

## GERMAN 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

This year a wide range of periods/authors and to some extent genre was presented. Twentieth-century fiction and drama proved, as usual, the most popular field.

Among the best were a few essays based on poetry – a very interesting one compared “Loreley” by Heine with the Kästner poem in regard to political criticism.

Another excellent choice was a comparison between Goethe’s and Plenzdorf’s protagonists under the aspect of social criticism.

Unfortunately, though, the suitability of literary works was rather questionable in some cases.

There were a couple of schools that served their candidates badly by guiding them all towards tackling similar questions from a narrow range of texts, often ones that had clearly been studied in class. Some schools and supervisors still seem unaware of the requirement that “The essay must be based on the literature of countries where the language (German) is spoken (that is, all works discussed will originally have been written in the language of the essay”).

This leads to the question of supervision. Most supervisors seem to have taken time and trouble to assist their candidate(s) as well as possible which is evident in the comments they wrote and the hours they spent with the candidate – although 10 hours is twice as much as recommended by the IB. Some supervisors do not seem to be aware of the time requirements and leave out writing a comment which is unfortunate and not helpful neither for the candidate nor for the examiner, others comment on the candidate’s approach and some even evaluate the EE enthusiastically. The IB has published precise and clear instructions on the role and responsibility of the supervisor. I can highly recommend refreshing one’s memory and familiarising the student with the demands and expectations set up for her/him, too.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

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

Most candidates were able to define their research question adequately, although there were still some topics that were framed in terms far too general.

Candidates who presented their topic as a statement rather than as a question were more liable to lose their focus, often simply asserting their thesis without analysing its implications

and then reiterating it in their conclusion. Research questions that were actual questions seemed to encourage a more interrogative and analytical treatment of the texts. The best essays did not simply state the research question in the title but also made it part of the introduction.

Supervisors need to ensure that the EE has one clear, focused and do-able RQ. Many candidates need guidance here.

## **B: introduction**

The approach adopted was generally appropriate, but weaker candidates often made the mistake of padding out their introduction by an unnecessary summary of content or with a brief, sometimes even lengthy biography of their chosen author(s). This adds nothing to the argument or to the illumination of the text and should be avoided. Another weakness of approach was an over-reliance on secondary sources, which were used as a substitute for the candidate's own reading of the primary text rather than as a source of new perspectives.

In a number of essays students omitted an introduction altogether or treated it like the conclusion. It was also not unusual to find students suddenly adding additional works and topics that were not mentioned in the RQ nor in the Abstract. Too often a justification or explanation of the choice of topic was missing.

## **C: investigation**

This year many EEs took pride in a 'werkimmanente' analysis as a new method not to use any secondary sources, as they were deemed unnecessary. This often resulted in statements about the author and/or work, which were little more than unsubstantiated personal opinions often even without quotes from the text. This attitude is a clear indication that students were unaware of IB requirements which expect the consultation of academic and appropriate sources – and a bibliography.

Over-reliance on secondary sources was another weakness, leading to arguments that were little more than a collage of ideas and opinions derived from published criticism like 'Hausaufgabenhilfe' and spark notes (literature study guides). Secondary sources like that have to be used carefully and need to be identified as quotations.

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

There is hardly an EE that does not demonstrate a good to excellent knowledge of the work(s). Mostly students used quotes appropriately and displayed an understanding of the work(s), though not necessarily in relation to the chosen Research Question. This is a point that emphasises once again the importance of a clearly stated and sharply focussed Research Question.

## **E: reasoned argument**

The better candidates had a clear line of argument, often already indicated at in the index. There were many well-structured essays presenting a coherent argument. Nevertheless,

though, examiners considered this to have been the weakest area of this year's EE. Too many students took a descriptive approach without any analysis or adequate supporting evidence from the primary texts. The lack of a clear and logical structure tended to lead to a certain repetitiveness.

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

Essays that relied too heavily on secondary sources and substituted received opinion for personal response were penalized under this criterion. There were some examples of empty enthusing without any intellectual substance; but many candidates were able to present their personal reading of a text in a measured and persuasive way.

Most essays showed that candidates did at least make an attempt at analysis.

Evaluative skills were more rarely demonstrated as many candidates took everything at face value and rarely thought critically - here a lack of secondary sources comes into play.

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

A fair range of writing was displayed in this year's EEs, but most essays were competently written, and some were fluent and eloquent and a pleasure to read. Common weaknesses were the use of a casual colloquial register that was inappropriate for literary criticism and the usual lack of correct spelling, application of punctuation and incorrect syntax.

### **H: conclusion**

Most essays presented a conclusion, often at least a partially consistent conclusion, and the best were thoughtful and aware of unresolved questions. However, some conclusions merely stated the obvious, or confined themselves to a couple of casual sentences, or simply repeated points made in the introduction rather than producing a new synthesis.

### **I: formal presentation**

Formal presentation has improved over the last years noticeably. However, some EEs still have incomplete bibliographies, lack paragraphing and referencing correctly. It needs to be stressed that there are standard formats for footnotes.

Bibliographies sometimes failed to mention all the works referred to in the essay or on the other hand mentioned sources that did not show up in the essay itself.

### **J: abstract**

There was an improvement in the writing of the Abstract though there were still candidates who treated it as a kind of introduction or who failed to define the three required elements clearly enough. Weak Abstracts sometimes consisted simply of cut and paste sections from the introduction and conclusion.

Some conform to the clear guidelines, some do not provide an Abstract at all. Many EEs seem to be unclear about the function of an abstract.

The best Abstracts were obviously written not at the start but at the end of the task.

### **K: holistic judgment**

Very few candidates achieved maximum points for this criterion, which is where outstandingly engaged and original work is rewarded. Initiative, creativity and insight are rarely to be found in a routine approach to the EE.

## **Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates**

It is important that supervisors familiarise themselves with the Extended Essay Guide, and this will prevent their students embarking on inappropriate topics and avoiding the selection of works not originally written in German. It would also be helpful to show the candidates the assessment criteria so that they understand what is required for a good essay. Guidance on the use of Internet sources would be invaluable, since students tend to assume that the information they find there is authoritative rather than of dubious quality and questionable value. Students should also be steered away from relying too heavily and uncritically on secondary sources and be encouraged to concentrate on the primary texts and to consider how they work as literature (rather than, for instance, what they tell us about social conditions or historical circumstances).

The most important aspect of supervision is helping the candidate define a manageable and productive research question, one that leads into a close examination of a text or texts.