2024 VCE Extended Investigation oral external assessment report

General comments

The 2024 VCE Extended Investigation oral presentation offered students a platform to present and defend their year-long research investigation. It involved a two-part assessment: a 7–10-minute presentation followed by 8–10 minutes of questions and challenges. The assessment was based on four criteria: knowledge and understanding of the research area, defence of research findings and understanding of audience, responses to questions and challenges, and reflection and evaluation.

**Critical thinking** is present across the four criteria, and a range of critical thinking skills and techniques must be drawn on to present a coherent and rigorous investigation. While description or summary is necessary to present the research, students must use a range of techniques to demonstrate their critical engagement throughout. Critical engagement with the academic literature, critical consideration of methodological choices, and defence of research findings in response to potential objections or limitations are all essential features of the oral investigation.

**Effective communication** is also key to success in this task. Students must tailor their presentation to a non-specialist audience, using clear and precise language. While it may be necessary to utilise concepts specific to the academic field, students must ensure that they have provided the non-specialist audience with sufficient information to grasp the development of the investigation. In addition, students must structure the presentation coherently, for example, by using signposting and other techniques to guide the audience.

**Students must drive their own research** and are strongly encouraged to select topics in which they have a genuine interest. This must be counterbalanced with considerations about the specificity of the research question, choice of methodology, and forms of evidence or data used.

**Ethical consideration** of the research in accordance with ethical codes of conduct in research should be given when relevant. Students must be prepared to demonstrate their understanding of the ethical complexities of their investigation, including issues related to participant consent, data privacy and potential biases.

**Artificial intelligence** (AI) programs are now a component of student learning. Many students can benefit from the use of AI programs to develop their research; however, students should be made aware that the use of AI to structure and/or construct sections of their writing may prevent them from demonstrating high-level critical thinking skills.

Advice for teachers and students

* Understand the assessment criteria: students should use the assessment criteria to guide the development of their presentation. This will ensure that students are demonstrating the required skills and knowledge.
* Time management: students should ensure that they cover the key aspects of their investigation within the 7–10-minute presentation time limit. The additional 8–10 minutes of questions and challenges allow students to demonstrate depth of understanding and critical evaluation of the investigation.
* Critical engagement with literature: in addition to summarising and reporting on the existing research, students must demonstrate how they have critically engaged with the academic literature. The presentation should show their analysis and evaluation of the implications and limitations of the prior research, in order to demonstrate the student’s understanding of the broader research context.
* Clear and purposeful presentation: a well-structured presentation should be logically sequenced and include clear language to signpost the conceptual linkages between the key components of the investigation for the non-specialist audience.
* Robust defence of findings: students should actively defend their research findings, in response to challenges. Students should make clear how the findings address the research question in addition to defending the strength of the findings.
* Methodological rigour: students must clearly articulate and justify their chosen methodology, demonstrating its appropriateness for their research question and their understanding of its strengths and limitations.
* Critical reflection and evaluation: students should engage in deep reflection on their research process, findings and limitations, demonstrating a nuanced understanding of their work and any potential objections to it as well as its implications.
* Preparation for questions and challenges: students should thoroughly prepare for the questions and challenges section by anticipating potential questions, practising their responses and being ready to engage in academic discourse.
* Ownership and passion: students should choose a research topic in which they are genuinely interested and take ownership of their investigation, driving their research and making informed decisions throughout the process.

Specific information

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding, resulting in a total of more or less than 100 per cent.

Each oral presentation is assessed individually against the criteria. The comments regarding performance levels provided below are for illustrative purposes only and do not represent all aspects of student work that may contribute to achievement.

Criterion 1 – Knowledge and understanding of the research area

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 11 | 15 | 18 | 22 | 15 | 8 | 6 | 5.7 |

Core requirement

This criterion assesses the student’s ability to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of their chosen research area. This understanding needs to encompass the significance of their research question, their engagement with relevant background research and a strong grasp of the chosen methodology.

Key elements for high performance

* **Well-defined research question:** a focused and specific research question that is linked to the prior academic literature is essential. High-scoring presentations are based on a precise research focus and a rigorous and comprehensive exploration of a well-targeted literature review.
* **Critical engagement with academic literature:** it is not enough to simply summarise the existing research. Students should critically analyse and evaluate the prior research, demonstrating an understanding of its implications and limitations.
* **Methodological rigour:** students must clearly articulate their chosen methodology and justify its appropriateness for their research question. High-scoring presentations demonstrate a deep understanding of the methodological approach and its connection to the research aims.
* **Conceptual understanding:** students should be able to position their research within the broader context of existing knowledge. This includes identifying areas of convergence and divergence with the prior research and understanding how their investigation contributes to the field.
* **Coherent argument:** a well-structured presentation with a clear line of argument is crucial. Students should connect the different components of their investigation, demonstrating a logical flow of ideas.
* **Evidence-based reasoning:** students should support their arguments and claims with evidence from both the academic literature and their own research findings.

Common pitfalls to avoid

* **Lack of critical engagement:** merely summarising the prior research without critical analysis is a common mistake. Students should go beyond simply reporting information and demonstrate their ability to evaluate and synthesise existing knowledge.
* **Underdeveloped research question:** a poorly defined or overly broad research question can hinder the depth and significance of the investigation. Students should carefully refine their research question to ensure it is manageable and allows for a meaningful exploration.
* **Methodological misalignment:** choosing an inappropriate or poorly understood methodology is another common issue. Students should ensure that their chosen method aligns with their research question and that they can clearly articulate a rationale for their choice of methodology.
* **Limited scope:** relying on a small number of sources or failing to engage with diverse perspectives can limit the depth and breadth of the investigation. Students should read widely and engage with a variety of scholarly sources.
* **Overemphasis on description:** spending too much time on describing the research topic or methodology during the presentation can leave insufficient time for critical analysis and discussion of findings. Students should prioritise analysis and evaluation.

Recommendations for success

* **Choose a topic of interest:** students should select a research area that is of genuine interest, which will enhance motivation and engagement throughout the year-long process.
* **Refine the research question:** take time to develop a clear, focused and manageable research question that allows for a meaningful investigation.
* **Engage deeply with the literature:** critically read and analyse a variety of scholarly sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of the research area.
* **Select an appropriate methodology:** choose a methodology that aligns with the research question and can effectively address the research aims.
* **Develop a coherent argument:** structure the presentation with a clear line of argument, connecting the different components of the investigation.
* **Support claims with evidence:** use evidence from both the academic literature and the findings of the investigation to support arguments and claims.
* **Practise and seek feedback:** rehearse the presentation and seek feedback from teachers and peers to improve clarity and delivery.

The extended investigation oral presentation assesses students' understanding of their research area. To score highly, students must effectively articulate the significance of their research question, engage with the relevant literature and demonstrate a strong grasp of their chosen methodology. Their presentation should reflect a coherent line of argument, supported by evidence-based reasoning.

High-scoring presentations demonstrated a deep understanding of their research area. These students presented well-defined research questions that allowed for a focused and in-depth exploration and engaged critically with the academic literature, going beyond mere summary to analyse and evaluate its implications and limitations. They exhibited methodological rigour, clearly articulating and justifying the appropriateness of their chosen methodology for their research question. Additionally, these students positioned their research within the broader context of existing knowledge, demonstrating a clear understanding of how their investigation contributes to the field.

In contrast, middle- and lower-scoring presentations often revealed a lack of critical engagement with the literature, relying on summary rather than analysis. Research questions were underdeveloped or overly broad, hindering the depth and significance of the investigation. Methodological misalignment was another common issue, with students choosing inappropriate or poorly understood methodologies. These presentations also suffered from a limited scope, relying on a small number of sources or failing to engage with diverse perspectives. Overemphasis on description rather than analysis and evaluation was another frequent pitfall. To improve, students must prioritise critical analysis, methodological rigour and a clear articulation of the significance of their research within the broader field.

Criterion 2 – Defence of research findings and understanding of audience

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 10 | 19 | 19 | 18 | 16 | 8 | 5 | 5.1 |

Core requirement

This criterion assesses the student’s ability to effectively communicate their research findings to a non-specialist audience. Students must defend their findings, demonstrating their relevance and significance in relation to the research question. Clarity, coherence and appropriate use of language are essential for success.

Key elements for high performance

* **Clear and purposeful presentation:** high-scoring presentations are well-structured, guiding the audience through the research journey with clarity and purpose. They utilise techniques such as signposting to highlight key ideas and maintain a coherent flow.
* **Adaptation for non-specialist audience:** students must effectively communicate their research to assessors who may not be experts in their chosen field. This involves defining complex terminology, using appropriate language and avoiding jargon.
* **Defence of findings:** students should not merely present their findings but also actively defend them. This involves explaining the relevance of their work, justifying their conclusions and demonstrating how their findings address the research question.
* **Connection to existing knowledge:** high-scoring presentations situate their findings within the broader research context. Students should discuss the implications of their findings and explore areas of agreement and disagreement with the previous research.
* **Data analysis and synthesis:** students must demonstrate a clear process for analysing and synthesising their data. This includes explaining how they extracted meaningful insights from their raw data and how these insights led to their conclusions.
* **Critical evaluation:** students should acknowledge the limitations of their research and discuss potential sources of bias or error. This demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the research process and a commitment to intellectual honesty.

Common pitfalls to avoid

* **Lack of coherent structure:** presentations that lack a clear structure or jump between ideas without clear transitions can be difficult to follow.
* **Unclear and imprecise use of technical language:** using excessive jargon or failing to define complex terms can alienate the audience and hinder understanding.
* **Limited defence of findings:** simply presenting data or stating findings without analysis or justification fails to demonstrate their significance.
* **Failure to connect with existing knowledge:** ignoring the broader research context or failing to discuss the implications of findings limits the impact of the presentation.
* **Insufficient data analysis:** lacking a clear process for analysing and synthesising data can lead to weak or unsubstantiated conclusions.
* **Ignoring limitations:** failing to acknowledge the limitations of the research or address potential sources of bias can undermine the credibility of the findings.

Recommendations for success

* **Develop a clear structure:** organise the presentation with a logical flow of ideas, using signposting and transitions to guide the audience.
* **Use appropriate language:** define complex terms and avoid excessive jargon to ensure clarity for a non-specialist audience.
* **Actively defend findings:** explain the relevance of the work, justify conclusions and demonstrate how the findings address the research question.
* **Connect with existing knowledge:** discuss the implications of the findings and explore alignments and contradictions with the previous research.
* **Demonstrate data analysis:** clearly articulate the process of analysing and synthesising data to support the conclusions.
* **Acknowledge limitations:** critically evaluate the research and acknowledge potential limitations or sources of bias.

Criterion 2 evaluates the student's ability to effectively communicate and defend their research findings to a non-specialist audience. The key components of a successful defence include a clear and purposeful presentation, the adaptation of language for a non-specialist audience and a robust defence of the findings. The presentation should be well-structured, coherent and free from jargon. Students must demonstrate a clear process for data analysis and synthesis, and critically evaluate their findings within the broader research context.

High-scoring responses presented research findings with clarity, confidence and fluency. These students effectively adapted their language and presentation style to engage a non-specialist audience. They went beyond merely presenting their findings by actively defending them, explaining their relevance and justifying the resultant conclusions. They also demonstrated a strong understanding of the research process by articulating a clear process for data analysis and synthesis. Furthermore, high-scoring presentations situated the findings within the broader research context, exploring connections and contradictions with existing knowledge. They exhibited a nuanced understanding of their research by acknowledging its limitations and potential biases.

In contrast, middle- and lower-scoring presentations often lacked a coherent structure and were delivered at a pace that hinders understanding. These presentations sometimes struggled to adapt complex terminology for a non-specialist audience, leading to confusion. A limited defence of the findings was another common issue, with students often merely listing their results without analysis or justification. Middle- and lower-scoring presentations at times also did not connect the findings with the broader research context, limiting the impact of the work. Insufficient data analysis and a failure to acknowledge limitations can further undermine the credibility of findings. To improve, students must prioritise clarity, coherence and a robust defence of their research findings, supported by evidence and critical analysis.

Criterion 3 – Responses to questions and challenges

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 11 | 20 | 18 | 15 | 16 | 10 | 5 | 5.1 |

Core requirement

This criterion assesses the student's ability to respond effectively to questions and challenges posed by the assessors. This section aims to clarify and extend the student's knowledge and understanding of their research area, methodology, findings and limitations. It provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate their critical thinking skills, depth of knowledge and ability to engage in academic discourse.

Key elements for high performance

* **Thoughtful and elaborative responses:** high-scoring presentations are well structured and detailed and clarify and elaborate on their research. They demonstrate a deep understanding of their investigation by going beyond the information presented in their initial presentation.
* **Evidence-based reasoning:** students should support their responses with evidence from their research and the relevant literature. They should be able to justify their choices and decisions throughout the research process, demonstrating a strong understanding of the rationale behind their approach.
* **Critical reflection:** high-scoring students engage in critical reflection on their research design, methodology and findings. They acknowledge any limitations and potential biases, demonstrating a nuanced understanding of the research process.
* **Connection to broader research context:** students should be able to connect their research to the broader field of inquiry. They should demonstrate an awareness of the implications of their findings and how their research contributes to existing knowledge.
* **Engagement in academic discourse:** students should be able to engage in a meaningful discussion with the assessors. They should be able to respond to challenges and counterarguments thoughtfully and respectfully, demonstrating their ability to participate in academic discourse.

Common pitfalls to avoid

* **Repetitive or superficial responses:** simply repeating information from the initial presentation without adding new insights or perspectives is a common mistake. Students should use the question and challenge section to expand on their ideas and demonstrate a deeper level of understanding.
* **Lack of evidence:** failing to support responses with evidence from the investigation or the literature can weaken the argument. Students should be able to draw on their research findings and relevant sources to justify their claims.
* **Limited reflection:** students who do not reflect critically on their research process and findings miss an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the complexities and limitations of their investigation.
* **Narrow focus:** staying within the strict confines of their research question and failing to connect their work to the broader research context can limit the scope of the discussion.

Recommendations for success

* **Thorough preparation**: students should thoroughly prepare for the question and challenge section by anticipating potential questions and practising their responses.
* **Active listening**: students should actively listen to the questions and challenges, seeking clarification if needed, to ensure they understand the underlying intent.
* **Structured responses**: students should structure their responses in a clear and logical manner, using evidence and reasoning to support their arguments.
* **Critical reflection**: students should be prepared to reflect critically on their research process, findings and limitations.
* **Engagement with assessors**: students should engage in a respectful and thoughtful discussion with the assessors, demonstrating their ability to participate in academic discourse.

Criterion 3 assesses a student's ability to respond effectively to questions and challenges posed by the assessors. This interactive component of the oral presentation provides students with an opportunity to clarify, elaborate on and extend their research findings, demonstrating a deep understanding of their investigation and the ability to engage in academic discourse. Assessors use this section to probe the student's knowledge and understanding of their research area, methodology, findings and limitations.

High-scoring presentations were thoughtful, elaborative and evidence-based. They demonstrated a strong command of their research by going beyond the information presented in their initial presentation and offering new insights and perspectives. These students engaged in critical reflection, acknowledging the limitations and potential biases in their research. They also effectively connected their research to the broader field of inquiry, demonstrating an awareness of the implications of their findings and their contribution to existing knowledge. Furthermore, high-scoring responses actively engaged in academic discourse, responding to challenges and counterarguments thoughtfully and respectfully.

In contrast, middle- and lower-scoring responses were repetitive or superficial, or lacked evidence and critical reflection. Students in this category at times struggled to connect their research to the broader research context or engage in meaningful academic discourse. Some responses to challenges were vague or off-topic, hindering the students’ ability to demonstrate a deep understanding of their investigation. To improve, students must focus on providing elaborative, evidence-based responses that demonstrate critical reflection and the relevance of their research to the broader research context. They should actively engage with the assessors, demonstrating their ability to participate in a thoughtful and respectful academic discussion.

Criterion 4 – Reflection and evaluation

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 12 | 20 | 20 | 17 | 13 | 7 | 4 | 3.9 |

Core requirement

This criterion assesses the student's ability to critically reflect on and evaluate their extended investigation. Students must demonstrate a nuanced understanding of their research process, findings and limitations. This involves reflecting on the decisions made throughout the investigation, critically examining the strengths and weaknesses of their approach, and evaluating the implications of their findings. Both the presentation and the question and challenge section are used to assess this criterion.

Key elements for high performance

* **Critical examination of research process:** high-scoring students go beyond merely describing their research process. They critically examine the decisions they made, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their choices. This includes reflecting on the selection of their research question, methodology, data collection methods and analysis techniques.
* **Acknowledgement of limitations:** students should demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the limitations of their research. This involves acknowledging potential biases, errors or constraints that may have impacted their findings. It's important to acknowledge these limitations honestly and thoughtfully, demonstrating a commitment to intellectual rigour.
* **Evaluation of implications:** high-scoring presentations evaluate the implications of the research findings. Students should discuss the significance of their work, its potential impact on the field of study and possible future directions for research. This demonstrates a broader understanding of the research context and the potential contribution of their investigation.
* **Evidence of learning and growth:** students should reflect on their learning and growth throughout the research process. This involves discussing the challenges they encountered, the skills they developed and the insights they gained. This demonstrates a metacognitive awareness of their learning journey.
* **Ethical considerations:** where relevant, students should reflect on the ethical dimensions of their research. This includes discussing any ethical challenges they faced and how they addressed them, demonstrating a responsible and ethical approach to research.

Common pitfalls to avoid

* **Superficial reflection:** simply stating that the research was ‘enjoyable’ or ‘informative’ without critical analysis is a common pitfall. Students should go beyond surface-level observations and engage in deeper reflection.
* **Ignoring limitations:** failing to acknowledge limitations or dismissing them as insignificant can undermine the credibility of the research.
* **Lack of evaluation:** merely describing the research process and findings without evaluation is insufficient. Students should critically assess their work and its implications.
* **Limited scope:** focusing solely on personal experiences or opinions without reference to broader research or theoretical frameworks can limit the depth of reflection.
* **Overemphasis on challenges:** while acknowledging challenges is important, dwelling on them excessively without discussing solutions or lessons learned can be counterproductive.

Recommendations for success

* **Embed reflection throughout:** integrate reflection throughout the presentation, rather than limiting it to a single section.
* **Use evidence to support claims:** ground reflections in evidence from the research process and findings.
* **Connect to broader context:** discuss the implications of the research in relation to existing knowledge and future research directions.
* **Demonstrate growth and learning:** reflect on personal growth, skills development and insights gained.
* **Address ethical considerations:** where relevant, discuss the ethical dimensions of the research and any challenges faced.

Criterion 4 assesses the student's capacity for critical reflection and evaluation of their extended investigation. This involves a nuanced understanding of the research process, findings and limitations. Students must demonstrate their ability to critically examine the decisions they made throughout the investigation, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their approach, and consider the implications of their findings. Both the oral presentation and the question and challenge section provide opportunities for students to showcase their reflective and evaluative skills.

High-scoring responses demonstrated a deep level of critical reflection and evaluation. They went beyond mere description, critically examining the decisions they made throughout their research process. These students thoughtfully acknowledged the limitations of their research, demonstrating intellectual honesty and a nuanced understanding of the research process. Additionally, they evaluated the implications of their findings, considering the significance of their work within the broader research context and potential future research directions. These students also reflected on their personal learning and growth, highlighting the skills they developed and the insights they gained.

In contrast, middle- and lower-scoring presentations often lacked depth and criticality in their reflection and evaluation. Some of these presentations contained superficial reflections, focusing on personal enjoyment or challenges without deeper analysis. Some also overlooked or dismissed the limitations of their research, undermining its credibility. Furthermore, middle- and lower-scoring presentations at times neglected to evaluate the implications of their findings, limiting the scope and impact of their work. To improve, students must prioritise critical self-reflection, acknowledge the research limitations and evaluate the broader implications of their research.