

# GCE

## Research-based Essay Guide

August 2009

Part One (Generic)

Edexcel Advanced GCE in French (9FR01)

Edexcel Advanced GCE in German (9GN01)

Edexcel Advanced GCE in Italian (9IN01)

Edexcel Advanced GCE in Russian (9RU01)

Edexcel Advanced GCE in Spanish (9SP01)

Edexcel Advanced GCE in Urdu (9UR01)

## Part 1 Generic guidance

### Writing the essay

It should be remembered that the essay is much shorter than any produced as coursework in previous specifications with a word limit of **240-270 words (180 - 200 words in Russian)**. This will require students to focus their research effectively and be very concise when writing.

The essay must reflect the views and opinions of the students and also have an analytical and an evaluative approach. This means for example that an essay on a geographical region which just reads like a tourist brochure will score a low mark.

The essay question must be answered as fully as possible within the restrictions of the word limit.

The best work must show evidence of individual research. Candidates may do this by producing a very brief bibliography with the name(s) of the most important book(s), writer(s) or website(s) consulted at the end of the essay. Full referencing will not be required. This will not be included in the word count but will have to be memorised. Students may also refer to their research in the body of the essay with a phrase such as 'As .... says in his work ....'. Quotes from background sources are very much encouraged to support ideas and will not be counted in the overall word limit. It would be useful to see them attributed as footnotes if appropriate.

Candidates may show evidence of research and analysis by clearly weighing up different views on a topic in their essay and drawing an appropriate conclusion.

It is very important that all the subtopics listed in each area of research are covered. This is to ensure that students are well prepared to answer the question set in the examination as only one question per area of research will be set. Nevertheless, the question set will be general enough to enable any topic, book, play or film to be attempted. The following must, therefore, be considered:

#### Geographical area e.g. a region or a city

- Key people, events and issues (demographic, environmental, economic, social, political) that have impacted or are having an impact on the area
- Customs, traditions, beliefs and religions

Although this area of research is non-prescriptive, students are advised to study a region or city of significant size and importance that offers real scope for research.

#### Hints for teachers and students

1. Well before the date of the examination students and teachers should make a decision on which area of research is to be chosen for this essay - possibly even before the end of the first year of A level, if following a traditional 2 year course.
2. Students will need to integrate evidence of reading and research into the essay to show that they have the required knowledge and understanding of their chosen issue. This could be done with footnotes on each page giving the source, with a simple bibliography if appropriate at the end of the essay or, more simply, with phrases such as 'As ...says in his book...' in the body of the essay. If choosing the literature option this may well not be necessary.
3. Students will need to adhere to a limited word count. For that reason they should look at the question carefully. It is likely to demand factual information, but also evaluation and analysis. They should not be tempted to tell the story if choosing literature or to write everything they know about a region, if choosing geography.
4. In many cases, depth of knowledge will require examples, facts, statistics and expert opinions.
5. If choosing a geographical region, students should avoid choosing somewhere too small. Capital or other major cities such as (eg. Berlin or Munich/Paris or Marseille/Rome or Milan/Moscow or St Petersburg/Madrid or Barcelona/Karachi or Islamabad) can easily stand alone but research of

wider regions would otherwise be recommended. Students will need to research political, cultural, economical and social issues in detail.

6. It is vital that students show what they know and refer to their sources when appropriate. However, **they must avoid learning huge chunks of text off by heart**. As far as possible, they should use their own words.
7. Students should use a range of structures and check for accuracy as they go along.
8. Questions in the exam will have quite a broad focus, as all candidates will have studied very varied texts, regions etc. Nevertheless students should make sure that they are not diverted from the requirements of the question.
9. Any research undertaken should primarily involve reading in the target language. If any English-language source materials are used, these must only be used to supplement target-language reading.
10. Areas of research not deeply rooted in target-language culture are not acceptable for this assessment.
11. In order to access the higher mark range, purely factual and descriptive work should be avoided.
12. It is unlikely that a pre learnt essay will represent a fully relevant response to the question.

NB: A checklist has been produced in *Appendix 1* to help students check that they have written the appropriate response. **This may only be used when practising essay writing.**

## Possible research-based essay titles

The following provide illustrations of possible research-based essay titles for each of the prescribed areas of research.

### Geographical area

- 1) Describe the main festivals in the region or city which you have studied. How important are these festivals for the economy of the region or city?
- 2) Describe some of places of worship in the region or city which you have studied. What importance does religion have in this region or city?
- 3) What factors influence the economic development in the region or city which you have studied? What is being done to promote the economy of the region or city?
- 4) What social problems are there in the region or city which you have studied? Is enough being done to solve these problems?
- 5) Describe the geographical situation of the region or city which you have studied. To what extent does this situation influence the day to day life of the inhabitants?

## Appendix 1 - Student checklist

Student may refer to the following checklist when practising research-based essay writing. This checklist must **not** be used in the examination.

| <b>Research-based Essay Checklist</b>  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Knowledge</b>   |  |
| Have I shown a good and relevant knowledge of the topic I have chosen?                   |  |
| Have I written concisely and avoided waffling?   |  |
| Have I indicated from where this knowledge has been acquired?                            |  |
| <b>Understanding</b>   |  |
| Have I evaluated the knowledge I have acquired and then given my own ideas and opinions? |  |
| <b>Organisation</b>  |  |
| Have I organised and planned my essay remembering the restriction on words?              |  |
| Have I avoided an over long introduction or 'telling the story'?                         |  |
| <b>Development</b>   |  |
| Have I developed the ideas and opinions I have given?                                    |  |
| <b>Accuracy</b>  |  |
| Have I written in as accurate language as I can?   |  |
| Have I tried to use appropriate but also challenging syntax and structures?              |  |

## Appendix 2 - Assessment criteria

Students will be rewarded for their performances according to the following assessment criteria, which will be applied on a 'best fit' basis.

| Mark    | A02 - Reading Research and Understanding   |
|---------|--|
| 0       | No rewardable material presented.  |
| 1 - 6   | Minimal understanding. Almost no evidence of reading and research.   |
| 7 - 12  | Limited understanding. Little evidence of reading and research.  |
| 13 - 18 | Adequate understanding. Some evidence of reading and research.   |
| 19 - 24 | Good to very good understanding; clear evidence of in depth reading and research.  |
| 25 - 30 | Very good to excellent understanding; clear evidence of extensive and in-depth reading and research.   |
| Mark    | A02 - Organisation and development   |
| 0       | No rewardable organisation and development.  |
| 1 - 2   | Limited organisation and development; structure almost wholly lacking in coherence.  |
| 3 - 4   | Some organisation and development; may be rambling and/or repetitive.  |
| 5 - 6   | Adequate organisation and development of material; development patchy and/or ambiguous.  |
| 7 - 8   | Good organisation and development; material well planned and sequenced with minor lapses.  |
| 9       | Very good organisation and development; material very effectively marshalled and developed within a carefully planned framework.   |
| Mark    | A03 - Quality of language  |
| 0       | No rewardable language.  |
| 1       | Very basic level of communication; language often breaks down because of lack of linguistic knowledge and/or ability to use structures; very inaccurate.   |
| 2       | Some communication achieved on a basic level but often lacks comprehensibility; limited linguistic range; basic sentence construction; register often inappropriate.                             |
| 3 - 4   | Satisfactory communication; inaccurate language occasionally impedes comprehensibility; fair range of appropriate lexis; structures often well handled.  |
| 5       | Good communication; errors rarely impede comprehensibility; language mainly accurate and appropriate; good range of lexis and structures; good handling of complex structures and use of idioms. |
| 6       | Very good communication; language almost always fluent, varied and appropriate; wide range of lexis and structures; high level of accuracy.  |

Students are **not** permitted to take any books or texts into the examination room.