

## CHINESE A1

### 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

Overall, candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the task and a great deal of care in treating their respective topics. As a result, the majority of them carried out a sharply focused study, and some really excellent pieces were produced. The common strengths of these studies were the candidates' understanding of the work/topic and their presentation of their arguments in an academic way. The areas that had caused problems to some candidates in the past prevented a number of weaker candidates from gaining a good mark for their essays this session too. The type and nature of the problems shall be explained in more detail later on in the report. One of them, which is worth mentioning here, was again the choice of the research question, as this is the reflection of candidates' intellectual capability in general and insight into the issue of their personal investigation.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

As always, a thorough perusing of the official regulations and the set of criteria contained in the Guide, both by the supervisor and the candidate, lays the solid basis for the latter's success in completing his/her research. This session is no exception. As mentioned above, the candidates were normally clearly aware of the task and handled their studies in accordance to the specific demand as described in each criterion. Yet, the marks scored were widely ranged, with a few essays being awarded almost the highest marks possible and some others judged as mediocre.

#### **A: research question**

This is the most crucial aspect of the exercise, and the majority of the candidates performed well on this criterion. The questions were appropriate both in terms of the nature and the scope, as well as in terms of the literary aspect of the work concerned and specified. This generally enabled the candidates to give an efficient treatment within the length permitted. Some candidates, who failed to achieve the highest mark on this criterion, either could not formulate a clear and specific question in the early part of the essay or phrased it rather vaguely. There were several essays that were not literary in nature.

The appropriate and successful topics include: imagery, linguistic style, characterisation and the motif of cultural and aesthetic significance. Some essays followed the traditionally popular pattern by examining the political or social issues as addressed in the works and character study. Such a variety of choices reflected the different personal interests of the candidates. Yet they also granted the candidates with a mixture of opportunities to display their intellectual initiative which in some way eventually determined the overall quality of their essays.

While it is legitimate for them to examine a political or social issue in their essay, the primary focus should be on how it is treated literally by the writer. Some candidates in this group tended to ignore this and turned their essay to be a rather portentous or shallow discussion of a sociological problem. As usual, those, who selected character analysis as their topic, explored with care the features of the character under discussion and his/her cultural context, and examined the interactions between the character and the social environment. Such a way of investigation, however, offered the candidates a rather limited scope for personal engagement and creativity.

As in the past, there were several candidates who failed to narrow down their research question and had to cover a broad or several issues in their essays. This inevitably did not allow them to produce a sharply focused and in-depth examination, and led to a narrative and inadequate discussion. As a result, the overall quality of their arguments was hardly beyond satisfactory. Some other candidates did choose an appropriate topic for investigation, yet failed to phrase it clearly in the introduction. This could be avoided by effective supervision at each of the schools where this occurs.

### **B: introduction**

The key to performing well on this criterion is candidates' ability to establish the context for their study and to link it to the existing knowledge in the area. They can therefore express briefly the reason/significance for their choosing of the topic and the result that they attempt to achieve. This session, the candidates' response to this demand as a whole can be divided more or less equally into two groups: one fulfilled the request by providing the information needed and the other either totally ignored these elements or failed to do so fully.

### **C: investigation**

The focus of this criterion is on the range of sources that candidates gathered in relation to their research question and their argument. The majority of candidates were awarded a 3, as they collected relevant and sufficient sources mainly from the primary literary texts and showed a proper planning for their research. What should be pointed out is that it is important for supervisors to encourage their candidates to draw on a variety of resources and interrogate and use the secondary sources to formulate and support their own arguments. They should also advise them to engage themselves critically with the information available on the Internet and be aware of its "potential unreliability". Most of the candidates' analysis were 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 challenge the published criticism.

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

The main concern here is candidates' quality of their understanding of the primary texts and their capability to locate their study within the "academic context". As for Criterion C, most of the candidates achieved the same level of performance here, as they demonstrated a good knowledge of the literary text(s) and their discussion was thorough and convincing. For those who chose a rather broad or general/several issue(s) to examine in their essays, their performance in some cases was judged as adequate at most.

Due to the wide nature, their investigation was far from systematic, and a sharply focused analysis was substituted for a mere assortment of sources and a series of loosely connected points. Another point that is worth mentioning here is that, although it is not considered as essential in all cases, supervisors should urge their candidates to seek and question a wide range of existing literature which would give their research an extended dimension.

**E: reasoned argument**

In order to score well against this criterion, the candidate needs to present his/her ideas within a clear and progressive structure. They are also able to use the material gathered to develop an argument related to the research question. As a whole, the candidates' performance in this regard ranged from excellent to mediocre. The strong candidates showed the consciousness of and capability to respond to the demand, and their essays' coherence helped them to reveal their ideas in a convincing and logical fashion. Some of these essays also made clever use of the views of critics in the field to support their own argument. The weaker ones, especially those with a broad topic, however, mainly presented the authors' ideas/themes as revealed in the works with little personal engagement. As a consequence, they used the essay writing as the avenue to present the sources collected, and the backbone of a developing argument was somehow absent there. It is important to note that candidates' personal opinion should not be simply substituted for argument and need to be substantiated by their reading, and a variety of opinions should be cited, consulted and questioned too.

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

In dealing with their respective topic, most of the candidates applied a good level of skills for analysis and evaluation about the material gathered and awarded a 3 or a 4. The essays on a technical aspect of a work, in general, showed the candidates' confidence and maturity in thinking and reasoning. They explored, with a varying degree of persuasiveness, the symbolic and cultural technical implications that are conveyed by these devices/designs. The weaker ones in this group, however, merely managed to deal with the technical elements per se and failed to dig out the underlying meaning. The essays regarding character analysis, merely described their features and the social causes of their behaviour. Their approach was mainly descriptive and lacked a personal interpretation. Here again, questioning and challenging the sources and information would assist the candidate to engage in a deeper investigation, and to explore alternative views through cross-referencing.

**G: use of language appropriate to the subject**

As always, the candidates in general showed their skills in communication and chose an appropriate register for literary discussion. Due to their careful editing and proofreading, typing errors and other mistakes were hardly present in their essays and as a result, their overall arguments were rendered fluent.

Yet, a small number of them appeared to not be able to use the language correctly and fluently in a consistent manner.

**H: conclusion**

In this section of the essay, it is important for the candidate to closely link his/her conclusive remark to the previous discussion and to respond to the research question that is stated in the beginning of the essay. While the majority of the candidates achieved a good mark under this criterion, others failed to do so because of their failure to provide a synthesis in light of the discussion and only rephrased the points made in the introduction. Some also attempted to mention some new matters.

**I: formal presentation**

In general, candidates achieved a relatively good mark, as they met the official requests regarding the word limit, provision of references/bibliography and other elements in a consistent fashion. Their essays were constructed in accordance with the convention of formal writing and composed of the introduction, main body and conclusion, with a clear heading for each section. Some essays were given a zero under this criterion, as they exceeded the word limit. Of the matter of presentation, it is important for supervisors and candidates to follow the principle of intellectual honesty by providing the origin of any sources that are consulted in essays. However, some candidates tended to fail to make an acknowledgement clearly, fully and consistently, which lead to a confusion to the reader of which ideas were the candidates and which were others. On another note, candidates should observe the regulation of word limit and know that by writing some extra, unnecessary words does not make their argument more convincing and impressive. They should learn the skill to present their ideas succinctly.

**J: abstract**

Many candidates failed to obtain a good mark on this criterion, as they either failed to include the required three elements, especially that of the conclusion, or did not make a clear statement about them.

**K: holistic judgment**

The basis on which an essay is rewarded under this criterion is its possession of the candidate's qualities of intellectual initiative, depth of understanding and insight. This may be achieved firstly by his/her choice of a stimulating and refreshing topic for investigation and their way of treating it efficiently. As usual, the strong candidates this session focused on a topic which helped them to display their independent thinking and innovative approaches. The weaker ones, in contrast, could only deal with a routine topic which gave them a limited chance to show their inventiveness and critical capability.

## Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

In accordance with the issues that have been raised above, the following suggestions may be made with regard to the future supervision of the writing of Extended Essays.

Schools should clearly understand the aims and objectives of this exercise and pay close attention to each of the general rules of the Extended Essay, in order to assist candidates to prepare for such a research process.

Supervisors should first of all give candidates advice on how to select the appropriate subject/topic and to formulate a manageable research question. Such a selection should present an opportunity for candidates to engage in an in-depth study of the topic, reflect their personal interest and allow them to display their personal insight into it. A routine or a broad topic and/or a mere analysis of the social or political aspects as addressed in the work(s) are unlikely to enable them to produce a successful essay.

During the discussion, candidates should develop an argument. They should also learn to analyse, synthesize and evaluate the information gathered in relation to the question and display the qualities of critical thinking and personal engagement. The supervisor can offer some assistance for this purpose by challenging and questioning the candidate's point of view. These can also be achieved by the candidate's wide and critical reading of the relevant material.

Supervisors should provide informative and meaningful comments on each candidate's performance against the criteria. The irrelevant information written in a fixed formula and judgments cannot be of help and use in assessing the essay under Criterion K.