

## BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

### 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

The range and suitability varied considerably both between centres and within centres. Some candidates produced very interesting, well researched pieces in terms of sources and the use of critical thinking / evaluative skills combined with well substantiated conclusions and recommendations.

While such a range is somewhat expected, there were some noticeable reasons for candidates not performing perhaps as well as they could have done.

The **most noticeable** issue observed by many examiners was the fact that students in some centres based their research solely or mainly on **primary sources**. It was disappointing to see that in some centres the new emphasis was not followed despite a clear interest and knowledge of the students. Basing the essay solely on primary research affected students' performance to various extents in criteria C, D, and K. Some supervisors commented on how difficult as well as time consuming it was for their students to carry out their primary research. These difficulties could have been avoided had the students changed the focus of their research.

The focus has been changed to '*Students should use as the basis of their extended essay secondary data supported, where appropriate, by primary research*'. The new focus was agreed by senior examiners in order to:

- distinguish the EE from the IA
- acknowledge the difficulty of students in various parts of the world in gaining access to real organisations.

**Hence, the expectation now is that the students produce a more academic research paper with the main focus on secondary data.**

Please note that with the new focus, it is expected that the candidates use a variety of secondary sources and do not solely or mainly use text books/ theoretical internet sites as their secondary sources. Some examples of possible sources are given in the new guide.

In some centres, the research questions were very similar and identical models were used and applied in a very similar way even where the appropriateness of such models was somewhat limited. These essays seemed to be over-directed by the supervisors. This could also prevent students from displaying more personal insight and individual flair.

Focussing on a feasibility study was a common essay title in a few centres, but these were too often over ambitious in nature. Some centres seemed to promote a feasibility study as a

RQ and it would appear that the approach to writing such an essay has been somewhat prescribed. This could prevent students from displaying more personal insight with individual initiative.

Some more specific reasons for not achieving the higher / highest mark bands in each criterion will be explained in the following section.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

### A: research question

A good number of candidates had chosen a research question which was sharply focused, making effective treatment possible within the word limit. Some research questions were too broad and lacked focus, making them difficult to be treated effectively.

Some titles were very backward looking and **descriptive**. The students simply described what organisation X had done.

The better titles/ research questions were forward looking and/ or back ward looking ones that promoted analysis and evaluation.

Some titles were entirely inappropriate and resulted in generalised descriptions of an event only loosely related to business and management.

### B: introduction

A good number of the candidates were successful in demonstrating the context of the research question. Moreover, these candidates in the introductions clearly explained the significance of the topic and why it was worthy of investigation. Many candidates achieved the top mark for this criterion.

There were a few candidates who made no attempt to explain the worthiness/importance of the topic.

### C: investigation

As mentioned above the inappropriate focus used by many students resulted in less than satisfactory performance here. Primary researches were credited if it actually added value to the secondary research. Consequently, many candidates were not able to reach the top bands as '*a limited range of appropriate sources have been consulted*'.

Successful candidates had consulted a good range of appropriate sources and collected sufficient data. In most cases, however, the candidates did not challenge validity / reliability of the information gathered.

Many candidates used conflicting data / evidence.

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

As stated in the guide *'this criterion requires students to show detailed knowledge and understanding of the topic being researched and its academic context'*

Explicit use and explanation of the academic context was often lacking or referred to in terms of a definition of the nature of a model like PEST or SWOT given in any text book. These models were often mechanically used by many students, often in the same centre. Such use did not add to answering the research question.

Please note:

*'To demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding, it is likely that the students will have to use a range of sources'* *Extended essay guide page 55.*

## **E: reasoned argument**

This criterion is about arguments and how the candidates express both sides of any relevant arguments.

The candidates who reached the higher bands were the ones who made a very clear and logical link between the research question, the data collected and arguments presented and the conclusions. Many did so. Those candidates who were not able to access the top bands were the ones who were narrative and descriptive.

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

Those candidates who presented conflicting arguments and used critical thinking combined with an appropriate use of theories and relevant data were the ones who were able to reach the top bands.

The reasons that many candidates were not able to reach the top bands were:

- the relative value and importance of arguments presented were lacking. Many essays were largely one sided.
- lack of evaluative skills and the use of critical thinking throughout the essay.
- a lack of empirical and grounded theoretical support.

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

Quite a few essays used business and management language which communicated clearly. Weaker essays made limited use of business terminology which at times lacked precision.

## H: conclusion

Many students produced relevant, substantiated conclusions that were consistent with the evidence presented. Other students produced conclusions that were not entirely consistent with the evidence or unsubstantiated due to lack of critical thinking.

A few students produced conclusions at the beginning of their research and the rest of their essay was largely an attempt to support it.

Some examiners reported a few cases where conclusions were not presented.

Some students provided new information in their conclusions. Consequently, these students were not able to reach the top band.

Please note:

For some research questions **recommendations** are not essential and students were not penalised for not providing recommendations.

## I: formal presentation

Most of the students produced essays that merited some marks. The formal presentation of some essays was excellent. These essays conformed to the required academic standards.

It was also pleasing to see that most students adhered to the word limit.

It was noticeable that many students still do not write the section 'Bibliography' in an appropriate way. Confusion between 'references' and 'bibliography' still exists. Dates of access of various web sites were all too often omitted. Lack of references throughout the research was also apparent in some essays. Students should attempt to show evidence of use of sources in the body not just produce a long list of internet sources and text books with minimal evidence in the body of use of such sources.

Some essays had no headings or sub-headings.

Students should be aware that all information / data has to be sourced including the appendices and SWOT / PEST analyses.

Some students, notably from certain centres, produced their research in a report format and /or a document for the management. Unlike the I.A, The extended essay should be treated as an academic research paper.

## J: abstract

Many students were awarded the top marks for their abstracts. Those who were not were the ones that omit one of the required elements, often the scope/ how the investigation was undertaken. Only very few students exceeded the 300 words.

Good essays had presented a sound overview of the research in the abstract and had stated all three elements required. Candidates lost marks as they didn't include all elements or did not clearly state them.

## **K: holistic judgment**

A lot of essays showed the involvement, intellectual initiative, depth of understanding and insight of the students to merit marks from the top bands. Considerable evidence of such quality was missing in most essays. Some of the supervisors refer to such qualities in their comments.

It was interesting to note that many supervisors did not comment on the viva voce. While the viva is not compulsory it can still be very useful to include comments on the final interview in the report.

Students who:

- used primary sources/ research only
- followed a very prescribed format and/or used and applied the same subject models in the same manner as their peers in the same centres
- were given excessive supervision time (please note the recommendation is between 3 and 5 hours)
- used no more than the text book to define/ explain some models

were judged to demonstrate only 'some' or 'little' evidence of intellectual initiative, depth of understanding and insight.

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

Supervisors need to ensure that the essay titles are sharply focused and therefore within the scope of the 4000 word limit. Over ambitious RQs normally resulted in a superficial narrative approach.

Supervisors must direct candidates in determining the significance of the question i.e. why it is worth investigating.

Supervisors must advise candidates what is meant by good evaluation i.e. more than just summarising previous arguments/comments or making a brief recommendation i.e. 'I think the business should invest'. Instead they should justify recommendations using gathered evidence to support any judgement made.

There are many web sites that help on how to write a bibliography, citations etc. - advise your students to use such sites.

Adhere to the required hours of supervision.