

THE EXTENDED ESSAY · FIRST ASSESSMENT MAY 2027

# The EE rubric, decoded.

The new five-criterion markscheme, plus the exact checklist that hits the top band. **Keep it open while you write your 4,000 words.**

## WHAT'S MARKED

## Five criteria

<b>A</b> Framework for the essay	6	<b>B</b> Knowledge and understanding	6
<b>C</b> Analysis and line of argument	6	<b>D</b> Discussion and evaluation	8
<b>E</b> Reflection			4

**30** marks total   graded **A–E**   up to **3** diploma points, with TOK

New model, first assessment **May 2027** (sitting before then? the old 34-mark rubric with a separate Presentation criterion still applies). Presentation is gone, folded into Criterion A. Criterion D is now the highest-weighted at **8** marks, and Criterion E is a single 500-word reflective statement written after your viva voce. Descriptors here are summarised, always check the official subject-specific guidance.

# A

## Framework for the essay

6 marks

Assesses your research question, your research methods, and the structural conventions of the essay, the foundation everything is built on. Presentation now lives here.

MARKS	DESCRIPTOR
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1-2	The RQ, methods and structure provide a limited framework. The RQ is stated but unclear or too broad; methods are barely explained; structural conventions are largely missing.
3-4	The RQ, methods and structure provide an adequate framework. The RQ is focused but methods are only partly justified; most structural conventions are present.
5-6	<b>The RQ, methods and structure provide an effective framework. The RQ is clear and focused, methods are well justified, and structural conventions are complete and correct.</b>

FULL MARKS

### HOW TO HIT THE TOP BAND

- State your RQ as an actual **question**, focused enough to answer fully within 4,000 words.
- Justify your research **methods** and why your sources meet the academic standard for the subject.
- Follow the structural conventions for your subject: title page, contents, page numbers, section headings.
- Apply one referencing system correctly and consistently; number and label every figure and table.
- Keep appendices relevant and minimal, examiners aren't required to read them.
- Refer back to your RQ throughout, not just in the intro and conclusion.

**B**

## Knowledge and understanding 6 marks

Assesses how well your research sits within its subject, and how clearly you show understanding through subject-specific terminology and concepts.

MARKS	DESCRIPTOR
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1-2	Knowledge and understanding is limited; source material has limited relevance, and use of terminology and concepts is unclear and limited.
3-4	Knowledge and understanding is good; source material is mostly relevant, and use of terminology and concepts is adequate.
5-6	<b>Knowledge and understanding is excellent; sources are clearly relevant and used effectively, with accurate and consistent terminology.</b> <span>FULL MARKS</span>

### HOW TO HIT THE TOP BAND

- Situate your RQ clearly within its subject or discipline.
- Use subject-specific terminology and concepts accurately and consistently.
- Choose sources that are clearly relevant and appropriate to the RQ.
- Show a genuine range of sources, not just one type such as websites.
- If your range is naturally narrow, justify why.
- Apply** your sources to build understanding, don't just describe them.



## Analysis and line of argument

6 marks

Assesses how well you analyse your research and build it into one clear, coherent line of argument that runs through the essay and answers your research question.

MARKS	DESCRIPTOR
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1-2	Limited. Research is barely relevant, analysis is thin or descriptive, and the line of argument is unclear or narrative.
3-4	Adequate. Most research is relevant and analysed, but some irrelevant material remains and the argument has gaps or inconsistencies.
5-6	<b>Excellent. Research is consistently relevant, analysis is focused and effective, and a clear, coherent line of argument leads logically to the conclusion.</b>

FULL MARKS

### HOW TO HIT THE TOP BAND

- Build **one** clear line of argument that runs through the whole essay and answers the RQ.
- Analyse, don't just describe: explain what each finding means for your RQ.
- Keep every paragraph relevant, cut material that doesn't serve the argument.
- Make the structure logical so the reader is led steadily from RQ to conclusion.
- Make sure each step of the argument is supported by the evidence you've analysed.
- Save the critical weighing of that evidence for Criterion D, here, focus on building the case.

**D****Discussion and evaluation****8 marks**

The highest-weighted criterion. Assesses how critically you discuss your findings, evaluate your sources, methods and limitations, and weigh what your evidence actually shows.

MARKS	DESCRIPTOR
<b>0</b>	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
<b>1-2</b>	Limited. Little real discussion; findings are reported but not evaluated, and limitations are ignored.
<b>3-4</b>	Adequate. Some discussion and evaluation, but it stays general; limitations are mentioned rather than weighed.
<b>5-6</b>	Good. A mostly critical discussion that evaluates sources and methods and addresses the RQ, with limitations considered.
<b>7-8</b>	<b>Excellent. A consistently critical discussion that evaluates sources, methods and limitations, weighs the strength of the evidence, and considers wider implications.</b>

**FULL MARKS****HOW TO HIT THE TOP BAND**

- Critically **evaluate** your sources and methods: reliability, limitations, possible error.
- Weigh what the evidence actually shows, including where it falls short.
- Discuss unexpected or inconvenient findings rather than ignoring them.
- Make sure your final conclusion reflects the evidence and the discussion.

**E****Reflection****4 marks**

Assesses a single 500-word reflective statement, written after your final viva voce. It's marked on growth, how you developed as a learner and thinker, not on what you did.

MARKS	DESCRIPTOR
<b>0</b>	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
<b>1-2</b>	Reflection is mostly descriptive. It recounts what happened with limited evaluation of your learning or growth.
<b>3-4</b>	<b>Reflection evaluates your learning experience with specific examples, showing genuine growth, transferable skills, and how your thinking and decisions changed.</b>

**FULL MARKS****HOW TO HIT THE TOP BAND**

- Evaluate** your learning, don't just describe what you did.
- Use specific examples of decisions, setbacks and how you adapted.
- Show transferable skills you can carry into future work.
- Explain how your thinking or perspective actually changed.



## Before you submit

The marks you lose most easily on the EE aren't about brilliance, they're about following the rules.

### ✓ THE NON-NEGOTIABLES

Stay under the hard **4,000-word** limit, examiners stop reading there, and anything beyond it is treated as if it weren't written, across every criterion. Reference every source in one consistent system; missing references can be flagged as academic misconduct. Hold your **three reflection sessions** with your supervisor, then write a single **500-word reflective statement** after your viva voce, it's all of Criterion E. Remember the EE is now marked out of **30**, graded **A–E**, and combines with TOK for up to **3 points** toward your diploma.

### THE FIVE-MINUTE FINAL CHECK

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> RQ stated as a question on the title page and in the intro. | <input type="checkbox"/> Argument links back to the RQ in every section.    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Table of contents page numbers match the text.              | <input type="checkbox"/> Bibliography contains only sources actually cited. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Figures and tables numbered and labelled.                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Word count under 4,000; appendices trimmed.        |

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