

German – Group 1

The report for May 2003, given below, applies also to the results of May 2004. There are no significant changes and no worrying new trends. The standard overall has been maintained and is roughly the same as last year.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The range of work submitted was very wide and included literature of all genres and several centuries. In the majority of cases the topic and the material used were suitable.

Candidates performance against each criterion

Criterion A Research question

This is one of the most problematical areas of the EE and one where the candidate has to rely on the advice of the supervisor. Many questions are just too vaguely phrased and/or far too broad in scope to be treated effectively. To give just two examples: 'Goethe-Benn: zwei Jahrhunderte, zwei Lebensanschauungen' is clearly not manageable within the limit of an EE, and a title like 'Genie und Wahnsinn in literarischen Texten erklären und ausführen' makes sense neither grammatically nor in any other way.

Criterion B Approach

The approach was generally appropriate to the research question although in many cases a biographical approach did not yield the desired results. The comparison between biographical events in Hesse's life and the development of Siddharta may be tempting for the candidate but should not be encouraged by the supervisor. In a similar way 'specialist' approaches used by non-specialists e.g. a psychoanalytical or sociological method should not be employed without the necessary theoretical foundation which the ordinary candidate will not possess.

Criterion C Analysis/Interpretation

Candidates did as a rule show analytical skills and were able to interpret the texts chosen in a lucid and convincing manner. Passages from the texts in question were referred to in order to support the argument and in many cases relevant secondary literature was consulted and documented. Some of the analyses showed great depth of understanding and insight.

Criterion D Argument/Evaluation

This is another problematical area. There is a deplorable tendency to treat a topic in a series of unrelated paragraphs presenting descriptions of characters, elements of plots etc. without any continuous narrative as demanded by an essay. In addition there is a great deal of summarizing of content and biographical material. While this may be useful in cases of remote literature (from which the candidates should be discouraged anyway in order to enable the marker access to the texts) it usually takes up whole chunks of the argument which could be filled more profitably. The lack of a continuous argument will then inevitably lead to an unsatisfactory link between research question and conclusion. The whole essay will become unfocussed and disjointed.

Criterion E Conclusion

Some sort of conclusion was attempted in the majority of cases. Where there was a precise research question and a cogent argumentation this link was usually very successful. Consistency of argument is therefore essential.

Criterion F Abstract

Even in the cases where the other formal criteria were below par the Abstract usually reflected the content.

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Criterion G Formal presentation

In the majority of cases the formal presentation was at least good. In only a few cases candidates neglected the requirements for the formal presentation whether deliberately or as a result of absence of advice depends on the individual situation. In a remarkable number of instances the formal presentation was of university level for which the EE ought to prepare.

Criterion H Holistic judgement

Again many candidates reached at least level 3 on account of their originality, personal engagement and flair. The examiner was pleased to be able to award quite a few verdicts of 'outstanding'.

Subject assessment criteria

There were several instances where the candidates based their essays on texts which were originally not written in the language of the essay and had therefore to be awarded 0 for criteria J and K.

Criterion K Personal response justified by literary judgement and/or analysis

In the majority of cases it was pleasing to see that the candidates had developed a close personal response to authors and works and were writing with a genuine feeling for the literature concerned. Both argument and conclusion usually justified the personal response in a convincing manner.

Criterion L Use of language appropriate to a literary essay

The language also tended to achieve level 3 or 4. It was in most cases both fluent and precise and appropriate to the discussion of literary texts. There were fewer grave spelling mistakes than in previous years which might well be due to the use of spell check.

Recommendation for the supervision of future candidates

- Make sure that the research question is precise and designed to cover a range which within the limit of the Extended Essay is manageable
- Discuss the candidate's approach to the research with a view to, where appropriate, steering the candidate away from speculative biographical or autobiographical investigations. The same applies to 'non-specialist' approaches as mentioned under B.
- Instruct the candidate in the technique of conducting a coherent and cogent argument, rather than a series of unconnected paragraphs leaving it to the Examiner to establish his own conclusions.
- Make sure the candidate is familiar with the basic technical requirements of the essay, e.g. bibliography, correct references etc.

General comments

There were a number of cases where the supervisor had recorded a bare minimum of contact sessions, in some cases zero or half an hour. This should be explained in the space reserved for teacher's comment otherwise the examiner is left to draw his own conclusion of whether this is due to a failure to supervise or a failure to consult.