

GEOGRAPHY

This is a supplementary report following the May 2010 session and should be read in conjunction with the May 2009 extended essay report.

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

Accepting that this could be purely a function of the particular sample I saw, the essays submitted this session were, in general, of a more mediocre standard than the past few years, with fewer really outstanding essays. It continues to be a concern that some essays submitted have only tangential relevance to the subject.

Candidate performance against each criterion

There was a wide range of achievement evident for all criteria. It remains surprising that so many candidates fail to write an adequate abstract, or do not state their research question (singular) near the start of their essay.

A: research question

Some research questions were unclear or so broad that they were impossible to answer satisfactorily within the word limit.

B: introduction

Introductions were generally sound; the better ones made explicit reference to relevant geographical theory (relevant also to criterion D).

C: investigation

Investigative techniques were fairly good, though the data assembled by many candidates was sometimes insufficient in quantity or quality to draw the conclusions they tried to make.

D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

The major weakness in knowledge and understanding was in relating results to existing geographic theory and in explaining anomalies using reasons other than poor methods of data collection.

E: reasoned argument

Most essays demonstrated some attempt to present ideas in a logical sequence.

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

The weakest essays were overly descriptive and were compilations of information which did not necessarily have any clear relevance to the student's chosen research question.

G: use of language appropriate to the subject and

H: conclusion

Most candidates used appropriate geographic terminology and most attempted a conclusion.

I: formal presentation

Formal presentation was usually satisfactory, but it remains a concern that some candidates do not provide a complete bibliography. Others failed to provide clear attribution to original source for all the illustrations or maps included in the text, even if the sources used were listed in a bibliography.

J: abstract

The quality of abstracts was disappointing, with many essays failing to score full marks.

K: holistic judgment

Many students had clearly gained considerable personal satisfaction in the process of writing their essay, even if this was not directly correlated with their level of achievement.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

Supervisors should be advised to dissuade students not studying IB geography from submitting an extended essay in the subject. Such essays are rarely successful.

Candidates should be advised to focus on a single, clearly-worded research question. Weaknesses in the formulation of the research question inevitably make it difficult for the candidate's essay to stay focussed and on track.

Candidates and supervisors should be reminded that having a clear spatial element in their essay (going beyond mere location on a map) is absolutely essential.