

History: Interpreting the EE assessment criteria

Criterion A: Focus and method

(Strands: Topic, Research question, Methodology)

Students must choose a topic from the human past that is of a meaningful nature. Topics may not discuss events/individuals/movements which have taken place within 10 years of the writing of the essay. For example, an essay submitted for assessment in 2018 must discuss events prior to 2008. Failure to follow this instruction will limit the grade in this criterion to a maximum of 4.

The topic chosen must be expressed in the form of a research question. The research question must be focused and capable of being discussed effectively within the word limit. Students must establish the historical context and significance of the topic and explain why it is worthy of investigation.

Students must demonstrate that they have selected a suitable range of appropriate and relevant sources. An attempt should be made to use both primary and secondary sources where possible. They should demonstrate both factual material as well as the opinions of historians. These sources must provide sufficient material to develop and support an argument and conclusion relevant to the research question.

Effective planning and a well-focused research question tend to go together. A key indicator of this is that students have chosen a comprehensive range of sources that are relevant and appropriate to answering the research question.

Ten-year rule

If the ten-year rule has not been adhered to, a maximum of only 4 marks can be awarded in this criterion.

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 history essays that breach the 10-year rule.

Criterion B: Knowledge and understanding

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

The essay must show that the student understands the place of the research question in a broader historical context; for example, the Marshall Plan with respect to the origins of the Cold War. In other words, if the focus of the essay is the Marshall Plan, students must demonstrate how this focus is relevant to an understanding of the origins of the Cold War.

The student must demonstrate that they understand and can use accurately historical terms and concepts relevant to the research topic.

Where it is deemed useful to clarify meaning or context, students may provide further explanation or definition of selected terms or concepts.

- Additionally, students must demonstrate that the knowledge gained from their selected sources can then be analysed and, on the basis of this analysis, form an argument and reach a conclusion(s) to the research question.

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Criterion C: Critical thinking

(Strands: Research, Analysis and Discussion and evaluation)

In a history essay, “research” refers to a critical engagement with the past through relevant sources. Students must be able to construct, present and support effectively a specific argument or position that provides their response to the research question.

This argument must be supported and developed by an analysis or consideration of the value and limitations of the research material.

Throughout the essay students must present ideas or concepts that relate consistently to the analysis of the research question. The inclusion of ideas or concepts that are not relevant will detract from the value of the analysis and limit the student’s ability to score well on this criterion.

The points contained in the argument and analysis must, at all times, be supported by specific, relevant material chosen from the student’s research.

Students should not present essays that are wholly or largely narrative or descriptive in nature. These do not provide any evidence of analytical skills and will not score well.

In history, the development of a reasoned argument based on the analysis of historical sources may start with a student stating their position in relation to the question posed. This position must then be supported by evidence and developed into a reasoned argument, which culminates in conclusion(s) being given.

A conclusion summarizes the student’s response to the research question. This conclusion must be consistent with the position and evidence presented in the essay. The conclusion may not include material that has not been discussed in the body of the essay.

However, questions that have arisen as a result of the research and may be suitable for further study may be included in the conclusion.

An evaluation of the relative value and limitations of the sources is an integral part of the analysis of the evidence and the development of a reasoned argument. This evaluation should be integrated into the text rather than contained in a separate section of the essay. It will then provide useful information or insight relative to the source or historian’s opinion that the student is referring to in support of their argument.

Ten-year rule

If the 10-year rule has not been adhered to, a maximum of only 3 marks can be awarded in this criterion.

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 history essays that breach the 10-year rule.

Criterion D: Presentation

(Strands: Structure, Layout)

This criterion relates to the extent to which the essay conforms to accepted academic standards in relation to how research papers should be presented. It also relates to how well these elements support the reading, understanding and evaluation of the essay.

Students may provide a section and subsection structure to their essays, with informative headings. Subheadings should not distract from the overall structure of the essay or argument presented.

Use of charts, images and tables

Charts, tables and images may appear in the body of the essay only if they illustrate or clarify the argument at that particular point. The inclusion of non-relevant or superfluous material will not be rewarded and may actually detract from the argument.

Any tables should enhance a written explanation and should not themselves include significant bodies of text. If they do, then these words must be included in the word count. Students must take care in their use of appendices as examiners are not required to read them. All information with direct relevance to the analysis, discussion and evaluation of the essay must be contained in the main body of the essay. All charts, images and tables must be properly referenced with respect to their origin or source.

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, 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. Charts, tables and images are not included in the word count. Students should be aware that examiners will not read beyond the 4,000-word limit, or 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 [RPPE](#), 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 they chose, and their relative success
- the [Approaches to learning](#) skills they have developed and their effect on the student as a learner
- how their conceptual understandings have developed or changed as a result of their research
- challenges they 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. Students must show evidence of critical and reflective thinking that goes beyond simply describing the procedures that have been followed.

The 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.