

May 2015 extended essay reports

GERMAN A

Overall grade boundaries

Grade:	E	D	C	B	A
Mark range:	0-7	8-15	16-22	23-28	29-36

The range and suitability of the work submitted

All in all, this year's EEs were more suitable than last year's. There was a bigger variety in the works chosen and not many "unsuitable" works, especially in the category 3 option. Still, there were quite a few EEs on Sueskind's *Das Parfum* but not as many as on Schlink's *Der Vorleser*. Beyond these often chosen titles, there was a wide range of literature used for the EE.

The problem which remains is the comparative essay. Still the comparative EEs like to just present what the two works have in common, (or how they differ), but it is not clear what the original goal of the comparison was, and what made the candidate choose the two works in question for a comparative analysis. Just listing differences is not sufficient. Research questions, which investigate the historical context, often show too much historical evidence. The historical background should be referred to once the analysis of literature has been undertaken, not the other way round. The same applies to abstract references; it is not the purpose of a language A essay to state in length a philosophical or other kind of theory. This should always be kept as short as possible, because the analysis of the text is the primary focus. The historical, philosophical, biographical or every kind of context should be 'referred to' but not main focus of the EE.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: research question

Mainly, the research questions were more focused this year. Only a few essays tried to investigate a research question which wanted to explore the author's biography or an aspect in history. Both type of questions do not lead to intensive analysis of the literary text. Some research questions were too broad again by looking into "the literature" of "the 19th and 20th century". Research questions of category 3 often do not relate to a text, but want to investigate *Die Veraenderung der Jugendsprache* or *Den Einfluss des Englischen auf die deutsche Sprache*. These questions result in vague essays, as "the German language" is a very wide field.

Criterion B: introduction

On the whole, introductions were better, almost all of them stated the research question. Most of them introduced the topic, but only a few stated why it is worthy of investigation. Many candidates just like to say, that this topic is “interesting” on personal level, but fail to explain, why it is interesting in an academic context.

Criterion C: investigation

Most candidates researched not only on the internet, but looked into written texts as well, which is good. However, just investigating the biography of the author or looking into *KoenigsErlaeuterungen* does not get full marks.

Criterion D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Most essays expressed (deep) knowledge about the text. Only a few candidates did not show their knowledge as they were just summarising the literary text. Category 3 essays, which summarised a historical period or psychological aspects, or repeating in length secondary sources, is not showing deep knowledge

Criterion E: reasoned argument

This is a problematic area for German A candidates. Not many EEs “reason” their argument, as they stay too descriptive. It is mainly due to a lack of analysis and/or the interpretation of it.

Criterion F: application of analytical and evaluative skills

Both are most of the time not done deeply enough. There are many essays, which are written without looking into “how” has the author achieved this. Also, pupils seem to find it hard to think, “why” the author has written the piece in the way that they have. Category 3 essays are often missing a text altogether, so that there is no analysis at all.

Criterion G: use of language appropriate to the subject:

All in all, the language was much better this year, there were only very few essays, which showed no control over the German language. Most importantly, there are only a few essays, which use some literary and linguistic specific terminology. As “analysis and evaluation” is done quite poorly, candidates hardly use literary criticism and therefore they lose marks in this category, as the terminology is missing.

Criterion H: conclusion

Conclusions are ok most of the time. Still, they summarise a lot from the main body, but there were more attempts this year to go beyond a simple summarisation. Most of them answered the research question, which was good to see.

Criterion I: formal presentation

This is another problematic area. Roughly 50% of the EEs still state literature in their bibliography, which they have not footnoted in the essay. According to the assessment requirements, this should be avoided. The bibliography on the other hand, does not always state all titles referred to in footnotes. The referencing system a candidate follows for the quotations, does not matter, but it should be used throughout consistently.

Criterion J: abstract

The abstract is still not always right after the title page. Very seldom does the abstract gain full marks, as there is often at least one of the aspects missing. It has to state the research question clearly; it has to show the word count; it has not only to state the investigation but also, why it was done in that way; and it has to state the result of the investigation.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

Supervisors should help to focus the research question; research questions which focus on history, the biography of the author or an entire century of literature tend to summarise these aspects too much and do not have the text analysis as main focus. In category 3 essays, supervisors have to make sure that the essay analyses a text, whatever the text might be. It is unnecessary to summarise the author's biography, a historical or literary period, let alone the literary text. Supervisors should make their candidates aware of that. Maybe teachers could point out the difference between formal (written) German and colloquialism. Candidates like to write in a formal essay expressions which are not suitable. Candidates need help with quotations and how to do a bibliography; if the school does not provide a system for the pupils, maybe the teachers could introduce a method the candidates can use. Also, teachers might want to advise the students a bit more about on how to choose a sufficiently narrow research question. If the research question is aiming at analysis of the text, they find it easier to stay focused on "analysis and evaluation".