

Group 2 Languages

Overview

A group 2 extended essay is intended for students who are studying a second modern language. Students may **not** write a group 2 extended essay in a language that they are offering as a language A1 for their diploma.

A group 2 extended essay provides students with the opportunity to develop their awareness and knowledge of the language studied, and their understanding of the culture concerned. This is achieved by enabling students to pursue their interest in the language through research based on texts (taken to be any meaningful piece of spoken or written language, for example, an article, a book, a play, a poem) or on specific cultural artifacts (such as works of fine art or architecture, films, radio or television programmes, or popular music).

The extended essay must be written in the language for which it is registered (the target language). It must be focused on matters related to the target culture.

The extended essay is a **research essay** and the assessment criteria emphasize the importance of research skills rather than linguistic proficiency. Although a certain level of ability in the language is obviously desirable in order to undertake a group 2 extended essay, fluency is neither a prerequisite nor a guarantee of success. In fact, students who are fluent in the language but who do not demonstrate the required research skills will definitely achieve a lower mark than students who are less fluent but who fulfill the other assessment criteria.

Choice of topic

As indicated in the "Overview" section, a group 2 extended essay aims to develop students' knowledge and understanding of the target language and culture. Any proposed topic that will not further that aim should be rejected. The essay should consist of the study of an issue in one of three categories: language, culture and society, or literature. Combinations of these are also permissible. Each category has specific requirements that are described in this section. In addition, students should ensure that their topic:

- is worthy of investigation. For example, "Does tourism have a future in Switzerland?" or "Is the wine industry an important source of income for France?" would be too trivial for an essay of 4,000 words.
- is not too broad and allows for an effective treatment within the word limit. Topics such as "Racism in France", "The theatre of the absurd", or "A history of the French language" would need to be given a sharper focus.
- provides them with an opportunity to develop an argument and to demonstrate critical analysis and personal judgment rather than just knowledge. Topics that are merely descriptive or narrative, or that only summarize secondary sources (such as "French cheeses", "The Provence region", "The events of May 1968 in Paris"), should be avoided.

In each category the examples given are for guidance only.

Category 1: language

The essay should be a specific analysis of the language (its use, structure and so on) normally related to its cultural context or a specific text.

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| Language | French |
| Topic | Language laws in Quebec |
| Research question | To what extent has Bill 101 contributed to increasing the prevalence of the French language in Quebec? |
| Approach | An investigation into the effect of Bill 101 on the status of the French language in Quebec. |
| Language | Japanese |
| Topic | Foreign words (<i>gairaigo</i>) in Japanese |
| Research question | Do young people use more words of foreign origin than older people? |
| Approach | A survey of younger people and older people. Results are compared for knowledge of foreign words, frequency of their use and attitude towards their use. |
| Language | Spanish |
| Topic | Alternative use of the forms “vos” and “usted” in the Spanish of the Rio de la Plata (River Plate) region |
| Research question | To what extent have differences between formal and informal usage disappeared from the language used in the Rio de la Plata region? |
| Approach | An investigation into the language of young people from Buenos Aires in the Rio de la Plata region in a range of communicative situations. |

Category 2: culture and society

A: essays of a sociocultural nature with an impact on the language

The essay should be an analysis of a cultural nature that describes the impact of a particular issue on the form or use of the language.

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|-------------------|--|
| Language | French |
| Topic | Language and feminism |
| Research question | Should feminine forms of more job titles be created in French to reflect shifting gender roles? |
| Approach | An examination of the linguistic and sociological arguments for and against the feminization of more job titles in French. |
| Language | Spanish |
| Topic | Language and discrimination |
| Research question | To what extent does the language used by groups of young students from a secondary school in Buenos Aires reflect racial discrimination? |
| Approach | A sociolinguistic investigation into the way language used by young people reflects attitudes of discrimination present in contemporary society. |

B: essays of a general cultural nature based on specific cultural artifacts

The essay should be an analysis of a more general cultural nature but specific to a country or community where the language is spoken. Topics that are too broad and could apply to many cultures (like globalization, the death penalty or eating disorders) are inappropriate.

Essays of a general cultural nature must be based on specific cultural artifacts. Cultural artifacts in this context are understood to include a wide variety of phenomena, ranging from works of fine art to newspapers, magazines and cartoons, to films, television programmes and popular music.

Language

French

Topic

Social criticism in the songs of MC Solaar

Research question

What is the nature of MC Solaar's rap critique of modern French society?

Approach

An investigation into the thematic content of MC Solaar's songs.

Language

Spanish

Topic

Representation of women in tango

Research question

Which roles do women play in tango lyrics?

Approach

A critical and thematic analysis of a corpus of tango lyrics to reveal female roles.

Category 3: literature

The essay should be an analysis of a literary type, based on a specific work or works of literature exclusively from the target language. In the case of a comparison of texts, **all** texts must originally have been written in the target language.

Language

French

Topic

Haitian politics as depicted in works by Dany Laferrière and Gary Victor

Research question

Does Dany Laferrière in *Pays sans chapeau* share the same point of view on Haitian politics as Gary Victor in *La Piste des sortilèges*?

Approach

An investigation into the similarities between the ways these two writers treat this theme.

Language

Spanish

Topic

Fictionalization of history in Abel Posse's novels

Research question

How does Abel Posse construct an imaginary history in his novel *El largo atardecer del caminante*?

Approach

A textual analysis to reveal the narrative techniques used by the author to make the plot contrast with the order of chronological events.

Treatment of the topic

The student should demonstrate an understanding of the issues raised by the research question and offer an objective, balanced analysis of these issues. The essay must be presented as a coherent argument, supported by relevant examples. Essays that are simply descriptive are unlikely to achieve a high mark.

In the case of an essay of a general cultural nature, the student should focus on, and research, what makes the topic specific and unique to the country or countries concerned. The student may draw relevant comparisons with another culture, if appropriate. However, it is essential that the focus remains on the culture of the language concerned. The purpose of comparisons is to shed light on the specific cultural issues raised by the research question of the essay.

Students may choose to analyse texts in a detailed literary fashion, or they may use literary texts as a means of exploring the target language or its culture and society.

Whenever questionnaires have been used or statistics presented, the student must show an understanding of the results and be able to interpret them with reference to the issue. A copy of any questionnaires or surveys should be included as an appendix.

If photographs and/or illustrations have been used, they should be labelled, explained and justified in the context of the topic.

Interpreting the assessment criteria

Criterion A: research question

The research topic can often be best defined in the form of a question. It may, however, also be presented as a statement or proposition for discussion. It must:

- be specific and sharply focused
- be stated clearly early on in the essay
- fit in one of the categories (language, culture and society, or literature), or be a combination of these.

If the topic does not meet the requirements of one of the three possible categories (for example, if an essay of a general cultural nature is not based on specific cultural artifacts), a maximum of level 1 is awarded. If the research question is not related to the target language/culture/literature, level 0 is awarded.

| Achievement level | Descriptor |
|-------------------|---|
| 0 | The research question is not stated in the introduction or does not lend itself to a systematic investigation in an extended essay in the subject in which it is registered. |
| 1 | The research question is stated in the introduction but is not clearly expressed or is too broad in scope to be treated effectively within the word limit. |
| 2 | The research question is clearly stated in the introduction and sharply focused, making effective treatment possible within the word limit. |

Criterion B: introduction

The introduction of the essay should be brief. It should focus on the research question and how it relates to existing knowledge of the subject. The student's personal experience or particular opinion is rarely relevant here.

For category 1 (language) and category 2 (culture and society) essays, the introduction should make clear how the chosen topic is specific or of special interest to the target culture.

For category 3 (literature) essays, lengthy accounts of the historical or biographical context of a literary text should be avoided, as they usually do not help to explain the significance of a topic in a satisfactory manner.

| Achievement level | Descriptor |
|-------------------|---|
| 0 | Little or no attempt is made to set the research question into context. There is little or no attempt to explain the significance of the topic. |
| 1 | Some attempt is made to set the research question into context. There is some attempt to explain the significance of the topic and why it is worthy of investigation. |
| 2 | The context of the research question is clearly demonstrated. The introduction clearly explains the significance of the topic and why it is worthy of investigation. |

Criterion C: investigation

Students must use authentic sources, mainly written in the target language. In the case of literature-based essays, all texts must have originally been written in the target language. Literary quotations must also be in the target language of the essay (that is, taken from the original works and not from translations).

Students are encouraged to look critically at the secondary sources that they read. The proper planning of an essay should involve interrogating secondary sources in light of the research question, so that the views of critics are used to support the student's own argument, and not as a substitute for that argument. It may thus be helpful for a student to challenge a statement by a critic instead of simply agreeing with it.

For category 3 (literature) essays, the relevant information to support the argument of the essay should mainly come from the primary text (although consulting a range of secondary sources may also be helpful).

If students make use of Internet-based sources, they should do so critically and circumspectly in full awareness of their potential unreliability.

| Achievement level | Descriptor |
|-------------------|---|
| 0 | There is little or no evidence that sources have been consulted or data gathered, and little or no evidence of planning in the investigation. |
| 1 | A range of inappropriate sources has been consulted, or inappropriate data has been gathered, and there is little evidence that the investigation has been planned. |
| 2 | A limited range of appropriate sources has been consulted, or data has been gathered, |

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| | and some relevant material has been selected. There is evidence of some planning in the investigation. |
| 3 | A sufficient range of appropriate sources has been consulted, or data has been gathered, and relevant material has been selected. The investigation has been satisfactorily planned. |
| 4 | An imaginative range of appropriate sources has been consulted, or data has been gathered, and relevant material has been carefully selected. The investigation has been well planned. |

Criterion D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Students must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the topic chosen, together with its context: historical, social and cultural, as well as academic.

For category 1 (language) and category 2 (culture and society) essays, this knowledge should be based at least partially on primary sources. (Primary sources are specific cultural artifacts, data and interviews. Secondary sources are textbooks, published criticism, articles and so on.)

For category 3 (literature) essays, the quality of the student’s understanding of the primary text(s) is the main concern.

Where the topic of the essay is not related to the target language/culture/literature, level 0 is awarded. Where the topic of the essay is not convincingly related to the target language/culture/literature, level 1 is the maximum that may be awarded.

| Achievement level | Descriptor |
|-------------------|---|
| 0 | The essay demonstrates no real knowledge or understanding of the topic studied. |
| 1 | The essay demonstrates some knowledge but little understanding of the topic studied. The essay shows little awareness of an academic context for the investigation. |
| 2 | The essay demonstrates an adequate knowledge and some understanding of the topic studied. The essay shows some awareness of an academic context for the investigation. |
| 3 | The essay demonstrates a good knowledge and understanding of the topic studied. Where appropriate, the essay successfully outlines an academic context for the investigation. |
| 4 | The essay demonstrates a very good knowledge and understanding of the topic studied. Where appropriate, the essay clearly and precisely locates the investigation in an academic context. |

Criterion E: reasoned argument

Students should be aware of the need to give their essays the backbone of a developing argument. Personal views should not simply be stated but need to be supported by reasoned argument to persuade the reader of their validity.

For category 1 (language) and category 2 (culture and society) essays, a mere compilation of facts or a description of events does not suffice.

For category 3 (literature) essays, students should be aware that straightforward description of a literary text through plot summary or narration of the action does not usually advance an argument and should generally be avoided (although, where a little-known text is under discussion, a brief description may be appropriate).

| Achievement level | Descriptor |
|-------------------|--|
| 0 | There is no attempt to develop a reasoned argument in relation to the research question. |
| 1 | There is a limited or superficial attempt to present ideas in a logical and coherent manner, and to develop a reasoned argument in relation to the research question. |
| 2 | There is some attempt to present ideas in a logical and coherent manner, and to develop a reasoned argument in relation to the research question, but this is only partially successful. |
| 3 | Ideas are presented in a logical and coherent manner, and a reasoned argument is developed in relation to the research question, but with some weaknesses. |
| 4 | Ideas are presented clearly and in a logical and coherent manner. The essay succeeds in developing a reasoned and convincing argument in relation to the research question. |

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

Appropriate application of analytical and evaluative skills here is the use of persuasive analysis and argument to support a personal interpretation or point of view. Second-hand interpretations or viewpoints that are derived solely from secondary sources will lose marks under this criterion, as will purely descriptive or narrative essays.

| Achievement level | Descriptor |
|-------------------|--|
| 0 | The essay shows no application of appropriate analytical and evaluative skills. |
| 1 | The essay shows little application of appropriate analytical and evaluative skills. |
| 2 | The essay shows some application of appropriate analytical and evaluative skills, which may be only partially effective. |
| 3 | The essay shows sound application of appropriate analytical and evaluative skills. |
| 4 | The essay shows effective and sophisticated application of appropriate analytical and evaluative skills. |

Criterion G: use of language appropriate to the subject

Clarity and precision of communication in group 2 essays includes the correct use of vocabulary, sentence structure and grammar, as well as the selection of an appropriate register and style.

There is no single acceptable style for essays. They may be written with, for example, different degrees of personal emphasis, some writers using the first person and others preferring a more

impersonal mode of communication. Whether a style is appropriate or not depends on the common practice in each different language or culture.

| Achievement level | Descriptor |
|-------------------|--|
| 0 | The language used is inaccurate and unclear. There is no effective use of terminology appropriate to the subject. |
| 1 | The language used sometimes communicates clearly but does not do so consistently. The use of terminology appropriate to the subject is only partly accurate. |
| 2 | The language used for the most part communicates clearly. The use of terminology appropriate to the subject is usually accurate. |
| 3 | The language used communicates clearly. The use of terminology appropriate to the subject is accurate, although there may be occasional lapses. |
| 4 | The language used communicates clearly and precisely. Terminology appropriate to the subject is used accurately, with skill and understanding. |

Criterion H: conclusion

“Consistent” is the key word here: the conclusion should develop out of the argument and not introduce new or extraneous matter. It should not repeat the material of the introduction; rather, it should present a new synthesis in light of the discussion.

| Achievement level | Descriptor |
|-------------------|--|
| 0 | Little or no attempt is made to provide a conclusion that is relevant to the research question. |
| 1 | A conclusion is attempted that is relevant to the research question but may not be entirely consistent with the evidence presented in the essay. |
| 2 | An effective conclusion is clearly stated; it is relevant to the research question and consistent with the evidence presented in the essay. It should include unresolved questions where appropriate to the subject concerned. |

Criterion I: formal presentation

This criterion relates to the extent to which the essay conforms to academic standards about the way in which research papers should be presented. The presentation of essays that omit a bibliography or that do not give references for quotations is deemed unacceptable (level 0).

Essays that omit one of the required elements—title page, table of contents, page numbers—are deemed no better than satisfactory (maximum level 2), while essays that omit two of them are deemed poor at best (maximum level 1).

| Achievement level | Descriptor |
|-------------------|--|
| 0 | The formal presentation is unacceptable, or the essay exceeds 4,000 words. |
| 1 | The formal presentation is poor. |
| 2 | The formal presentation is satisfactory. |

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| 3 | The formal presentation is good. |
| 4 | The formal presentation is excellent. |

Criterion J: abstract

The abstract is judged on the clarity with which it presents an overview of the research and the essay, not on the quality of the research question itself, nor on the quality of the argument or the conclusions.

The abstract should be written in the language of the extended essay. Elements such as personal information about the student and his or her reasons for choosing the topic should not be included in the abstract.

| Achievement level | Descriptor |
|-------------------|---|
| 0 | The abstract exceeds 300 words or one or more of the required elements of an abstract (listed above) is missing. |
| 1 | The abstract contains the elements listed above but they are not all clearly stated. |
| 2 | The abstract clearly states all the elements listed above. |

Criterion K: holistic judgment

Qualities that are rewarded under this criterion include the following.

- Intellectual initiative: Ways of demonstrating this in group 2 essays include the choice of topic and research question, and locating and using a wide range of sources, including some that may have been little used previously or generated for the study (for instance, transcripts of oral interviews).
- Insight and depth of understanding: These are most likely to be demonstrated as a consequence of detailed research, reflection that is thorough and well informed, and reasoned argument that consistently and effectively addresses the research question.
- Creativity: In group 2 essays, this includes qualities such as inventive approaches to linguistic, cultural or literary analysis, and new approaches to popular topics.

| Achievement level | Descriptor |
|-------------------|--|
| 0 | The essay shows no evidence of such qualities. |
| 1 | The essay shows little evidence of such qualities. |
| 2 | The essay shows some evidence of such qualities. |
| 3 | The essay shows clear evidence of such qualities. |
| 4 | The essay shows considerable evidence of such qualities. |