

Sports, Exercise and Health Science

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

As the popularity of the subject increases the number of Extended Essays has subsequently increased. The range and diversity of the chosen fields of study were both broad and interesting. As per last year the majority tended to focus on physiological aspects of athletes or performance outcomes. The vast majority included experiments conducted by the candidate. There were some good examples of movement analysis essays, although these were again in the minority. The essays written in the Sports Psychology field were also very diverse, ranging from ‘Aggression in team and individual sports’ to ‘Pre-performance routines’. For the second year running there were a number of essays that tended to focus on head injuries, concussion and protective headwear. Whilst there was some note-able improvement in dealing with this topic, there was still too much focus on the equipment itself (technical and manufacturing details) and not enough on the physiological and sporting effects the protection provides. Great care needs to be taken with this area if the candidates choose to look into this field of study, as it can too easily lead away from the main content of the course. Sadly there were few essays that were submitted in the SEHS category that were not subject related. When supervising it is advisable to seek assistance as to the ‘fit’ of the essay and to refer to the syllabus itself for guidance.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: research question

A number of research questions (RQ) for SEHS tended to be too broad. An example of this would be ‘The effects of recovery drinks on runners’. Both runners and recovery drinks require definition. For example, specific drinks and specific age/gender groups would be more appropriate. A further problem was the use of the term ‘Performance’ when used as an indicator of outcome.

Criterion B: introduction

It proved very difficult for candidates to score maximum marks in this area. Weaker candidates failed to establish why the topic was worthy of investigation beyond their own personal motivation or opinions. When establishing the worthiness of the RQ, reference to literature and the investigation undertaken should be mentioned. Many essays failed to score full marks for criterion B as one or more of these elements were missing.

Criterion C: investigation

It is not essential to conduct a direct experiment in every SEHS extended essay. There are many topics that will be better served by finding and analysing a range of appropriate resources. This is often the case in extended essays in the Sports Psychology area. Care must be taken to ensure the EE does not become an expanded Internal Assessment task – they are both discrete assessments with their own assessment criteria. This was the case far too often this session. Candidates relied on their IA skills and neglected the reasoned argument and other aspects of the Extended Essay. This approach is self-penalising for candidates.

Criterion D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

This is an area that candidates generally fared well in. It was clear that the topics held genuine interest for the majority of candidates.

Criterion E: reasoned argument

There should be a continued reference to the RQ, where this is done the reasoning has a clear thread between the introduction and the conclusion. The weaker candidates often made individual arguments of small points as they remembered they had to provide some argument. Essays that had a direct experiment by the candidate again fared worse in this area, too much focus was on the outcome and the determination to prove their hypothesis.

Criterion F: application of analytical and evaluative skills

Where candidates conduct their own experiment there is ample scope to demonstrate analytical and evaluative skills. Where there was no experiment the analysis tended to be weaker as these skills appeared less developed. There were some exceptions to this in the Sports Psychology field, with some excellent interpretation of resources and data.

Criterion G: use of language appropriate to the subject:

A good extended essay with a well-defined RQ should provide ample opportunity to demonstrate good terminology and subject specific language. Essays that contained little or no connection to the subject area, inevitably prove poor for demonstrating adequate subject specific language. In order to reach the higher levels candidates need to be consistent and precise in their language.

Criterion H: conclusion

As is often the case at this level of study a number of candidates rather 'ran out of steam' by the time they wrote the conclusion, rushing and summing up in abbreviated terms. The better essays looked forward and suggested further areas to study as well as evaluated any direct experiment.

Criterion I: formal presentation

This area has improved from last year. Candidates are reminded that where there is a numerical value there should be a note of what this represents.

Criterion J: abstract

On the whole there was much improvement in this area.

Criterion K: holistic judgement

This is an area where examiners will carefully read the comments provided by the supervisors as they give a valuable insight into the process and progress of the candidate and the writing of the essay.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

Sports exercise and health science has undoubtedly increased in popularity as a choice for the EE. Supervising an essay in this area can require a great deal of work in helping students in terms of equipment, space and time. This supervision is crucial and the better essays all had supervisors who seemed interested and knowledgeable in the subject area.

The main problems again tended to be in helping the students produce a focused RQ, this in turn will be a deciding factor in the outcome of the essay. This is an area that still requires some development. When deciding on the RQ supervisors should remember to question the student on 'how' they intend to gather data and results and whether this covers the question in the RQ, also to determine if the RQ allows for reasoned argument. It may be necessary to revisit the RQ several times before settling on the final wording. Candidates should not be left to their own devices and produce one RQ that is not explored through discussion. The most successful essays are those that are based on clearly defined independent variables and a quantifiable and easily measured dependent variable. The majority of field experiments can be conducted with equipment found in most schools. Recognised 'gold standard' sports tests are to be encouraged.

Poor essays were produced when there was no early intervention by the supervisor and the candidate was left to their own devices and were liable to follow the essay down the wrong path. This leads to endemic problems throughout all the criterion and could be avoided with time spent with the supervisor at the start of the essay.

There were a small number of supervisors who did not make comment at all, this is not helpful to the candidate or the examiner.

The keys areas to address are:

- Establishing a focused research question
- Establishing and maintaining a reasoned argument
- Bibliographic entries and in-text references
- Avoiding bias
- Writing a thorough conclusion
- Writing a concise and accurate introduction