidates, however, failed to achieve a good mark on this criterion as they either could not formulate the question clearly and specifically in the early part of the essay, or because they chose a topic which was not of a literary nature.

The most appropriate and successful topics were related to a literary aspect of the work concerned and its cultural and aesthetic significance. In general, successful essays showed the personal interest of the candidate and his or her intellectual initiative. However, quite a number of candidates this session failed to select a topic which was sharply focused and within their academic capability. Their chosen topic was either vaguely defined or too intellectually demanding for them to handle, and the essays turned out to be rather shallow or a general account of the issue under discussion. Personal engagement and creativity was missing in these essays.

Criterion B: introduction

The extent to which the candidate was able to establish the context for their study and to set the academic goal of the research is the key here. Many candidates displayed their awareness of such a demand and responded rather well. However, in some cases, candidates either totally ignored this element or failed to complete it convincingly.

Criterion C: investigation

Candidates tended to collect relevant and sufficient sources and demonstrate proper planning for their research. However, most of them failed to draw on an imaginative range of resources and use secondary sources to support their own arguments. Consequently, their analysis was dependent on the primary texts solely and did not concern other related sources, or, if so, not critically. They were, as usual, reluctant to show their personal opinion on, or to challenge, published criticism.

Criterion D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Most candidates achieved a similar level in this criterion, as they demonstrated a good knowledge of the literary text(s) and the reference was detailed and thorough. However, how to locate their study within the proper "academic context" still appeared to be beyond their capability. For those who chose to examine a rather broad or general issue, or even several issues, their performance tended to be judged as adequate at most. In these cases, investigation was far from systematic and sharply focused.

Criterion E: reasoned argument

The success of candidates in this area depended upon their capability to build a strong central argument and display their material in a clear and progressive structure. While candidates usually managed to present the different sides of the issue in parallel, they often failed to organize their argument in a well-developed and coherent structure.

Criterion F: application of analytical and evaluative skills

In many essays, the candidates treated their material with care and related this to the topic closely. They were also able to pay attention to detail to support their arguments. Some of them, however, either failed to dig out the underlying meaning of the issue under investigation, or relied heavily on the descriptive approach to it.

Criterion G: use of language

As always, the candidates generally demonstrated good skills in communication and chose an appropriate register for literary discussion. Due to their careful editing and proofreading, typos and other errors were hardly present in their essays and as a result, their overall arguments were rendered fluent. A small number of essays demonstrated difficulties in using the language correctly and fluently in a consistent manner.

Criterion H: conclusion

As in the past, most of the candidates were conscious of linking their conclusion to their previous discussion, and some of them were even able to present some new issues that would be worth investigating in the future. Some weaker candidates, however, failed to provide a meaningful summary based on the examination, or repeated points that had already been made in the introduction. A few of them even included new matters which were not related to the research at all.

Criterion I: formal presentation

In general, candidates achieved a relatively good mark, as they met the official requirements regarding the word limit, provision of references and a bibliography, and other elements in a consistent fashion, and followed the convention of academic writing. In some cases candidates did poorly under this criterion as they either exceeded the word limit, or failed to acknowledge the origin of the resource.

Criterion J: abstract

Many candidates lost one or two points on this criterion as they failed to include the required three elements, especially that of the conclusion.

Criterion K: holistic judgment

Candidates tended to do well on this criterion based on the evidence of intellectual initiative, depth of understanding and insight displayed in the essays. This was weaker in essays where the choice of research question did not give candidates enough room to display these features.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

- Schools should make sure that candidates understand well the aims and objectives of this exercise and pay close attention to the requirements of the extended essay.
- Supervisors should give candidates advice on how to select an appropriate subject and topic, and how to formulate a manageable research question. Such a selection should present an opportunity for students to engage in an in-depth study of the topic, reflect their personal interest and allow them to display their personal insight into it.
- Supervisors need to remind candidates of presenting their ideas in logical way. During the examination, they need to analyse, synthesize and evaluate the information gathered in relation to the question and display the qualities of critical thinking and personal engagement.
- Supervisors should encourage candidates to follow the requirements closely in terms of word limit and other matters concerning formal presentation.