

IB PSYCHOLOGY: Extended Essay Assessment

All extended essays are externally assessed by examiners appointed by the IBO. All extended essays are marked on a scale from 0 to 34. For each criterion, examiners are instructed to identify the level descriptor that is most appropriate (i.e. the best match) for the extended essay under consideration.

Criterion A: Focus and Method – 6 points possible

Students should state their choice of topic clearly at the start of the EE.

The research question must be:

1. expressed in question format
2. very precise
3. able to be fully addressed within the word limit.

It should be clear to the reader how the question relates to and is derived from the knowledge and understanding of the topic under consideration.

The introduction should provide the academic context and subsequent justification for the research question. The student should show how and why it is relevant for consideration in an academic context, indicating the current state of research and the discussions raised.

Although their personal interest in the topic is important, students' personal experiences and opinions are inappropriate here. Students must explain their approach to the topic. Their explanation needs to:

- outline the remit of the essay
- indicate the psychological theories and studies they will use and how
- enable the reader to see how the focus of the essay is to be maintained.

Psychological journals and books are appropriate resources. Materials from “pop psychology” and items from the media do not offer sufficient depth and academic rigour to develop an informed and balanced argument.

Students must select appropriate resources and make explicit reference to the research question throughout the essay to score highly against this criterion.

Where a student considers neuro-cognitive processing in relation to a behaviour, the focus of their essay should be on its impact on the behaviour or experience of the individual rather than on description of biological processing, however detailed and accurate.

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 psychology essays that are based on the collection of primary data.

_____ 0 **The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors below.**

_____ 1-2: **The topic is communicated unclearly and incompletely:**

- Identification and explanation of the topic is limited; the purpose and focus of the research is unclear, or does not lend itself to a systematic investigation in the subject for which it is registered.

The research question is stated but not clearly expressed or too broad:

- The research question is too broad in scope to be treated effectively within the word limit and requirements of the task, or does not lend itself to a systematic investigation in the subject for which it is registered.
- The intent of the research question is understood but has not been clearly expressed and/or the discussion of the essay is not focused on the research question.

Methodology of the research is limited:

- The source(s) and/or method(s) to be used are limited in range given the topic and research question.
- There is limited evidence that their selection was informed.

_____ 3-4

The topic is communicated:

- Identification and explanation of the research topic is communicated; the purpose and focus of the research is adequately clear, but only partially appropriate.

The research question is clearly stated but only partially focused:

- The research question is clear but the discussion in the essay is only partially focused and connected to the research question.

Methodology of the research is mostly complete:

- Source(s) and/or method(s) to be used are generally relevant and appropriate given the topic and research question.
- There is some evidence that their selection(s) was informed.

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.

- _____ 5-6 **The topic is communicated accurately and effectively:**
- Identification and explanation of the research topic is effectively communicated;
 - the purpose and focus of the research is clear and appropriate.
- The research question is clearly stated and focused:**
- The research question is clear and addresses an issue of research that is appropriately connected to the discussion in the essay.
- Methodology of the research is complete:**
- An appropriate range of relevant source(s) and/or method(s) have been applied in relation to the topic and research question.
 - There is evidence of effective and informed selection of sources and/or methods.

Criterion B: Knowledge and Understanding – 6 points possible

Students can provide evidence in several ways that they clearly understand the concepts and materials they are using and are able to communicate them effectively.

- Use of an appropriate academic style throughout, with the terminology of psychological research methods accurately and confidently applied.
- Psychological terminology consistently used in a manner that indicates understanding of theories and concepts.
- Considered evaluation of evidence and findings from empirical studies and their related theories, in terms of culture, ethics, gender and methodology. This evaluation informs students' interpretation of the research question, contributing to perceptive commentary.

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 psychology essays that are based on the collection of primary data.

- _____ 0 **The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors below.**
- _____ 1-2 **Knowledge and understanding is limited.**
- The selection of source material has limited relevance and is only partially appropriate to the research question.
 - Knowledge of the topic/discipline(s)/issue is anecdotal, unstructured and mostly descriptive with sources not effectively being used.
- Use of terminology and concepts is unclear and limited.**
- Subject-specific terminology and/or concepts are either missing or inaccurate, demonstrating limited knowledge and understanding.
- _____ 3-4 **Knowledge and understanding is good.**
- The selection of source material is mostly relevant and appropriate to the research question.
 - Knowledge of the topic/discipline(s)/issue is clear; there is an understanding of the sources used but their application is only partially effective.
- Use of terminology and concepts is adequate.**
- The use of subject-specific terminology and concepts is mostly accurate, demonstrating an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding.
- 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.**
- _____ 5-6 **Knowledge and understanding is excellent.**
- The selection of source materials is clearly relevant and appropriate to the research question.
 - Knowledge of the topic/discipline(s)/issue is clear and coherent and sources are used effectively and with understanding.
- Use of terminology and concepts is good.**
- The use of subject-specific terminology and concepts is accurate and consistent, demonstrating effective knowledge and understanding.

Criterion C: Critical Thinking – 12 points possible

This criterion is looking for critical engagement with appropriate material. Students must show throughout the essay that they can analyse and evaluate the psychological theory and published research they have selected to answer the research question.

Research should be applied to effectively demonstrate the complex nature of a research question that connects with relevant areas of inquiry in the field of psychology.

Throughout, students must use psychological theory and/or studies to justify points in the construction of their argument. They need to explain the material and explicitly link it to the research question.

The research question should analyse and evaluate different perspectives or approaches to the research question.

Their analysis must include:

- the context of the study or research (eg a consideration of the nature of participants and materials used)
- an awareness of possible researcher bias and methodological biases.

It is the responsibility of the student to persuade the reader of the reasons for, and validity of, their perspective. Students should evaluate the evidence at the point at which they introduce it rather than in a separate add-on section.

As in-depth treatment is required, essays that are largely descriptive or narrative in nature will not achieve highly against this criterion.

Students are expected to draw conclusions throughout the presentation of their essay and in a summative conclusion at the end. This must be consistent with the argument and evidence presented in the body of the essay. The conclusion is not the place for new evidence. However, it should include unresolved questions that have arisen from the discussion and which could be suitable for further study.

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 psychology essays that are based on the collection of primary data.

_____ 0 **The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors below.**

_____ 1-3 **The research is limited.**

- The research presented is limited and its application is not clearly relevant to the RQ.

Analysis is limited.

- There is limited analysis.
- Where there are conclusions to individual points of analysis these are limited and not consistent with the evidence.

Discussion/evaluation is limited.

- An argument is outlined **but** this is limited, incomplete, descriptive or narrative in nature.
- The construction of an argument is unclear and/or incoherent in structure hindering understanding.
- Where there is a final conclusion, it is limited and not consistent with the arguments/evidence presented.
- There is an attempt to evaluate the research, but this is superficial.

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.

_____ 4-6 **The research is adequate.**

- Some research presented is appropriate and its application is partially relevant to the Research question.

Analysis is adequate.

- There is analysis **but** this is only partially relevant to the research question; the inclusion of irrelevant research detracts from the quality of the argument.
- Any conclusions to individual points of analysis are only partially supported by the evidence.

Discussion/evaluation is adequate.

- An argument explains the research **but** the reasoning contains inconsistencies.
- The argument may lack clarity and coherence but this does not significantly hinder understanding.
- Where there is a final or summative conclusion, this is only partially consistent with the arguments/evidence presented.
- The research has been evaluated but not critically.

_____ 7-9 **The research is good.**

- The majority of the research is appropriate and its application is clearly relevant to the research question.

Analysis is good.

- The research is analysed in a way that is clearly relevant to the research question; the inclusion of less relevant research rarely detracts from the quality of the overall analysis.
- Conclusions to individual points of analysis are supported by the evidence but there are some minor inconsistencies.

Discussion/evaluation is good.

- An effective reasoned argument is developed from the research, with a conclusion supported by the evidence presented.

- This reasoned argument is clearly structured and coherent and supported by a final or summative conclusion; minor inconsistencies may hinder the strength of the overall argument.
- The research has been evaluated, and this is partially critical.

_____ 10-12 **The research is excellent.**

- The research is appropriate to the research question and its application is consistently relevant.

Analysis is excellent.

- The research is analysed effectively and clearly focused on the research question; the inclusion of less relevant research does not significantly detract from the quality of the overall analysis.
- Conclusions to individual points of analysis are effectively supported by the evidence.

Discussion/evaluation is excellent.

- An effective and focused reasoned argument is developed from the research with a conclusion reflective of the evidence presented.
- This reasoned argument is well structured and coherent; any minor inconsistencies do not hinder the strength of the overall argument or the final or summative conclusion.
- The research has been critically evaluated.

Criterion D: Presentation – 4 points possible

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

Any charts, images or tables from literature sources included in the essay must be carefully selected and labelled and referenced. They should only be used if they are directly relevant to the research question, contribute towards the understanding of the argument and are of a good graphic quality.

Graphs or charts drawn from the analysed data should be selected to highlight only the most pertinent aspects related to the argument. Too many graphs, charts and tables will distract from the overall quality of the communication. Only summary data charts of information that is central to the argument of the essay should be included in the body of the essay.

Tables should enhance a written explanation but 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.

Any material that is not original must be carefully acknowledged, with specific attention paid to the acknowledgment and referencing of quotations 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 of narrative. of narrative. Students should be aware that examiners will not read beyond the 4,000-word limit, nor assess any material presented thereafter.

_____ 0

The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors below.

_____ 1-2

Presentation is acceptable.

- The structure of the essay is generally appropriate in terms of the expected conventions for the topic, argument and subject in which the essay is registered.
- Some layout considerations may be missing or applied incorrectly.
- Weaknesses in the structure and/or layout do not significantly impact the reading, understanding or evaluation of the extended essay.

_____ 3-4

Presentation is good.

- The structure of the essay clearly is appropriate in terms of the expected conventions for the topic, the argument and subject in which the essay is registered.
- Layout considerations are present and applied correctly.
- The structure and layout support the reading, understanding and evaluation of the extended essay.

Criterion E: Engagement – 6 points possible

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 [RPPF](#), 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 chosen, and their relative success
- the [Approaches to learning](#) skills they have acquired and how they have developed as a learner
- how their conceptual understandings have developed or changed as a result of their research
- challenges 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. In order to demonstrate that engagement, students must show evidence of critical and reflective thinking that goes beyond simply describing the procedures that have been followed. 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.

- _____ 0 **The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors below.**
- _____ 1-2 **Engagement is limited.**
- Reflections on decision-making and planning are mostly descriptive.
 - These reflections communicate a limited degree of personal engagement with the research focus and/or research process.
- _____ 3-4 **Engagement is good.**
- Reflections on decision-making and planning are analytical and include reference to conceptual understanding and skill development.
 - These reflections communicate a moderate degree of personal engagement with the research focus and process of research, demonstrating some intellectual initiative.
- _____ 5-6 **Engagement is excellent.**
- Reflections on decision-making and planning are evaluative and include reference to the student's capacity to consider actions and ideas in response to challenges experienced in the research process.
 - These reflections communicate a high degree of intellectual and personal engagement with the research focus and process of research, demonstrating authenticity, intellectual initiative and/or creative approach in the student voice.

Predicted Total: _____

Grade descriptors

The extended essay is externally assessed, and as such, supervisors are not expected to mark the essays or arrive at a number to translate into a grade. Predicted grades for all subjects should be based on the **qualitative** grade descriptors for the subject in question. These descriptors are what will be used by senior examiners to set the boundaries for the extended essay in May 2018, and so schools are advised to use them in the same way.

Grade A

Demonstrates effective research skills resulting in a well-focused and appropriate research question that can be explored within the scope of the chosen topic; effective engagement with relevant research areas, methods and sources; excellent knowledge and understanding of the topic in the wider context of the relevant discipline; the effective application of source material and correct use of subject-specific terminology and/or concepts further supporting this; consistent and relevant conclusions that are proficiently analysed; sustained reasoned argumentation supported effectively by evidence; critically evaluated research; excellent presentation of the essay, whereby coherence and consistency further supports the reading of the essay; and present and correctly applied

structural and layout elements.

Engagement with the process is conceptual and personal, key decision-making during the research process is documented, and personal reflections are evidenced, including those that are forward-thinking.

Grade B

Demonstrates appropriate research skills resulting in a research question that can be explored within the scope of the chosen topic; reasonably effective engagement with relevant research areas, methods and sources; good knowledge and understanding of the topic in the wider context of the relevant discipline; a reasonably effective application of source material and use of subject-specific terminology and/or concepts; consistent conclusions that are accurately analysed; reasoned argumentation often supported by evidence; research that at times evidences critical evaluation; and a clear presentation of all structural and layout elements, which further supports the reading of the essay.

Engagement with the process is generally evidenced by the reflections and key decision-making during the research process is documented.

Grade C

Demonstrates evidence of research undertaken, which has led to a research question that is not necessarily expressed in a way that can be explored within the scope of the chosen topic; partially effective engagement with mostly appropriate research areas, methods and sources—however, there are some discrepancies in those processes, although these do not interfere with the planning and approach; some knowledge and understanding of the topic in the wider context of the discipline, which is mostly relevant; the attempted application of source material and appropriate terminology and/or concepts; an attempted synthesis of research results with partially relevant analysis; conclusions partly supported by the evidence; discussion that is descriptive rather than analytical; attempted evaluation; satisfactory presentation of the essay, with weaknesses that do not hinder the reading of the essay; and some structural and layout elements that are missing or are incorrectly applied.

Engagement with the process is evidenced but shows mostly factual information, with personal reflection mostly limited to procedural issues.

Grade D

Demonstrates a lack of research, resulting in unsatisfactory focus and a research question that is not answerable within the scope of the chosen topic; at times engagement with appropriate research, methods and sources, but discrepancies in those processes that occasionally interfere with the planning and approach; some relevant knowledge and understanding of the topic in the wider context of the discipline, which are at times irrelevant; the attempted application of source material, but with inaccuracies in the use of, or underuse of, terminology and/or concepts; irrelevant analysis and inconsistent conclusions as a result of a descriptive discussion; a lack of evaluation; presentation of the essay that at times is illogical and hinders the reading; and structural and layout elements that are missing.

Engagement with the process is evidenced but is superficial, with personal reflections that are solely narrative and concerned with procedural elements.

Grade E (failing condition)

Demonstrates an unclear nature of the essay; a generally unsystematic approach and resulting unfocused research question; limited engagement with limited research and sources; generally limited and only partially accurate knowledge and understanding of the topic in the wider context of the relevant discipline; ineffective connections in the application of source material and inaccuracies in the terminology and/or concepts used; a summarizing of results of research with inconsistent analysis; an attempted outline of an argument, but one that is generally descriptive in nature; and a layout that generally lacks or incorrectly applies several layout and structural elements.

Engagement with the process is limited, with limited factual or decision-making information and no personal reflection on the process.