2016 VCE Extended Investigation: oral presentation 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 research investigation and a questions/challenges section. Both sections contribute equally to the student's score. The duration of the oral presentation is 15–20 minutes. Students present for 7–10 minutes, after which they will be 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, understanding of audience, response to questions and challenges, and reflection and evaluation. While students' understanding of the criteria was good, schools are still strongly encouraged to use the criteria when developing the content and structure of students' presentations. It is important that the differences between the criteria for the oral presentation and written report are understood, and that students address the correct criteria.

In 2016 the use of visual materials assisted students in illuminating the explanation of complex concepts, methodologies or subject-specific terminology.

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. While no marks are awarded for presentation style, clarity of expression and pace have an impact on the way that assessors receive information. Students need to be aware of this throughout their presentation and adjust their language to suit the purpose of the oral presentation.

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.

Very high – High

Presentations scoring at this level of achievement were marked by a critical and highly detailed exploration of the student's investigation. Students synthesised and made links between the different aspects of their work, including extensive connections to existing academic research. In engaging with academic research, students who scored at this level discussed areas of tension and congruence as well as potential gaps in academic work. They endeavoured to situate their own investigation in this context and use literature to support the relevance of their own study, building a case for the usefulness of their investigation.

Presentations comprehensively explored the methodological design and processes undertaken within the investigation, critically justifying the design and process of the research with specific reference to existing methodological studies and the student's own research question. Data collected as a result of this was well synthesised and often grouped into overarching themes to identify significant findings within the investigation. The implications of findings were explored in detail, alongside consistent links between the student's own findings and existing knowledge in the research area. Students who scored very highly in this range also extensively evaluated and reflected on their investigation, embedding this throughout their presentation. These students' presentations were clearly adjusted for a non-specialist audience; however, maintained a level of complexity in their engagement with concepts within their research. They demonstrated critical thought, reflection, and analysis of their investigation and its outcomes.

Students who scored towards the lower end of this range may have missed some opportunities to critically engage with their research material; for example, summarising existing research more so than synthesising it. Typically, these students made some connections between literature, their investigation and their findings but needed to further expand this discussion.

In elaborating on their investigation through the questions/challenges section, students supported their discussion with relevant literature and further justified their research choices. They added to the information presented in their presentation and, where appropriate, explored questions in depth.

Medium

Students demonstrated a sound understanding of their investigation despite gaps or brief explanation in some sections of their work. These students demonstrated general engagement with their research area and were able to articulate some connections to existing research, although there may have been evidence of engagement with a small number of sources. This was sometimes accompanied by a brief overview and reduced synthesis of ideas. For example, rather than exploring the commonalities or differences in existing work, students tended to deal with studies individually. In discussing their method and findings students presented an informative, often descriptive, overview of their work. These presentations would have benefited from greater justification and greater connection of the student's research choices to the original aims of the investigation and existing methodological research. When discussing their findings some students reported data based on individual survey/interview questions rather than synthesising their work into key findings. They usually presented some synthesis and an overarching conclusion at the end of their work, and would have benefited from embedding this in the findings/implications aspect of their presentation. Some students engaged critically with the limitations of their work; however, there was a general need for greater detail and critical thinking.

The majority of presentations were clearly structured, and students were able to effectively respond to questions from assessors. During their responses students would have benefited from making greater links to existing research and further elaboration of their ideas. Where references to existing research were made, these were brief or limited to a small number of references.

Low – Very low

Students who scored at this level of achievement provided a brief, general summary of their work and demonstrated inconsistent engagement with the research process. They attempted to explain their investigation and in some cases briefly explained connections to existing research. Where this occurred it took the form of brief acknowledgment of sources or engagement with a small number of less authoritative sources. Some students presented a brief outline of the method; however, this was descriptive and missing key elements, such as a discussion of participants or data collection methods. Some students at the lower end of this range listed their method as a chronological sequence without explanation. Where findings were discussed this was either brief or confused; for

example, presenting a range of statistics without explaining their meaning/purpose. At the lowest end of this range students often did not articulate a research question, a method or a result of their investigation.

The structure of presentations in this range was often problematic, with limited links made to the student's central research question. A particular issue for students in this range was their adjustment of language for a non-specialist audience. A range of terms within these presentations remained undefined and there was a reliance on technical, subject-specific concepts that were not adequately explained. Responses to questions were often brief, descriptive and lacked engagement with existing literature. Some students were able to build on the information presented in their presentation; however, they lacked the ability to justify or critically engage with their work. In some cases students provided one-word answers or answers that contradicted earlier statements.

Advice to students/teachers

- The suggested presentation time for students is 7–10 minutes. Students are asked to conclude their presentation if they exceed 10 minutes to allow sufficient time for the questions/challenges section. Students whose presentation was significantly shorter than the indicated time frame tended to provide a general summary and needed to include further detail. Those whose presentation significantly exceeded the time frame needed to synthesise and prioritise their investigation to improve the clarity of their presentation.
- Some students identified themselves or their school as part of their presentation. Students and teachers are reminded that identifying information should not be included in the oral presentation or on visual material.
- Some students attempted to pre-empt questions or to direct assessor questions by leaving out information in their presentations. Students should be aware that there are no set questions that assessors must ask and that a student should not rely on being asked about a specific area of their work. If there is an essential component of their investigation it should be highlighted in the presentation.
- Students do not need to come to a positive conclusion regarding their original research question. In some cases, the data collection and analysis process may reveal inconsistencies or contradict the initial hypothesis presented by the student. Critically reflecting on the outcome of the investigation, suggesting the need for further research or identifying unexpected findings are all aspects of authentic research and should be included in the student's work where relevant.
- Some students struggled to adjust their research for a non-specialist audience. Those who did so successfully often reinforced definitions across their presentation and used analogies, metaphors or diagrams. These are not the only means of adjusting language, however, and students should consider the best way to achieve this in the context of their research.
- Reflection and evaluation of the student's investigation does not have to exist as a discrete section at the end of the presentation, although this is one way of approaching it. Embedding reflection and evaluation throughout the presentation is also an approach many students adopted successfully.
- Where relevant, students should deal with the ethical issues in their research. An extensive discussion is not relevant for all studies and should only be included where ethical issues exist and have been dealt with in the conduct of the investigation.
- Visuals can be a useful means of supporting understanding of complex concepts and subject-specific terminology.
- Students are reminded that where they do not understand a question posed by assessors, or wish to confirm their understanding, they can ask for questions to be repeated or clarified. It is also acceptable to request a moment to consider a question. If a question is asked that does

not touch on an area reasonably within the scope of the student's research they are able to advise assessors of this.

Assessment criteria

Criterion 1 – Knowledge and understanding of the research area

During their presentation and the questions/challenges section students are expected to engage fully with all aspects of their investigation. This includes their research focus, existing literature in the field, the method utilised in their study, and the significance, findings and ultimate response to their research question.

In 2016 most students presented a clear overview of their investigation, with reference to many of the above areas. However, a limited engagement with existing literature across many aspects of students' work was evident, particularly for students scoring in the mid to lower ranges. Although this is an oral presentation there is still an expectation that students reference scholarly material throughout their presentation – both in their presentation and in the response to questions/challenges. This is particularly important in highlighting the student's knowledge and understanding of their research area. Scholarly material in this regard refers to academic research rather than media texts, basic reference texts, general websites or blogs.

High-scoring students developed connections between the different facets of their investigation, drawing a link between their research question, existing research, methodological design and conclusions. In doing so they consistently justified their research design and engaged critically with the literature in their field. This included exploring areas of tension or congruence within the literature and making connections to their own research. Lower-scoring responses may have overemphasised one aspect of their work; for example, extensively discussing the method without accounting for existing research or their findings in enough detail. They may have also demonstrated a lack of critical engagement and discussion, focusing instead on descriptive summary or brief details regarding their work. While the questions/challenges section can provide opportunities for some aspects of the investigation to be drawn out in further detail, a full discussion is still expected in the initial presentation.

The connection between students' chosen methodological approach, research methods and research focus was often clearly articulated. Overall, students exhibited a good grasp of the connections between the different data collection tools within their research. There were, however, some students who did not have a full grasp of the need to have a rationale for their data collection beyond convenience and ease of access. Low-scoring students, for example, spoke of convenience sampling and used small numbers of questions (where surveys or interviews were undertaken) and often indicated that this was to simplify the data collection process rather than articulating a specific rationale in the context of their research question. They may also have failed to explain the analysis framework or process undertaken when conducting text analysis, literature review or other research without human participants. High-scoring students tied all aspects of their research design back to their central question and were critical in their discussion, exploring the reasoning behind their data collection process, analysis of data and ultimate conclusions.

Criterion 2 – Defence of research findings and understanding of audience

An important aspect of this criterion is the student's ability to articulate and critically engage with their findings. There are two components to success in Criterion 2: defence of findings and adjustment of language for a non-specialist audience. It is important that teachers and students are aware of the dual elements in this criterion and that both are accounted for equally in the preparation.

Students presented with confidence and clarity, and demonstrated clear evidence of preparation. The majority of presentations were well structured and developed in a logical manner. However, some students presented their data before fully articulating their research focus. While there is no set structure required for the oral presentation, it is important that the background to a student's work is presented before exploring their findings or method in detail so that the following discussion is in context.

The adjustment of language for an educated, non-specialist audience was done well, although there were some presentations where this adjustment could have been further refined. This is a crucial aspect of ensuring that assessors understand student work and can fully engage with the thinking undertaken by students. Students who effectively defined and adjusted key terms did so throughout their presentation and in the context of their investigation, rather than using a brief summary at the start. This assisted in reinforcing key concepts central to the student's discussion in the course of their presentation. Some students also used metaphor, analogies or diagrams to support their definitional work. It is also important to note that where definitions are used, these should come from scholarly, reputable sources.

In defending their findings students are expected to present an outcome of their investigation and support this with relevant evidence from their study. This includes making links between their own work and existing research in the field. The highest-scoring discussions synthesised different aspects of data and drew conclusions based on this. They articulated a number of overall findings and explored each of these in some detail. Such presentations either made further links between their own findings and existing research or explored inconsistencies and areas for further development in their own research. They may, for example, have discussed conflicting findings and the potential reasons behind this. In 2016 a number of students presented data that was taken straight from their survey and demonstrated limited analysis. This lack of synthesis hampered the student's ability to draw connections between different aspects of their research and to come to a clear, overall conclusion regarding their project.

Criterion 3 – Responses to questions and challenges

The questions/challenges section is important in illuminating additional aspects of students' research. Criterion 3 specifically assesses students' ability to respond to such questions/challenges. There is no set list of questions that assessors will ask. While they should touch on a range of aspects within the student's work there may be some areas that are explored more than others.

Throughout the questions/challenges section students demonstrated an understanding of the research process and an ability to respond to questions regarding their work. A small number of students brought scripted responses, although this should be discouraged.

The most effective responses were considered, detailed and built on the information students had already presented in their presentation. They regularly linked back to the central premise and research question underpinning their investigation. High-scoring students also demonstrated critical thought, reflection and justification of their research, beyond a descriptive response. They articulated clear reasoning behind their choices and drew on a range of evidence, including existing research and their own data. Low-scoring students missed central elements of the question posed, gave brief responses that did not provide clarity as to their research choices or repeated information presented in their presentation without including additional detail.

Many students missed opportunities to make connections with existing research during the questions/challenges section. This is an area for improvement across the range of student achievement.

Criterion 4 – Reflection and evaluation

A central component of the Extended Investigation process is for students to critically reflect on and evaluate their work. The emphasis of this should be on the conduct of the investigation itself, not on the student's likes or dislikes about the subject or experience.

High-scoring students embedded the limitations and refinement of their work across the body of their presentation. They discussed areas including bias, adjustments needed to their methodology and areas for further investigation based on contradictory or limited findings. In order to achieve highly in this criterion students needed to make specific connections to their own research. Lower-scoring responses tended to list general limitations without making clear reference to their own work or explanation. When discussing limitations some students listed time constraints and their own lack of organisation rather than limitations in terms of the design or conduct of their research.