

## Reflection and the EE (for supervisors)

### IB Extended Essay

#### Guiding student reflection

In critically reviewing your engagement in the research process, it might help to think in terms of three levels of reflection: descriptive, analytical and evaluative reflection. The table below gives examples of guiding questions to help with this. They are not exhaustive.

Level of reflection	Example of the kinds of questions students may have asked and answered of themselves
Descriptive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What did I do?</li><li>• How did I undertake my research?</li><li>• What were the problems I faced?</li><li>• Did my approach or strategies change throughout the process?</li><li>• What have been the high and the low points of the research and writing process?</li></ul>
Analytical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Was my research successful?</li><li>• If I changed my approach or strategies during the process, why did I do this?</li><li>• What did I learn from the experience in terms of my understanding of the subject area and/or the skills needed to undertake research?</li><li>• How has my understanding of the topic and research process developed throughout the task?</li></ul>
Evaluative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If I were to undertake this research again, would I do it differently—if so, why or why not?</li><li>• What has affected this?</li><li>• If I did do the research again, would I change the theories applied or the methodological approach? Would this have led to a different outcome?</li><li>• What can I conclude from this?</li><li>• Were the strategies I used for undertaking my research the most appropriate for achieving my outcomes?</li><li>• What, if any, questions emerged as a result of my research that I was not expecting? Would these questions influence my approach if I were to undertake the research again?</li></ul>

These levels correspond to the attainment levels of the rubric for [criterion E \(engagement\)](#).

### Reflections on planning and progress form

The [Reflections on planning and progress form](#) enables examiners to gain an insight into students' thinking processes while researching and writing the EE. The examiners are looking to see how students' thinking and skills have developed during this time.

The assessment criterion E (engagement) will be applied in the assessment of students' reflections. Representing 18% of the total grade, this is an extremely important part of the overall EE assessment.

It is important to stress with students that examiners want to gain an insight into their thinking processes throughout their experience with the EE. **Criterion E assesses the student's engagement with their research focus and the research process. It will be applied by the examiner at the end of the assessment of the essay, after considering the student's RPPF.**

Markband	Level descriptor
0	<b>The work does not reach a standard outlined by the description or a RPPF has not been submitted.</b>
1–2	<b>Engagement is limited:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Reflections on decision-making and planning are mostly descriptive.</li><li>● These reflections communicate a limited degree of personal engagement with the research focus and/or research process.</li></ul>
3–4	<b>Engagement is good:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Reflections on decision-making and planning is analytical and includes reference to conceptual understanding and skill development.</li><li>● These reflections communicate a moderate degree of personal engagement with the research focus and process of research, demonstrating some intellectual initiative.</li></ul>

5–6	<p><b>Engagement is excellent:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflections on decision-making and planning are evaluative and include reference to the student’s capacity to consider actions and ideas in response to challenges experienced in the research process.</li> <li>• These reflections communicate a high degree of intellectual and personal engagement with the research focus and process of research, demonstrating authenticity, intellectual initiative and/or creative approach in the student voice.</li> </ul>
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An essay that achieves highly against criteria A–D will not automatically achieve highly against criterion E. Students who have struggled with the EE can nonetheless achieve quite highly against criterion E. The crucial point is to show what they have learned in terms of their understanding of the research process, its challenges and their own personal development.

The examiners will read the RPPF together with the EE and will want to be able to recognize the student’s voice in their reflections.

Once students have entered a reflection on the RPPF, they must not amend it with hindsight. Amendments will undermine the authenticity of the reflection and may hide the development the examiners are looking for. The following exemplars are for guidance (please note that the exemplars are based on authentic student work but have been modified for illustrative purposes). They give some insights into the kinds of comments that may be included on the RPPF.

There is no one “right” way to complete this form and the examples provided here **must not** be viewed as the “ideal”.

### Supervisor comments and analysis

The supervisor writes her or his comments after conducting the *viva voce* with the student.

The comments are summative in nature. They should reflect the whole process and the student comments made in their reflection sessions—initial, interim and final (*viva voce*).

The examiner will assess the RPPF against criterion E (engagement), but the supervisor should not attempt to do the examiner’s job with her or his comments. The supervisor’s comments should provide supporting evidence and context for what the student has shown on the RPPF.

**Criterion E (engagement) assesses the student’s engagement with the research focus and the research process. It will be applied by the examiner at the end of the assessment of the essay, after considering the student’s RPPF.**

Markband	Level descriptor
0	<b>The work does not reach a standard outlined by the description or a RPPF has not been submitted.</b>
1–2	<b>Engagement is limited:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reflections on decision-making and planning are mostly descriptive.</li> <li>● These reflections communicate a limited degree of personal engagement with the research focus and/or research process.</li> </ul>
3–4	<b>Engagement is good:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reflections on decision-making and planning is analytical and includes reference to conceptual understanding and skill development.</li> <li>● These reflections communicate a moderate degree of personal engagement with the research focus and process of research, demonstrating some intellectual initiative.</li> </ul>
5–6	<b>Engagement is excellent:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reflections on decision-making and planning are evaluative and include reference to the student's capacity to consider actions and ideas in response to challenges experienced in the research process.</li> <li>● These reflections communicate a high degree of intellectual and personal engagement with the research focus and process of research, demonstrating authenticity, intellectual initiative and/or creative approach in the student voice.</li> </ul>

## Exemplars

### Exemplar 1

<b>Supervisor's comment</b>	<p>The candidate's connection with her topic is of a rather personal nature: as a matter of fact, one would be hard-pressed to identify an example that would hit closer to home. The student is Lebanese and lived in Lebanon, raised by a Shia Muslim father and Sunni mother.</p> <p>The EE process turned out to be a rewarding one, as it offered the candidate the unique and invaluable opportunity to study and begin to understand a conflict that she was aware of but not familiar with in terms of the historical significance of names, events and places. By looking at the facts, the student discovered that the underlying cause was religious factionalism.</p> <p>In addition, the candidate was surprised how she was able to maintain an objective distance from the topic, despite her background.</p> <p>One difficult aspect involving the research process was getting started in terms of laying the foundation and finding reliable historians. However, once started, and after finding several good sources, everything moved forward smoothly.</p> <p>Another challenge involved time management and the writing and rewriting of the essay. In general, the student spent most of her time establishing how various religious groups in Lebanon viewed each other and, in relation to this, how to separate opinions from facts.</p> <p>Overall, in the candidate's assessment, the EE process was very much worth it. Main future application and benefit of having gone through said process is an awareness of the importance of managing one's time well by getting a head start and spacing out time wisely. The candidate appreciated how the personal nature of the essay made her motivated to want to write and research.</p>
<b>Value of the comment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Shows the student's personal connection to the topic as well as her struggles with the process of writing an EE.</li><li>● Demonstrates how the student consciously avoided bias in her research despite her obvious personal connection.</li><li>● Focuses on how the student developed good research and time management skills through her work on the EE while demonstrating perseverance in executing the final product.</li></ul>

### Exemplar 2

<b>Supervisor's comment</b>	The student was reflective in his writing process. He freely shared ideas with enthusiasm and was open to suggestions. He understood that the EE is about the process, not just the product.
<b>Value of the comment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The supervisor is positive about this student.</li><li>• Lacks details and/or examples that address the importance of engagement in the process, eg mentions the student has engaged in reflection of the writing process, but there is no sense of what type of reflection was done nor any mention of its outcome.</li></ul>

### Exemplar 3

<b>Supervisor's comment</b>	<p>The student chose this area because it relates to research he is currently involved in as a temporary intern at a local university.</p> <p>When discussing the EE process, he described how his greatest challenge was understanding the different journal articles he consulted. Because of the high level of knowledge needed to fully understand the concepts involved, he re-read the articles numerous times to try to comprehend the processes they employed.</p> <p>Through this approach, he has improved his use and understanding of scientific language and terminology, though his grasp of some of the concepts remains somewhat vague in the essay.</p> <p>The student showed himself to be something of a risk-taker in choosing to look at other scientists' research and data to come to new conclusions instead of doing his own experiment.</p>
<b>Value of the comment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Indicates student individual initiative and personal growth through engagement in the process. Even though the candidate's knowledge and understanding may be limited, this does not affect the level of engagement.</li><li>• The level of student reflection is not indicated in the commentary.</li></ul>

#### Exemplar 4

<b>Supervisor's comment</b>	<p>I have worked with E over the last year leading up to the submission of her EE. Although E was somewhat slow in producing written work, she was engaged intellectually in the EE task.</p> <p>During the <i>viva voce</i>, E explained that she is passionate about visual arts but she wanted to analyse more current and pervasive texts in her EE, which led her to advertisements.</p> <p>Further, she chose her focus on company X since it is a multinational company with several brands around the world that she could analyse. She also explained that she liked the fact that company X has leading brands in the US and in Brazil, as she planned to analyse the use of language as well as images in the ads.</p> <p>E mentioned that she particularly enjoyed researching and analysing entire product ads and campaigns, yet she felt the need to select representative ads to analyse more carefully considering the scope of the EE. She also commented that she was surprised to find that beer advertisements are so culturally oriented.</p> <p>She explained that the difficulties she encountered in the EE were mostly within the writing process itself, as she struggles with writing generally. Thus, her advice to other students is to spread out the EE writing, so that there is more time to write and revise under less time pressure. Finally, E explained that she learned the value of time management through the EE, since she did not always manage her time well and she struggled to meet internal deadlines.</p> <p>E's comments during the <i>viva voce</i> illustrated a fairly good degree of critical analysis and depth of understanding of her research question.</p>
<b>Value of the comment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Indicates that the student was both engaged in the process of doing the EE and the topic of her research.</li><li>● The supervisor clearly feels that the student has learned a lot through the process and has been able to some degree to reflect on this. There is also a clear insight into the rationale for subject choice in terms of the area of research.</li></ul>