

## The assessment criteria

### Criterion A: Focus and method

This criterion focuses on the topic, the research question and the methodology. It assesses the explanation of the focus of the research (this includes the topic and the research question), how the research will be undertaken, and how the focus is maintained throughout the essay.

Level	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors below.
1–2	<p>The topic is communicated unclearly and incompletely.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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.</li></ul> <p>The research question is stated but not clearly expressed or too broad.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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.</li><li>• 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.</li></ul> <p>Methodology of the research is limited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The source(s) and/or method(s) to be used are limited in range given the topic and research question.</li><li>• There is limited evidence that their selection was informed.</li></ul>
3–4	<p>The topic is communicated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identification and explanation of the research topic is communicated; the purpose and focus of the research is adequately clear, but only partially appropriate.</li></ul> <p>The research question is clearly stated but only partially focused.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The research question is clear but the discussion in the essay is only partially focused and connected to the research question.</li></ul> <p>Methodology of the research is mostly complete.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Source(s) and/or method(s) to be used are generally relevant and appropriate given the topic and research question.</li><li>• There is some evidence that their selection(s) was informed.</li></ul> <p>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.</p>
5–6	The topic is communicated accurately and effectively.

Level	Descriptor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and explanation of the research topic is effectively communicated; the purpose and focus of the research is clear and appropriate.</li> </ul> <p>The research question is clearly stated and focused.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The research question is clear and addresses an issue of research that is appropriately connected to the discussion in the essay.</li> </ul> <p>Methodology of the research is complete.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An appropriate range of relevant source(s) and/or method(s) have been applied in relation to the topic and research question.</li> <li>• There is evidence of effective and informed selection of sources and/or methods.</li> </ul>

## Criterion B: Knowledge and understanding

This criterion assesses the extent to which the research relates to the subject area/discipline used to explore the research question, or in the case of the world studies extended essay, the issue addressed and the two disciplinary perspectives applied, and additionally the way in which this knowledge and understanding is demonstrated through the use of appropriate terminology and concepts.

Level	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors below.
1–2	<p>Knowledge and understanding is limited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The selection of source material has limited relevance and is only partially appropriate to the research question.</li> <li>• Knowledge of the topic/discipline(s)/issue is anecdotal, unstructured and mostly descriptive with sources not effectively being used.</li> </ul> <p>Use of terminology and concepts is unclear and limited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject-specific terminology and/or concepts are either missing or inaccurate, demonstrating limited knowledge and understanding.</li> </ul>
3–4	<p>Knowledge and understanding is good.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The selection of source material is mostly relevant and appropriate to the research question.</li> <li>• Knowledge of the topic/discipline(s)/issue is clear; there is an understanding of the sources used but their application is only partially effective.</li> </ul> <p>Use of terminology and concepts is adequate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of subject-specific terminology and concepts is mostly accurate, demonstrating an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding.</li> </ul> <p>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.</p>

Level	Descriptor
5–6	<p>Knowledge and understanding is excellent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The selection of source materials is clearly relevant and appropriate to the research question.</li> <li>• Knowledge of the topic/discipline(s)/issue is clear and coherent and sources are used effectively and with understanding.</li> </ul> <p>Use of terminology and concepts is good.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of subject-specific terminology and concepts is accurate and consistent, demonstrating effective knowledge and understanding.</li> </ul>

## Criterion C: Critical thinking

This criterion assesses the extent to which critical-thinking skills have been used to analyse and evaluate the research undertaken.

Level	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors below.
1–3	<p>The research is limited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The research presented is limited and its application is not clearly relevant to the RQ.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis is limited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is limited analysis.</li> <li>• Where there are conclusions to individual points of analysis these are limited and not consistent with the evidence.</li> </ul> <p>Discussion/evaluation is limited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An argument is outlined <b>but</b> this is limited, incomplete, descriptive or narrative in nature.</li> <li>• The construction of an argument is unclear and/or incoherent in structure hindering understanding.</li> <li>• Where there is a final conclusion, it is limited and not consistent with the arguments/evidence presented.</li> <li>• There is an attempt to evaluate the research, but this is superficial.</li> </ul> <p>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.</p>
4–6	<p>The research is adequate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some research presented is appropriate and its application is partially relevant to the Research question.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis is adequate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is analysis <b>but</b> this is only partially relevant to the research question; the inclusion of irrelevant research detracts from the quality of the argument.</li> </ul>

Level	Descriptor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any conclusions to individual points of analysis are only partially supported by the evidence.</li> </ul> <p>Discussion/evaluation is adequate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An argument explains the research <b>but</b> the reasoning contains inconsistencies.</li> <li>• The argument may lack clarity and coherence but this does not significantly hinder understanding.</li> <li>• Where there is a final or summative conclusion, this is only partially consistent with the arguments/evidence presented.</li> <li>• The research has been evaluated but not critically.</li> </ul>
7–9	<p>The research is good.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of the research is appropriate and its application is clearly relevant to the research question.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis is good.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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 .</li> <li>• Conclusions to individual points of analysis are supported by the evidence but there are some minor inconsistencies.</li> </ul> <p>Discussion/evaluation is good.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An effective reasoned argument is developed from the research, with a conclusion supported by the evidence presented.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• The research has been evaluated, and this is partially critical.</li> </ul>
10–12	<p>The research is excellent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The research is appropriate to the research question and its application is consistently relevant.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis is excellent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Conclusions to individual points of analysis are effectively supported by the evidence.</li> </ul> <p>Discussion/evaluation is excellent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An effective and focused reasoned argument is developed from the research with a conclusion reflective of the evidence presented.</li> </ul>

Level	Descriptor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• The research has been critically evaluated.</li> </ul>

## Criterion D: Presentation

This criterion assesses the extent to which the presentation follows the standard format expected for academic writing and the extent to which this aids effective communication.

Level	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors below.
1–2	<p>Presentation is acceptable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Some layout considerations may be missing or applied incorrectly.</li> <li>• Weaknesses in the structure and/or layout do not significantly impact the reading, understanding or evaluation of the extended essay.</li> </ul>
3–4	<p>Presentation is good.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Layout considerations are present and applied correctly.</li> <li>• The structure and layout support the reading, understanding and evaluation of the extended essay.</li> </ul>

## Criterion E: Engagement

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, after considering the student's [Reflections on planning and progress form](#).

Level	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors below.
1–2	<p>Engagement is limited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflections on decision-making and planning are mostly descriptive.</li> <li>• These reflections communicate a limited degree of personal engagement with the research focus and/or research process.</li> </ul>
3–4	Engagement is good.

Level	Descriptor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflections on decision-making and planning are analytical and include reference to conceptual understanding and skill development.</li> <li>• These reflections communicate a moderate degree of personal engagement with the research focus and process of research, demonstrating some intellectual initiative.</li> </ul>
5–6	<p>Engagement is excellent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflections on decision-making and planning are evaluative and include reference to the student’s capacity to consider actions and ideas in response to setbacks experienced in the research process.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>