### **Using Assessment Criteria**

Examiners use assessment criteria to grade your essay; you should closely consult these criteria as you write.

### **Criterion A: Framework for the Essay**

Research Question

* Must arise from a specific topic related to your DP subject(s).
* Should be specific, focused, and genuinely a question.
* Should encourage critical analysis and strong argumentation.
* Avoid double-barrelled or descriptive questions.
* Use higher-order questioning (“to what extent?”, “how significant?”, etc.) to promote deep thinking.
* Should not lead to an obvious answer but invite thorough research and argument.

Research Methods

* Explain why chosen methods suit your research and subject methodology.
* Describe methods clearly enough for replication if involving experimentation or fieldwork.
* Demonstrate application of these methods.
* Ensure sufficient quality sources; if lacking, consider revising your question or topic.

Structure

* Follow a basic academic essay structure (introduction, body, conclusion).
* Observe subject-specific structural conventions (e.g., use of figures/tables in sciences or geography).
* Label and refer to all visuals clearly.

Refer to subject-specific guidance for detailed structural advice.

### **Criterion B: Knowledge and Understanding**

Knowledge

* Show systematic exploration of the topic using relevant research findings.
* Avoid excessive quoting; demonstrate knowledge in your own words.
* Knowledge underpins analysis, discussion, and evaluation.

Understanding—Terminology

* Use accurate subject-specific terminology consistently to demonstrate understanding.

Understanding—Concepts

* Incorporate key concepts central to your subject to support analysis and context.

### **Criterion C: Analysis and Line of Argument**

Analysis

* Break down the topic to reveal essential elements using your research question as a guide.
* Support analysis points with relevant evidence.
* Avoid overly descriptive or narrative writing.

Line of Argument

* Develop a reasoned, coherent thread linking parts of your essay.
* Help readers follow your logic and understand your position.
* Link ideas explicitly and logically throughout.

Key elements include:

* Research question
* Research findings
* Conclusions

Signpost these sections clearly without adding unnecessary paragraphs.

### **Criterion D: Discussion and Evaluation**

Discussion

* Offer a balanced review of your findings’ significance from multiple perspectives.
* Present clear conclusions supported by evidence.

Evaluation

* Assess strengths and limitations of your sources and methods.
* Consider authors’ views critically.
* Integrate evaluation into your argument leading to well-founded conclusions.

### **Criterion E: Reflection**

Evaluative

* Reflect on how the extended essay experience has impacted you as a learner.
* Provide explicit examples of skill transfer to other contexts.

Growth

* Consider how changes in perspective influenced decisions.
* Reflect on how insights might shape future thinking and application of skills.

Extended Essay Assessment Criteria

Assessment Criteria

Criterion A: Framework for the Essay  
Guiding question: Do the research question, research methods, and structural conventions provide an effective framework for the essay?  
*Note: If the work does not meet the standards outlined by the performance level descriptors, 0 marks are awarded.*

| **Marks** | **Research Question** | **Research Methods** | **Structure** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1–2 | Research question is stated but lacks relevance, clarity, or focus. | Research methods used are mostly unsuitable for the research question. | Structural conventions are present but do not support communication effectively. |
| 3–4 | Research question is relevant and clear but only partially focused in relation to the essay's scope. | Mostly suitable research methods are explained and partially effective. | Structural conventions support some aspects of communication. |
| 5–6 | Research question is relevant, clear, and focused within the essay's scope. | Suitable research methods are explained and applied effectively. | Structural conventions effectively support communication of the research. |

Criterion B: Knowledge and Understanding  
Guiding question: Does the student demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter used in their research?  
*Note: 0 marks if standards are not met.*

| **Marks** | **Knowledge** | **Terminology** | **Concepts** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1–2 | Research materials establish knowledge but lack relevance. | Terminology used lacks accuracy or is very limited. | Concepts identified are irrelevant or superficially explained. |
| 3–4 | Relevant materials establish some knowledge of the subject. | Some relevant terminology used accurately. | Some relevant concepts explained and partially effective. |
| 5–6 | Comprehensive, relevant materials establish knowledge. | Relevant terminology used accurately and consistently. | Relevant concepts explained and used effectively. |

Criterion C: Analysis and Line of Argument  
Guiding question: Does the student analyse information and produce a coherent line of argument?  
*Note: 0 marks if standards not met.*

| **Marks** | **Analysis** | **Line of Argument** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1–2 | Essay is descriptive rather than analytical. | Partial line of argument present. |
| 3–4 | Analysis is partially effective with some relevant findings. | Partially consistent line linking research question, findings, and conclusions. |
| 5–6 | Analysis is effective and consistently produces relevant findings. | Clear, sustained line linking research question, findings, and conclusions. |

Criterion D: Discussion and Evaluation  
Guiding question: Does the student discuss findings and evaluate the essay?  
*Note: 0 marks if standards not met.*

| **Marks** | **Discussion** | **Evaluation** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1–2 | Significance described without supporting evidence. | Partial evaluation present; strengths and limitations not stated. |
| 3–4 | Partially balanced discussion sometimes supported by evidence. | Evaluation present with some strengths and limitations stated. |
| 5–6 | Balanced discussion often supported by appropriate evidence. | Evaluation present with relevant strengths and limitations described. |
| 7–8 | Balanced discussion fully supported by appropriate evidence. | Evaluation present with relevant strengths and limitations explained. |

Criterion E: Reflection  
Guiding question: Does the student evaluate the effect of the extended essay learning experience on them as a learner?  
*Applies only to the reflective statement on the student's RPPF.*  
*Note: 0 marks if standards not met.*

| **Marks** | **Evaluative Reflection** | **Growth Reflection** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Reflection is descriptive only. | Growth reflection limited to description; no transfer of learning evidence. |
| 2 | Reflection is descriptive with some specific examples. | Some evidence of growth and transfer of learning. |
| 3 | Reflection is partially evaluative with specific examples. | Often shows evidence of growth and transfer of learning. |
| 4 | Reflection is consistently evaluative with specific examples. | Consistently shows evidence of growth and transfer of learning. |

Alignment with Assessment Objectives

* **Criterion A: Framework for the Essay**
  + *Knowledge and Understanding*: Relevance of research question indicates understanding; knowledge of research methods is evident.
  + *Communication of Research*: Research communicated using appropriate structural conventions.
* **Criterion B: Knowledge and Understanding**
  + *Knowledge and Understanding*: Research materials establish knowledge; terminology and concepts demonstrate understanding.
* **Criterion C: Analysis and Line of Argument**
  + *Application and Analysis*: Appropriate analysis determines relevant findings.
  + *Synthesis and Evaluation*: Line of argument links research question, findings, and conclusions.
* **Criterion D: Discussion and Evaluation**
  + *Synthesis and Evaluation*: Balanced discussion of findings’ significance; essay effectiveness evaluated.
* **Criterion E: Reflection**
  + *Synthesis and Evaluation*: Extended essay learning experience evaluated; student’s growth reflected.

Extended Essay Grade Descriptors

* **Grade A**
  + Demonstrates effective research skills with a well-focused, appropriate research question explored within scope.
  + Effective engagement with relevant research areas, methods, and sources.
  + Excellent knowledge and understanding in wider disciplinary context.
  + Effective application of source material; correct use of terminology/concepts supports understanding.
  + Conclusions are consistent, relevant, proficiently analysed; arguments are sustained, reasoned, well-supported by evidence.
  + Research critically evaluated; coherence, consistency, and structural conventions support readability excellently.
  + Reflection is consistently evaluative with specific examples; shows consistent evidence of growth and transfer of learning.
* **Grade B**
  + Appropriate research skills resulting in a research question explored within scope.
  + Reasonably effective engagement with research areas, methods, sources.
  + Good knowledge and understanding in wider disciplinary context.
  + Reasonable application of source material; terminology/concepts reasonably used.
  + Conclusions consistent and accurately analysed; arguments show reason, often supported by evidence.
  + Research sometimes critically evaluated; coherence, consistency, structural conventions support readability well.
  + Reflection partially evaluative with specific examples; often shows growth and transfer of learning.
* **Grade C**
  + Evidence of research leading to a research question not always expressible within scope.
  + Partially effective engagement with mostly appropriate methods/sources; minor discrepancies not interfering with approach.
  + Some knowledge and understanding mostly relevant to discipline’s wider context.
  + Attempted application of source material; terminology/concepts attempted; partial analysis synthesized.
  + Conclusions partly supported by evidence; arguments descriptive rather than analytical.
  + Partially successful evaluation; essay inconsistently coherent with irregular structural conventions but readable.
  + Reflection descriptive with some examples; sometimes shows growth and transfer of learning.
* **Grade D**
  + Lack of research; unsatisfactory focus; unanswerable research question within scope.
  + Occasional engagement with appropriate methods/sources but discrepancies interfere with planning/approach.
  + Some relevant knowledge but sometimes irrelevant; inaccurate or underused terminology/concepts.
  + Irrelevant analysis; inconsistent conclusions from descriptive discussion; lack of evaluation.
  + Limited coherence/consistency; absence of structural conventions hinders readability.
  + Reflection descriptive only; growth reflection limited without transfer evidence.
* **Grade E (Failing Condition)**
  + Little or no research; unfocused, ineffective research question; unsystematic approach.
  + Limited engagement with research/sources; limited and partially accurate knowledge/understanding.
  + Ineffective application of source material; inaccuracies in terminology/concepts; inconsistent analysis summarizing results; descriptive argument outline only.
  + Lack of coherence/consistency; absence of structural conventions significantly hindering readability.
  + Very limited reflection without evidence of transfer of learning.

Examiners assess your extended essay holistically by looking for evidence of each criterion throughout the essay, using a best-fit approach based on level descriptors. They mark positively, giving credit for what you have done rather than penalizing for omissions.

Writing the essay is the final, iterative stage of your project, following pre-research and research. You may start writing before all data is collected and continue researching as new questions arise. Present your essay professionally, adhering to general and subject-specific guidelines.

Active readers (and examiners) use signposts like the title, research question, table of contents, section headings, and introduction/conclusion to predict and understand your essay. Providing clear signposts helps both your reader and yourself.

Use a structured approach like PEELL for each point:

* Point: state your argument
* Evidence: support it with data or quotes
* Explain: clarify how evidence supports the point
* Link: relate to your research question
* Link: connect to the next point

Plan how data and information fit your essay, ensuring enough evidence supports each point. Consider word distribution across sections to maintain balance and decide if your topic needs broadening or narrowing.

Include only graphics or tables that directly support your points, referring to them in the text. Follow writing conventions for your subject regarding quotations and paraphrasing, clearly indicating summarized material and sources. For citations, integrating the author’s name into the narrative can enhance readability and impact.

In science essays, write as continuous text rather than lab reports; place extensive lists in appendices. Evaluate sources and methods within the essay discussion rather than in a separate section after the conclusion.

Address your research question explicitly in the conclusion. A definitive answer may not be possible, but strong argumentation and discussion are crucial for good assessment.

The essay must be no more than 4,000 words; examiners stop reading beyond this limit. Monitor word count regularly, accounting for excluded elements per official guidelines, and report the adjusted count on the title page.

There is no minimum word count, but too short an essay may indicate insufficient depth or too narrow a topic. Mathematics essays often are shorter due to many formulas excluded from word count.

Increasing word count may require broadening your topic or rethinking your essay. After drafting, review and edit your essay for word count before submitting to your supervisor and final upload.

Overall, effective planning, clear structure, adherence to guidelines, and thoughtful presentation help maximize your essay’s quality and assessment outcome

Subject-Specific Guidance for the Extended Essay

### **Language A**

Distinctive Features:  
An extended essay in Language A involves in-depth analysis of one or more texts, focusing on both their effects and the literary devices used to create them. It invites independent literary criticism and engagement with established critical commentary and literary theory.

Key Points:

* The essay must be based on clearly defined text(s), which can be a single text, a comparative study of multiple texts, or a comparison between a literary and a language text.
* For comparative essays, at least one primary text must be originally in the essay’s registered language; others may be translations.
* Essays must be written in the language for which they are registered, not in the Language B subject.
* Texts studied in the Language and Literature course cannot be reused unless different works by the same author are chosen.

Choosing a Topic:

* Topics must relate to literature and/or language and be based on textual analysis, not merely social, political, or philosophical issues.
* Avoid topics that apply generic theories superficially; choose texts with sufficient literary merit and complexity to sustain analysis.
* Text types include novels, poems, plays, media texts, films (focusing on screenplay), and oral texts, among others.
* Avoid overly biographical or sociological approaches that detract from literary analysis.

Research and Writing:

* Use both primary sources (texts) and secondary sources (literary criticism, theory).
* Avoid using recently published works lacking critical commentary or “young adult” novels without depth.
* Focus on authorial ideas and support your analysis with textual evidence.
* Engage critically with secondary sources rather than just summarizing them.
* Comparative essays must justify text selections and specify temporal boundaries.

Assessment Criteria Highlights:

* Provide a clear framework with a focused research question and appropriate structure.
* Use relevant terminology and concepts accurately.
* Develop a strong line of argument supported by textual analysis.
* Offer balanced discussion and critical evaluation of findings.
* Reflect on learning and growth from the essay experience.

### **Language B**

Distinctive Features:  
Language B extended essays develop understanding of a second language and its culture. Topics can explore language use, literary analysis, or cultural studies related to the target language.

Key Points:

* Texts must be originally written or spoken in the target language; translations are not acceptable.
* Fluency is not required, but clarity and academic tone are essential.
* Topics can cover literary analysis, language development/use, or cultural studies with a focus on sociocultural issues specific to the target language.

Choosing a Topic:

* Literary topics analyze original works in the target language; film screenplays may be analyzed as literature but not for cinematographic qualities.
* Language use topics investigate linguistic aspects within cultural contexts.
* Cultural topics focus on concrete artefacts or customs unique to the target language culture.

Research and Writing:

* Use mostly sources in the target language.
* Prefer published over student-generated data for cultural topics.
* Maintain academic tone despite writing in a second language.

Assessment Criteria Highlights:

* Clearly explain how your topic develops knowledge of the language and culture.
* Use appropriate terminology and concepts fluently.
* Maintain a focused line of argument with balanced discussion and critical evaluation.

### **Classical Languages**

Distinctive Features:  
Extended essays in classical Greek or Latin offer deep investigation into linguistic features, literature, or civilization of the ancient world.

Key Points:

* Essays must engage with classical Greek/Latin sources and be submitted in English or Spanish.
* Topics should focus on classical contexts, avoiding modern comparisons.
* Availability of primary and secondary sources is essential.

Research and Writing:

* Use digital libraries and academic editions for primary sources.
* Demonstrate understanding of morphology, syntax, literature, and cultural context as relevant to your topic.

Assessment Criteria Highlights:

* Balance counterarguments in your line of argument.
* Critically evaluate sources’ reliability and relevance.

### **Individuals and Societies**

Distinctive Features:  
These essays explore human experience and behaviour across disciplines like history, economics, psychology, anthropology, politics, etc.

Key Points:

* Topics may arise from personal experience or contemporary issues.
* Each subject has specific methodologies and source requirements; consult subject guides carefully.
* Primary research is often supplemented by secondary data; some subjects restrict primary data use (e.g., psychology).

Research and Writing:

* Use appropriate disciplinary concepts, terminology, and sources.
* Employ suitable research strategies (case studies, discourse analysis, etc.).

Assessment Criteria Highlights:

* Align research question and methods with your chosen discipline.
* Demonstrate knowledge by using relevant concepts and terminology.
* Develop coherent arguments grounded in disciplinary logic.
* Provide balanced discussion considering multiple perspectives.

### **Sciences**

Distinctive Features:  
Science extended essays involve collecting primary or secondary data through scientific methodology leading to evidence-based conclusions.

Key Points:

* Develop falsifiable hypotheses and replicable methods.
* Use controlled variables and standardized methodology if collecting primary data.
* Keep topic manageable within available resources and time.

Research and Writing:

* Ground research in scientific theory with clear methodology allowing replication.
* Present results with appropriate labels, units, and statistical analysis.
* Conclusions should be data-supported; negative results are valid.

Assessment Criteria Highlights:

* Focus research question to enable strong data analysis and critical evaluation.
* Demonstrate understanding of scientific concepts with clear terminology.
* Maintain line of argument directly addressing research question.
* Provide critical discussion linked to findings and methodology.

### **Mathematics**

Distinctive Features:  
Mathematics extended essays may be theoretical (exploring mathematical concepts) or practical (applying mathematics to real-world data).

Key Points:

* Include secondary research (literature review).
* Word count may be less due to algebraic notation.
* Avoid overly broad comparisons requiring deep knowledge of multiple complex areas.

Research and Writing:

* Explain all mathematical steps clearly in your own words.
* Use appropriate notation tools for clarity.
* In practical essays, let data guide choice of analytical methods.

Assessment Criteria Highlights:

* Keep essay focused on the research question with clear mathematical presentation.
* Demonstrate thorough understanding of mathematics used.
* Maintain consistent line of argument aligned with your question.
* Discuss strengths and limitations throughout the essay.

### **Arts**

Distinctive Features:  
Arts extended essays cover dance, film, music, theatre, visual arts—integrating primary source analysis with scholarly research.

Key Points:

* Select primary sources robust enough to sustain 4,000-word analysis.
* Avoid diverging into non-artistic disciplines; focus on artistic meaning/significance.
* Comparative essays require rigorous formal analysis supported by evidence.

Research and Writing:

* Use high-quality reproductions if primary sources cannot be accessed directly.
* Combine primary source analysis with critical secondary perspectives to build argument.

Assessment Criteria Highlights:

* Provide a focused framework informed by existing literature.
* Use accurate artistic terminology; demonstrate knowledge of styles/periods as relevant.
* Build line of argument illustrated by examples from works studied.
* Balance discussion with evaluation of research strengths/limitations.

### **Cross-disciplinary Subjects (Environmental Systems & Societies [ESS], Literature & Performance)**

Distinctive Features:  
Cross-disciplinary essays integrate approaches from two DP subject groups:

* ESS combines sciences and individuals & societies perspectives on environmental topics.
* Literature & Performance examines a written text alongside its performance adaptation.

Key Points:

* ESS topics focus on interactions between environmental systems and societies using holistic systems approaches.
* Literature & Performance requires balanced analysis of both text and performance using appropriate critical terminology.

Research and Writing:

* Use primary/secondary data appropriate to your subject’s methodology.
* Ground your argument in combined disciplinary logic.

Assessment Criteria Highlights:

* Ensure research question reflects cross-disciplinary nature.
* Integrate terminology/concepts effectively.
* Develop line of argument synthesizing interdisciplinary insights.
* Provide balanced discussion evaluating significance of findings.

This guidance complements the Generic Guidance for the Extended Essay, which you should consult alongside subject-specific advice to maximize the quality of your essay across all criteria (A–E).