

Interpreting the EE assessment criteria

Criterion A: Focus and method

(Strands: Topic, Research question, Methodology)

For all three categories of studies in language and literature essays, the term “research” should be interpreted as “research material(s)” or “area of investigation” or “the topic under investigation”.

In terms of the choice of topic, the research question must be specific and sharply focused and stated clearly in the introduction of the essay. It should be formulated as a question, not a statement or proposition for discussion. Its purpose should be made clear to the reader and be related to the knowledge and understanding in context.

Overly broad topics that cannot be dealt with adequately within the scope of the word limit should be avoided. Similarly, too obvious a topic is unlikely to score highly in terms of criterion C.

The introduction should state briefly why the student has chosen that particular research question and what it has to offer. It should also indicate clearly how it relates to existing knowledge on that topic.

The subsequent planning of the essay and its focus for discussion should involve analysis of the text(s) in the light of the research question. Students may also include a critical perspective on secondary source material so that the views of critics are used to support the students’ own arguments. The sources used must provide sufficient material to develop and support an argument and a conclusion relevant to the research question.

- For **categories 1 and 2 essays**, appropriate sources include the literary text or texts that form the focus of the investigation and, where appropriate, secondary sources such as published criticism on those texts.
- In both these categories, students should be aware that they may be limiting themselves by choosing texts that are not capable of sustaining a detailed in-depth literary analysis, eg some types of children’s literature or teenage fiction.
- **Category 2 essays** should include a brief rationale for the pairing of the texts chosen, indicating what might be gained from the comparative study being undertaken. Students should avoid taking an approach where such texts are dealt with in two separate discussions.
- **Category 3 language essays** based on a primary text or texts from the range indicated in the subject guide should also use secondary sources to provide a framework for a critical analysis of how language, culture and context shape meaning.

If the topic or research question is deemed inappropriate for the subject in which the essay is registered, no more than four marks can be awarded for this criterion. This applies to language A essays that are based on inappropriate texts.

Criterion B: Knowledge and understanding

(Strands: Context, Subject-specific terminology and concepts)

For all three categories of essay, supporting source materials should be chosen appropriately and used effectively and purposefully to demonstrate an understanding of the wider issues involved.

Clarity and precision of communication in a studies in language and literature essay includes the correct use of language. Students should be able to convey their ideas fluently and articulately. They should also be able to use subject-specific terminology appropriate to the discipline and apply it to their chosen topic with discernment.

- For **categories 1 and 2 literature essays**, the context should be established succinctly and should not be an excuse for padding out an essay with a lengthy account of the historical or biographical context of a literary text: the quality of the student's understanding of the primary text is the main concern. The use of secondary source materials is helpful in terms of establishing a wider framework for the discussion; however this should not replace the student's personal engagement with the primary text(s).
- For **category 3 language essays**, the introduction of the essay should focus on the chosen topic and how it relates to existing knowledge of that subject and/or why it is of special interest to the target language and/or culture. The text(s) should be explored and understood through a critical consideration of their specific cultural and/or linguistic background. The student's personal experience or personal opinion should only be included if relevant to a discussion of, for example, the target audience for the text, and not as unsupported assertion.

If the topic or research question is deemed inappropriate for the subject in which the essay is registered, no more than four marks can be awarded for this criterion. This applies to language A essays that are based on inappropriate texts.

Criterion C: Critical thinking

(Strands: Research, Analysis, and Discussion and evaluation)

For all three categories of studies in language and literature essays, the analysis and argument should focus on the research question and support a personal interpretation.

Students should aim for a detailed and critical consideration that develops their own argument rather than simply adopting the views of critics. Second-hand interpretations or viewpoints that are derived solely from secondary sources, or purely descriptive essays, will not score highly.

The essays must focus on the analysis of the research material presented. Personal views should not simply be stated but need to be supported by reasoned argument.

The conclusion should present a considered evaluation of the topic in the light of the discussion as well as findings or results from the research (as appropriate).

Students are also encouraged to take a critical perspective on secondary sources: in particular, if students make use of internet-based sources, they should do so critically and circumspectly in full awareness of their potential unreliability.

- For **categories 1 and 2 literature essays**, a straightforward description of a literary text through plot summary or narration of the action does not usually advance an argument and should generally be avoided.
- This also applies to **category 3 language essays** that give only straightforward descriptive or narrative accounts of a text or texts that lack critical analysis.

If the topic or research question is deemed inappropriate for the subject in which the essay is registered, no more than three marks can be awarded for this criterion. This applies to language A essays that are based on inappropriate texts.

Criterion D: Presentation

(Strands: Structure, Layout)

This criterion relates to the extent to which the essay conforms to current academic standards concerning the presentation of research papers. It also relates to how well these elements support the reading, understanding and evaluation of the essay.

Essays in studies in language and literature would normally be presented as a continuous body of text, although some category 3 topics may benefit from a section and subsection structure to their essays, with appropriate informative headings.

The use of charts, images and tables may also be appropriate for category 3 essays. They should only be used if they are directly relevant to the research question, contribute towards the understanding of the argument and are of a good graphic quality.

Any material that is not original must be carefully acknowledged, with specific attention paid to the acknowledgment and referencing of quotes and ideas. This acknowledgment and referencing is applicable to audiovisual material, text, graphs and data published in print and electronic sources. If the referencing does not meet the minimum standard as indicated in the guide (name of author, date of publication, title of source and page numbers, as applicable), and is not consistently applied, the work will be considered as a case of possible academic misconduct.

A bibliography is essential and has to be presented in a standard format. Title page, table of contents, page numbers, etc must contribute to the quality of presentation.

The essay must not exceed 4,000 words of narrative. Graphs, diagrams or other illustrative material are not included in the word count. Students should be aware that examiners will not read beyond the 4,000-word limit, nor assess any material presented thereafter.

Criterion E: Engagement

(Strands: Process, Research focus)

This criterion assesses the student's engagement with their research focus and the research process. It will be applied by the examiner at the end of the assessment of the essay, and is based solely on the candidate's reflections as detailed on the [RPPF](#), with the supervisory comments and extended essay itself as context.

Students are expected to provide reflections on the decision-making and planning process undertaken in completing the essay. Students must demonstrate how they arrived at a topic as well as the methods and approach used. This criterion assesses the extent to which a student has evidenced the rationale for decisions made throughout the planning process and the skills and understandings developed.

For example, students may reflect on:

- the approach and strategies chosen, and their relative success
- the [Approaches to learning](#) skills they have acquired and how they have developed as a learner
- how their conceptual understandings have developed or changed as a result of their research
- challenges faced in their research and how they overcame these
- questions that emerged as a result of their research
- what they would do differently if they were to undertake the research again.

Effective reflection highlights the journey the student has engaged in through the EE process. In order to demonstrate that engagement, students must show evidence of critical and reflective thinking that goes beyond simply describing the procedures that have been followed. Reflections must provide the examiner with an insight into **student** thinking, creativity and originality within the research process. The **student** voice must be clearly present and demonstrate the learning that has taken place.