2022 VCE Extended Investigation oral Externally-assessed Task 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. It comprises two sections: the presentation of the investigation; and the response to questions and challenges. 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 these four assessment criteria when developing the content and structure of their presentations.

Most students appeared enthusiastic about their topics in 2022 and seem to have enjoyed the process of exploring an area of interest. The highest-scoring presentations demonstrated a strong conceptual understanding of the research process, thoroughness and awareness of possible flaws in either design or conduct of the project, adaptability in the face of challenges and hurdles (for example, difficulty in finding participants or accessing literature), and ability to articulate quite complex ideas and field questions effortlessly.

Not all students demonstrated a clear understanding of the assessment criteria. For instance, some responses that did not score well expounded on information in the field without discussing methodology, results or key findings, or reflecting on limitations.

Students are encouraged to seek as many opportunities as possible to practise their oral presentations in front of different audiences, in order to encounter a variety of questions that should build their preparedness for the actual assessment.

Advice for teachers and students:

* Extended Investigation questions and methods must comply with responsible and ethical research guidelines, as outlined in the VCE Extended Investigation Study Design. A number of presentations should have undergone a more rigorous review prior to commencement as students presented content or used language beyond that which is deemed appropriate for school 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 2022 very few presentations were significantly shorter than 7 minutes; however, there were presentations significantly longer than 10 minutes that needed further synthesis and clarity.
* Students generally used visual aids effectively, though they are reminded to take time to explain the visuals (such as charts and graphs) they have chosen to present.
* It is important that students are made aware of speech structure, signposting, language choices and presentation techniques. While presentation style is not an assessed criterion, students should be aware of the impact of speaking too quickly or without engagement with the audience.
* It is strongly recommended that students save their presentations in PowerPoint format. Presentations saved as a PDF often did not display correctly on the screen.
* Students are reminded to remove all personal information (name, school, etc.) from their presentation. In 2022 many students introduced themselves by name, referred directly to their school or had their name on their presentation.
* It was clear that some students selected research topics they were not passionate about or interested in. This often led to apathetic and unenthusiastic presentations, negatively impacting the quality of the presentation. Assessors sometimes had the impression that students had the topics allocated to them as opposed to ‘owning’ their own information.
* 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.
* Critical thinking skills underpin the entire Extended Investigation process. When preparing for their oral presentation students should consider how they are demonstrating critical thinking skills.

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. Comments regarding performance levels as outlined below are for illustrative purposes only and do not constitute all aspects of student work that may contribute to achievement.

Criterion 1 – Knowledge and understanding of the research area

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 11 | 16 | 21 | 19 | 13 | 9 | 4 | 6.2 |

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 highly 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 relying on only knowing its content. These students 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. 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 with 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 their method(s) 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 used. These students were able to demonstrate how their selected data collection method(s) enabled them to collect data that helped them respond to the specific demands of their research question. Students who scored most highly carefully selected data collection method(s) 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, where relevant, 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 productively linking this to their topic or their aims. Students whose method was identified as a ‘systematic literature review’ or ‘document analysis’ but was more similar to a collation of reading material with little critical engagement had difficulty in explaining their method of analysis. This was one of the most significant areas of weakness in 2022. There needs to be a deep understanding of the different types of methodologies and their justification for different types of research.

Criterion 2 – Defence of research findings and understanding of audience

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0.2 | 4 | 6 | 11 | 19 | 24 | 13 | 11 | 7 | 3 | 5.9 |

Students are expected to discuss the relevance of their work and to justify their findings in light of their primary research question. In explaining their work to the assessors, presentations are expected to be well structured, coherent and free from jargon. Subject-specific terminology should be clearly explained. Both the presentation and questions/challenges sections are used to assess against this criterion.

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 highly 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, presentations that did not score well 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.

Students who scored highly showed an ability to adapt their research report to the unique demands of an oral presentation (i.e. a non-specialist audience). High-scoring presentations used verbal hooks and cues to connect the various components of their investigation and to guide the assessors through the presentation. Students who actively defined complex terminology using reputable, scholarly sources tended to deliver presentations that were easier to follow.

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. 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. 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. In defending their research findings, students who scored highly were able to situate their results in the context of the research field, noting significant consistencies and inconsistencies with previous research where appropriate These students synthesised their findings, provided evidence from the data they collected and also discussed the implications of their findings.

There was a tendency for students to spend a lot of time on the description and explanation of their topic and chosen methodologies, which left a limited amount of time left to defend their research 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. Investigations that did not score well were often more like an extended essay with limited or no data collected, which meant that the students were unable to discuss any findings. 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 score beyond the medium range. It is important that students do not take a ‘blinkered’ approach to their research. In such instances, students have already determined what the ‘answer’ to their research question is and so they collect and analyse data in such a way to confirm what they already believe. Students need to look at different perspectives and viewpoints. They need to interrogate their data to find disconfirming or contradictory stories. They need to remain open-minded to different possibilities and pathways within their research

Criterion 3 – Responses to questions and challenges

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0.4 | 4 | 5 | 12 | 16 | 22 | 16 | 10 | 10 | 4 | 6.1 |

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 and challenges that allow students to fill in any gaps from the first part of the presentation as well as 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, it is important that students do not attempt to pre-prepare answers that might not necessarily fit the context of the question asked. 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 highly 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. They also were able to see that their own work had the potential to be adapted or re-employed within a different context and were rewarded for perceiving the wider implications of their work. Many high-scoring responses drew on additional evidence and supporting arguments that had not been mentioned earlier.

Students who did not score well 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. In some cases, they were not able to provide evidence of the work undertaken and large gaps in their knowledge were exposed. Some students overly relied on their visuals in the hope that they would receive a question about their method if they did not elaborate on it earlier. Many students missed the opportunity during the questions and challenges section to evaluate their methodological approach and the implications the method may have had on their findings. This is an area that requires improvement across the range of student achievement and will assist students in their ability to reflect on and evaluate the outcomes of their investigation.

Criterion 4 – Reflection and evaluation

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0 | 6 | 5 | 12 | 19 | 24 | 12 | 13 | 6 | 3 | 5.9 |

This aspect of the oral presentation requires students to critically reflect on and evaluate their extended investigation. Both the presentation and questions and 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 who scored highly 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 in the discussion of the individual components of the research process (e.g. potential limitations and implications of methodological choices). Students who scored highly 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 mid-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 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 friends and school communities 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 subsequently had an inherent bias. These students found it difficult to evaluate and reflect on the process and were unable to draw substantiated conclusions. For some it appeared like a personal project that did not seem to have 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.

It is important that students take ethical issues seriously in their investigations and understand the ethical dimensions of their research. Stating that participants in interviews and surveys are provided with ethics forms to complete does not show a deep understanding. Examples of demonstrating a deeper understanding of ethical considerations included exploring the environmental sustainability of materials used in scientific experiments or showing an understanding of the cultural, religious and language differences of interview or focus-group participants.