

2018 VCE Extended Investigation oral presentation examination report

General comments

The Extended Investigation oral presentation affords students the experience of presenting and defending the research they have completed over the course of a year. The conduct of the assessment allows students to celebrate and reflect on their research journey.

The oral presentation comprises two sections: the presentation of the investigation and the response to questions/challenges. The duration of the oral presentation is 15–20 minutes. Students present for 7–10 minutes, after which they are asked questions for a further 8–10 minutes.

Assessment of the oral presentation is based on knowledge and understanding of the research area, defence of research findings and understanding of audience, response to questions and challenges, and reflection and evaluation. Students are strongly encouraged to use the four assessment criteria when developing the content and structure of their presentations.

Advice for teachers and students

- The time frame for the first part of the presentation is 7–10 minutes, and students should be reminded to stay within this limit. In 2018 very few presentations were significantly shorter than 7 minutes; however, presentations that were significantly longer than 10 minutes needed further synthesis and clarity.
- Students should be reminded that they are not to wear their school uniform, and that their name and the name of their school are to be removed from their USB and PowerPoint presentations.
- Students are reminded that the understanding of audience (criterion 2) can be demonstrated through the appropriate employment of images/visuals, analogies, examples and so forth. These can assist in illuminating the discussion of complex information and ideas for the specified audience.
- In preparation for the oral presentation it is important that students are made aware of speech structure, signposting, language choices and presentation techniques that will assist in explaining their research effectively.
- It is important for students to know and understand the differences between the research report and the oral presentation. Some students attempted to repeat their 4000-word report in the allotted 10 minutes.
- Students are encouraged to read more widely as the breadth and depth of literature explored as the foundation for research made a significant difference to the presentations.
- Students are reminded not to pre-empt the questions as this often led to students responding with information that was not suited to the question they were asked.
- Students are reminded to learn how to pronounce subject-specific terms, names and authorities correctly.

- Students were most successful when they pursued a topic they were clearly passionate about and connected to; however, a question with personal significance often affected the capacity of the student to maintain a critical distance.
- Students sometimes used immediate and extended family to complete their research, which led to limited possibilities for exploring the research process, particularly the findings, in sufficient depth.
- Extended Investigation questions and methods must comply with responsible and ethical research guidelines.

Specific information

Each oral presentation is assessed individually against the criteria. Comments regarding performance levels as outlined below are for illustrative purposes only and do not constitute all aspects of a student's work that may contribute to achievement.

Assessment criteria

Criterion 1 – Knowledge and understanding of the research area

In order to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of their research area, students are expected to engage with the full detail of their investigation. This includes the focus and significance of their research area and question, background research in the field, as well as their chosen data collection method(s). It is important that students consistently reference sources/information throughout their presentation.

Most students presented a clear overview of their investigation. Students who scored in the high range often selected quite specific areas of investigation with a precise set of parameters that allowed them time to delve more deeply into the research and show a comprehensive understanding of key issues. By doing so, these students consistently and convincingly justified their research choices and supported these choices with evidence and data. Students who scored highly were able to identify the implications and significance of the information contained in existing literature rather than merely relying on knowing its content. Students who scored highly critically engaged with literature and methods throughout their presentation and demonstrated a firm understanding of the complexities of the research field.

Some students who scored in the lower and middle ranges selected a research question that made it difficult for them to deliver a significant or substantial piece of research. These students often relied on a very small number of sources and found it difficult to venture beyond these sources. Some students who scored within these ranges claimed that there was 'no or limited research in the field'. It is important that students read academic literature in order to be able to fully explore similarities and differences between other research and their topic of investigation. Furthermore, these students provided brief summaries of key ideas without critical engagement of the literature. It is important for students to be able to show a conceptual understanding of how their investigation fits within the context of existing research (i.e. this is what others have found and this is how my research fits within this). Doing this will assist students to demonstrate Criterion 1 at a high level.

Students were mostly able to explain the design and conduct of their investigation effectively. It was necessary for students to explain and justify their chosen method(s) in some detail, clearly demonstrating how methods helped them collect data that responded to their research question. Students who scored highly were able to explain the key components of their methodological approach and the various data collection methods they utilised. These students were able to demonstrate how their selected data collection method enabled them to collect data that helped them to respond to the specific demands of their research question. Students who scored most

highly carefully selected data collection techniques that were clearly appropriate to answering their question in a meaningful way. These students were able to realise that one research choice could lead to another that was unforeseen at the outset and to reflect critically on the connection between their research methods.

Students who did not score highly struggled to explain the relevance of their selected method within the context of the research area. For example, in many cases surveys are an appropriate methodological choice; however, some students who completed surveys did so without it productively linking to their topic or what they wanted to find out. For some students the use of a mixed-method approach to data collection seemed to be just a way of saying 'I have used two methods, not just one'. They did not always link the two approaches to explain how each complemented the other or how one was able to compensate for some shortcomings in the other. Students who used a literature review as their primary data collection method often struggled to explain why this particular method assisted them to respond to their research question.

Criterion 2 – Defence of research findings and understanding of audience

Most students displayed a real sense of enjoyment and passion for their topics. They presented with confidence and it was apparent that students had prepared well. Students who scored well spoke confidently, fluently and clearly. A well-structured presentation, including techniques such as signposting to highlight key ideas, enabled students to demonstrate a firm grasp of the material and a sound understanding of the research process. Although there is no prescribed structure, lower-scoring presentations often lacked a coherent structure, moving from one section to another without clear links and at such speed that the presentations were difficult to follow.

The adaptation of language for a non-specialist audience was done well. Students who scored well showed an ability to adapt their research report to the unique demands of an oral presentation. However, students who did not score well often simply read directly from their reports, attempting to fit as much into their allotted time as possible. Students are reminded not to oversimplify their presentations. Students often defined key terms and ideas at the start of their presentation; however, in many cases these were definitions of words that did not need to be defined for the non-specialist audience. Dictionary definitions are generally not recommended. Definitions, where needed, should be adapted to the topic and the audience. For highly technical topics, students must be aware of the inherent complexity of their topic for the non-specialist audience. Some students used metaphor, analogy and visual aids to assist in explaining key terms and concepts. It is important that students have a range of techniques for explaining highly complex and technical terms.

In defending their findings, students were expected to discuss the relevance of their work, justify their findings and clearly articulate an outcome of their investigation in light of their research question. It is vital, therefore, that students are able to explain how they analysed their data (e.g. interviews, surveys). Students who scored well had a clear process for data analysis, often using triangulation to demonstrate how the analysis of one part of their data collection led to the collection of further data in order to more fully explore emerging trends and patterns. Without a clear process for analysis, it is often difficult for students to convincingly and comprehensively defend their findings. Students who did not score well tended to focus on simplistic approaches to data analysis, such as graphs and charts that are automatically generated through online surveys.

In defending their research findings, students who scored well were able to locate their results in the context of the research field, noting significant consistencies and inconsistencies with previous research where appropriate. They clearly and purposefully highlighted the most significant findings and demonstrated how their findings helped them respond to their research question. These students synthesised their findings, provided evidence from the data they collected and also discussed the implications of their findings. Students who did not score well often took too long to get to their findings, leaving them with insufficient time to fully explore the data they collected and

defend their findings. These students also struggled to connect their findings within the context of the broader field of investigation (i.e. existing literature). Many students merely listed their findings on a question-by-question basis, from their surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Some students were not able to overcome the inherent bias that affected their research from the start and collected data that simply confirmed what they already thought about a given topic. These students often struggled to move beyond the medium range. Although there are no criteria for visuals, it was clear that descriptions of data findings are greatly enhanced when students have visual aids to refer to.

Criterion 3 – Responses to questions and challenges

The response section is designed to illuminate aspects of a student's work that may not have been fully explored in their presentation. Although there is only one criterion that explicitly addresses this section, the questions and challenges can have significant implications for the success of the student across the whole set of criteria. Through the questions, students are given the opportunity to clarify and elaborate on their investigation. This includes key issues in the research, background research, methods, findings and limitations. Assessors pose questions/challenges that allow students to fill in any gaps from the first part of the presentation as well as to provide opportunities for students to extend their thinking, make connections, clarify ideas previously raised and explore their investigation in greater depth.

As there is no set list of questions that assessors ask, it is important that students do not attempt to pre-empt what the assessors will ask as this often leads to pre-prepared answers that might not necessarily fit the context of the question. Some students provided answers that they wanted to give rather than responding to the question asked. It is recommended that students practise responding to a range of unpredictable questions as this will best prepare them for this criterion. As there is a maximum of 10 minutes for the questions and challenges section of the presentation, it is imperative that students give themselves the best chance of success by providing responses that not only enable them to clarify and elaborate on their ideas but that are also concise and succinct.

In responding to questions and challenges, students who scored well elaborated on and clarified their research design, supported their discussion with reference to previous research and further reflected on the findings of their investigation. These students were able to discuss issues beyond the strict parameters of their investigation, displayed an enthusiasm for stretching the discussion and could elaborate on responses with ease, indicating that their knowledge of their investigation was extensive. Students who scored in the lower ranges had difficulty elaborating on their responses during the questioning, and their responses often simply repeated information from the first part of the presentation, rather than making links to existing literature or data gathered through their investigation.

Many students missed the opportunity during the questions/challenges section to evaluate their methodological approach and the implications the method may have had on their findings. Some of the common responses made by students to methodological questions included:

- 'I would aim for a larger sample size.' (Why then did you plan the study with this sample size?)
- 'I would aim to include a wider demographic.' (Why would this be relevant? What implications could it have?)
- 'It would have been good if I had more time to collect more data.' (What are the implications of the short time frame on your findings? What could you have done differently?)

Many students did not understand why these changes would be valuable or why they had not been addressed in the planning. Students who scored well clearly understood that more data is not necessarily better and that it is far more important to be able to discuss the quality, reliability and validity of the literature, methodological approach and data collected. This is an area that requires improvement across the range of student achievement and will assist students in their ability to reflect and evaluate the outcomes of their investigation.

Criterion 4 – Reflection and evaluation

This aspect of the oral presentation requires students to critically reflect on and evaluate their extended investigation. Both the presentation and questions/challenges sections are used to assess this criterion.

Students were generally able to provide a detailed and thoughtful reflection and evaluation of the research process and their findings. Students scoring in the high range reflected on the decisions they made throughout their investigation and were able to critically examine and evaluate these choices. These students demonstrated critical thought, reflection, and analysis of their investigation and its outcomes and often embedded the reflection and evaluation of their work as they discussed the individual components of the research process (e.g. potential limitations and implications of methodological choices). Students who scored well had a developed idea of why their area of research is important and where it might lead in the future, providing a range of ideas for the direction future research might take. Students who scored in the medium range were generally able to reflect on the data collection techniques they used, such as the questions used in surveys or the experimental design. There was some ability to defend the approaches they had taken and to reflect on any limitations of the methods they used.

A key area where students could have improved was in the trialling of a particular method in order to ascertain the effectiveness or usefulness of the data that is to be collected. This will aid in ensuring that their research is valid (concerned with the instruments used to gather data [e.g. questionnaires] and reliable (a measure to determine if students would get the same answer if they asked the same question of the same person on two separate occasions). By doing so, students will not only be better placed to insightfully evaluate their research design but also be able to more convincingly defend their findings and conclusions. For example, some students were able to describe how they tested their survey on a small pilot group of participants to see if the questions they were asking provided them with appropriate data that enabled them to respond to their research question. This process can apply to all types of data collection techniques, including experiments, interviews and document reviews.

A number of students reflected on their investigations but did not critically explore how the limitations of their own planning or their research design affected their results. These students were often not able to connect how inadequate planning resulted in a poorly constructed research question that needed adjustment or how limited research design resulted in a lengthy list of unexpected issues that arose during their investigation. Some students who used their family to complete their research (i.e. as a means to collect data) struggled to critically evaluate the decisions they made. This was also evident with topics that were quite personal in nature and that had an inherent bias. These students found it difficult to evaluate and reflect on the process and were unable to draw substantiated conclusions. Students who chose topics that were of considerable emotional impact in their personal lives often found it difficult to move from the personal impact to a more generalised research focus. For some it appeared like a personal project that had never been subjected to any academic rigour or challenge.

As per the research criteria, it is important that students develop a research question and design that can be addressed by systematic and sound research methods. They should attempt to keep a critical distance and take an impersonal or objective stance where possible. Finally, it is important that students pursue research that is realistic and manageable within the limits that time and resources impose.