

PSYCHOLOGY

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

There was a wide range of topics chosen. Encouragement to engage with less explored areas of psychology provided the best candidates with the chance to investigate new and possibly more controversial areas of psychology. As a result, there were several essays of outstanding quality. These were a pleasure to read.

There was however a wide gulf between the most and least successful essays. Often the difference between these two ends of the mark spectrum was caused by the variable degree of attention paid to the current Diploma Programme Guide for Psychology. The guide must be used as reference for an understanding of subject methodology.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A: research question

At an early stage in the Extended essay guide students are advised to “formulate a well-focused research question.” Many did just this but others did not. The latter either failed to present an identifiable research question or made the question so general and over ambitious that they had no chance of addressing it competently.

B: introduction

There were many over ambitious essays where the focus was too broad and this made it difficult to place the research question in a context. In some of the essays, the context was even ignored and it was difficult for examiners to find sufficient relevance to justify the essay as psychological in nature.

C: investigation

The best essays used a wide range of sources and were well planned. The least successful essays used a narrow range of sources and showed little evidence of planning.

D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

There were many essays that looked at new areas of psychology but some of these tended to lack sufficient depth of understanding, knowledge or evaluation. Often a more straight forward topic choice would have led to greater success.

E: reasoned argument

Candidates who seek to promote an argument are also expected to support claims with evidence from appropriate psychological research. There should be an outline of an academic context into which the knowledge and understanding of the essay topic can be firmly located.

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

Candidates are expected to show analytical and evaluative skills in the reasoned argument that they present in their essays. Whilst the more able exponents of essay writing were able to use such skills effectively there were some who seemed to ignore these necessary attributes in their work. Analysis can lead to evaluation that is either negative or positive. It is rare for a psychological topic to be entirely at one end of a polarity resulting from an appropriate analysis.

G: use of language appropriate to the subject

Use of language and terminology, and clear means of communication are essential to reach the higher levels in this criterion. Candidates who were absorbed by their chosen topic showed it by their use of appropriate terminology. It was as though their growing familiarity with their subject matter had been sub-consciously absorbed and subsequently interpreted in their own writing.

H: conclusion

The best conclusions were pertinent to the research question and analysis. The weakest conclusions showed little or no connection with the research area or analysis.

I: formal presentation

Formal presentation and the creation of an abstract are among the more mechanistic of tasks required for an Extended Essay, yet both seem to present undue difficulty for candidates.

Students need to be disciplined in creating their reference and/or bibliography sections as they write their essays. Many cited psychological research in the body of their essays yet often fail to acknowledge their sources.

J: abstract

An abstract should be written after the essay has been completed; it should not refer to what will be done but what has been done in the essay. It should enable the reader to anticipate the arguments presented and the conclusion of its findings.

K: holistic judgment

The degree of enthusiasm and engagement of the student is measured in this criterion. This may come through in the essay itself but the supervisor's report is also important as it provides the examiner with invaluable background information.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

Although the construction of the essay may be slightly flexible, as research proceeds it is of benefit of the student if the essay construction is in place before the.

Pay close attention to the criteria making sure that all candidates have access to them and understand their demands

This report should be read in conjunction with the May 2009 extended essay report in psychology