



Pearson

## **International Advanced Level**

**Modern Foreign Languages**

**French**

**German**

**Spanish**

**Generic Essay Guide**

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## Generic guidance

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## Introduction

This guide is intended to support teachers and students preparing for the essay section in Unit 4 of the Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level in Modern Foreign Languages, French, German and Spanish.

The guide should be used in conjunction with the appropriate Specification and Sample Assessment Materials.

The first section contains generic guidelines and the second section contains sample essays for each of the 3 languages.

The language specific section contain examples of students' work which have been assessed by senior examiners. Pearson acknowledges and thanks the schools, colleges, teachers and students who helped in the production of these materials.

### **Rationale for Essays on set topics, texts and films**

This section of the specification is created to allow students to study a topic, film or text related to the target-language culture (French, German or Spanish) which is of genuine interest to them.

It encourages wide reading, individual study and personal initiative. It offers an important intellectual challenge for students to acquire the skills of working individually, planning, selecting and organising material.

Students will have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and understanding of a target language culture by exploring an aspect of that culture which interests them. They will have a choice of topics within the four areas of **geography, history, literature and films**.

The Unit 4 essay should encourage students to develop analytical and interpretive skills, develop ideas on a range of issues and express these ideas critically.

## **Key requirements of the Unit 4 essay**

Students must choose an area of research from the four areas detailed in each specification namely:

**Geography**

**History**

**Literature**

**Films**

Students must answer one question which relates to a topic or a text/film chosen from the prescribed list featured in Section C of each specification.

Students should write 300–400 words.

The assessment rewards students for communicating relevant information effectively as well as for the quality of the language produced.

The Geography or History topics must be firmly rooted in the target-language speaking culture.

Preferably the chosen topic, text or film should reflect personal interest i.e. the essay should reflect the candidate's own ideas.

## Getting started

Teachers may wish to begin work on the essay at the end of the first year of a 2-year programme.

There are various ways in which this section can be taught:

- A whole class project where all students study the same topic, text or film.
- A completely free choice for all students.
- An option of two topics, texts or films (or a combination of these), which could be studied together and/or individually. This offers the possibility of studying two texts or two films, although only one can be chosen in the examination. Some students like this option so they have a back-up if the questions in the examination are not to their taste.

Each of the above has its advantages and disadvantages.

A whole class approach may well be easier to organise and the progress of the students can probably be more easily monitored.

On the other hand, teachers may prefer to offer students a free choice of topic.

The third option would enable students to broaden their appreciation of the target-language culture and, as mentioned, would also offer them greater flexibility on the day of the examination.

Whichever approach is taken, teachers would be expected to direct and guide their students appropriately. This would include giving advice on how to access the full mark range. It is recommended that teachers discuss different choices with the students. This could mean, for example, providing students with brief descriptions of two texts to gauge where there is most interest. It would also be possible to undertake further research beyond the text or film that could be linked to another topic.

*For example, International Advanced Level GCE German students may study the text 'Zonenkinder' as well as aspects of the DDR in an historical context. International A Level GCE French students may study the film "Indochine" as well as aspects of the French involvement in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in an historical context. For International A Level Spanish students, the study of part of the history of Chile would fit well with working on "Inés del alma mía".*

## **Writing the essay**

Topics and texts which may be chosen are as follows:

### **Geography**

Students would be expected to undertake wide research, become aware of and demonstrate understanding of the following:

- key people, events and issues (for example demographic, environmental, economic, social, political) which have impacted or are having an impact on the area
- customs, traditions, beliefs and religions

### **History**

Students would be expected to undertake wide research, consider and demonstrate understanding of the following:

- a specific period of history of particular relevance to the chosen country
- key people, events and issues from the above period

### **Literature**

#### **French**

Molière: *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*

Anouilh: *L'Alouette*

Etcherelli: *Élise ou la vraie vie*

Guène: *Kiffe Kiffe demain*

Condé: *Le coeur à rire et à pleurer*

#### **German**

Brecht: *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui*

Dürrenmatt: *Der Besuch der alten Dame*

Hensel: *Zonenkinder*

Lenz: *Fundbüro*

Ossowski: *Stern Ohne Himmel*

#### **Spanish**

Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

Delibes: *El príncipe destronado*

Isabel Allende: *Inés del alma mía*

Fernando Fernán-Gómez: *Las bicicletas son para el*

*verano*

Federico Garcia Lorca: *Yerma*

## **Films**

### **French**

Wargnier: *Indochine*

Falardeau: *Monsieur Lazhar*

Truffaut: *Jules et Jim*

Berri: *Jean de Florette and Manon des Sources*

Malle: *Lacombe Lucien*

### **German**

Heidelbach: *Berlin 36*

Petzold: *Barbara*

Ruzowitzky: *Die Fälscher*

Samderell: *Almanya, Willkommen in Deutschland*

Weingartner: *Die fetten Jahren sind vorbei*

### **Spanish**

Guillermo del Toro: *El laberinto del fauno*

Emilio Martínez-Lázaro: *Ocho apellidos vascos*

Andrés Wood: *Machuca*

Joshua Marston: *Maria, llena eres de gracia*

Íciar Bollaín: *También la lluvia*

The essay is expected to be about 300 – 400 words in length although there is no formal limit.

However, students' time is limited in an examination and they will need to learn to focus effectively and be very concise when writing, avoiding lengthy descriptions and irrelevant material.

The essay must reflect the views and opinions of the candidate and also have an analytical and an evaluative approach. This means for example that a Geography essay which just reads like a tourist brochure will score a low mark. Similarly a History essay which just gives a description of the lifeline of a specific person will score a low mark.

In Literature and Film, an essay which simply relates the plot cannot score highly.

The best work must show evidence of a certain amount of individual research. This means that the candidate needs to show a good understanding of the text or film chosen, or for the topics a good understanding of the region or historical period. Candidates may indicate how their knowledge and understanding was

gained 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 300 – 400 words.

Students may also refer to their research in the body of the essay with a phrase such as 'As .... says in his work ....' in order to justify the points they make. Quotes from background sources are very much encouraged to support ideas. It would be useful to see them attributed if appropriate.

Students 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 important that essays show analysis in order to gain the best marks. This means that the essay will need to go beyond narration and simple facts. Geography essays, for example, would need to analyse how industry has impacted on the region, if that were the question. In History, it may involve analysing how one specific event led to another. Texts and films will also require analysis, such as the development of characters or the structure of the work.

Essays require appropriate organisation and this includes an appropriate introduction and conclusion. The essay will require each piece of information presented to be discussed and analysed, and, where appropriate, backed up by quotes.

This development from narrative information leading to examples of what is being discussed and the possible consequences of this information is also very important.



## Hints for teachers and students

1. Well before the date of the examination, possibly before the end of the first year of a 2-year programme, students and teachers should make a decision on the topic, text or film to be chosen for this essay.
2. Students should try to integrate evidence of reading and research into the essay to show that they have the required knowledge and understanding of their chosen topic, text or film. 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/her book...*' in the body of the essay.
3. Students will need to practise writing essays of between 300 and 400 words. For that reason they should always look at the question carefully. It is likely to demand some narrative and factual information, but also evaluation and analysis. They should not be tempted to tell the story if choosing literature or a film or to write everything they know about a region, if choosing geography. All topics, texts and films require the same level of knowledge and understanding and therefore it won't be acceptable to write a tourist leaflet about a home town.
4. In most cases, depth of knowledge will require examples, facts, statistics and expert opinions.
5. If choosing Geography, students should avoid choosing somewhere too small. Major cities which would be appropriate would include places like Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Montreal, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Madrid, Barcelona, Mexico City, Buenos Aires. Cities such as these can easily stand on their own but research of wider regions would otherwise be recommended. Students will need to research political, cultural, economic and social issues in detail.
6. If choosing an historical study, students should avoid making their research too narrow.
7. If choosing literature or a film, students may choose to use critical guides either online or in print to help with research.
8. 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**. It is not appropriate to learn an essay off by heart and then try to get it to fit an essay title. As far as possible, they should use their own words.
9. Students should use a range of structures and check for accuracy as they go along.

10. Students should make sure they understand the question thoroughly before beginning to write and should make sure that they are not diverted from the requirements of the question.

11. Any research undertaken should involve listening and reading primarily in the target language.

12. Topics not deeply rooted in target-language culture are not acceptable for this assessment. For example, all regions chosen for the Geography option **must** be French, German or Spanish speaking, as appropriate to the language being examined.

13. In order to access the higher mark range, purely factual and descriptive work should be avoided.

14. 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 and not in the exam itself.**

## **Possible essay titles**

The following provide illustrations of **possible** essay titles for each of the prescribed areas of study.

### **Geography**

- 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? To what extent is this effective in promoting 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?

### **History**

- 1) Describe two important people from the period which you have studied. How significant was the role they played in this period?
- 2) Choose an important year in the period which you have studied. Why was this year particularly important?
- 3) Choose an important event in the period which you have studied. Why was this event so important in history in your opinion?
- 4) Explain the most important social and economic changes from the beginning to the end of the period which you have studied. Why did these changes happen?
- 5) Compare two people whom you have studied. To what extent was their contribution to history similar or different in your opinion?

### **Literature and Films**

- 1) How does the main character in X develop and to what extent is this development significant for/to the plot
- 2) Situate the above extract within X. How representative is what we learn here about the main character.
- 3) What do we learn about the historical background in X? To what extent is this historical setting important?
- 4) What message does X still have for today's society? How important is this message do you think?
- 5) To what extent can one reasonably state that the theme of loyalty underpins all action in X?

## **Appendix 1 – Student checklist for practice essay writing**

Student may refer to the following checklist when practising Unit 4 essay writing. This checklist must **not** be used in the examination.

### **Essay Checklist**

#### **Knowledge**

- Have I shown a good and relevant knowledge of the topic, text or film I have chosen?
- Have I written concisely?

#### **Understanding**

- Have I evaluated the knowledge I have acquired and then given my own ideas and opinions?

#### **Organisation**

- Have I organised and planned my essay remembering the word count?
- Have I avoided an over long introduction or 'telling the story'?

#### **Development**

- Have I developed the ideas and opinions I have given?

#### **Accuracy**

- 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	Content and Communication (A02)
0	No rewardable material.
1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ The student has shown minimal factual knowledge of the topic, text or film.</li><li>❖ There is no relevant supporting evidence from the topic, text or film.</li><li>❖ Only superficial details in the response.</li></ul>
4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ The student has shown some basic, generic factual knowledge of the topic, text or film.</li><li>❖ There is limited relevant supporting evidence from the topic, text or film.</li><li>❖ There is limited depth in the response.</li></ul>
7-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ The student has shown acceptable factual knowledge of the topic, text or film.</li><li>❖ There is some variety of relevant supporting evidence from the topic, text or film.</li><li>❖ There is some depth in the response.</li></ul>
10-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ The student has shown good factual knowledge of the topic, text or film.</li><li>❖ There is a good range of relevant supporting evidence from the topic, text or film.</li><li>❖ There is a good level of depth in the response.</li></ul>
13-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ The student has shown excellent factual knowledge of the topic, text or film.</li><li>❖ There is a wide range of relevant supporting evidence from the topic, text or film.</li><li>❖ There is a high level of depth in the response.</li></ul>

Mark	Quality of language (A03)
0	No rewardable language
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Communication is only occasionally achieved even at a basic level.</li> <li>❖ Grammatical structures are basic and mostly used incorrectly.</li> <li>❖ Vocabulary is often lacking or incorrect.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Communication is sometimes achieved at a basic level.</li> <li>❖ Candidate has used mostly common structures, and these are sometimes used correctly.</li> <li>❖ Vocabulary is limited in range.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Communication is achieved most of the time.</li> <li>❖ Common grammatical structures are mostly used correctly, and though there is some use of less common structures, they may contain errors.</li> <li>❖ Vocabulary is acceptable in range.</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Communication is achieved almost all of the time.</li> <li>❖ A good range of common grammatical structures are used correctly; some less common structures are used correctly.</li> <li>❖ Vocabulary is good in range and includes specialist terms relevant to the topic, text or film</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Communication is fluent and varied throughout.</li> <li>❖ A wide range of both common and less common grammatical structures are mostly used correctly.</li> <li>❖ Vocabulary is excellent in range and shows knowledge of many specialist terms relevant to the topic/text.</li> </ul>

Mark	<b>Critical analysis (A04) Organisation and development (A03)</b>
0	No evidence of a critical, analytical understanding of the topic, text or film.
1-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ (A04) A superficial description in response to the question that shows minimal engagement with the cultural topic, text or film, sufficient only to make a basic response.</li> <li>❖ (A03) Limited links between ideas, leading to limited coherence throughout.</li> <li>❖ (A04) Lacks conclusive remarks that are linked to, or substantiated by, the essay content.</li> </ul>
5-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ (A04) A partial explanation in response to the question that shows partial engagement with the cultural topic, text or film.</li> <li>❖ (A03) Occasional links between ideas and some attempts to justify these, and organisation within paragraphs or sections is sometimes present.</li> <li>❖ (A04) Conclusive remarks that may only be tangentially linked to, and are only occasionally substantiated by, the essay content.</li> </ul>
9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ (A04) A full explanation in response to the question that shows moderate engagement with the cultural topic, text or film.</li> <li>❖ (A03) Some justified links between ideas, and coherent organisation between paragraphs is occasionally present.</li> <li>❖ (A04) Conclusive remarks which are linked to the essay and are sometimes substantiated by the essay content.</li> </ul>
13-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ (A04) A critical analysis in response to the question, albeit applied inconsistently, that shows substantial engagement with the cultural topic, text or film.</li> <li>❖ (A03) Justified links between ideas, and coherent organisation between paragraphs is mostly present.</li> <li>❖ (A04) Conclusive remarks which are linked to the essay, are mostly substantiated by the essay content and show a developing individual response.</li> </ul>
17-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ (A04) A full evaluation in response to the question that shows excellent engagement with the cultural topic, text or film.</li> <li>❖ (A03) Consistently justified links between ideas leading to a well-organised and coherently developed argument throughout.</li> <li>❖ (A04) Conclusive remarks which are linked to the essay, are always substantiated by the essay content and show insightful observations that form an individual response</li> </ul>



## Appendix 3 – Support

If you have any **queries** relating to the assessment of the essay or any part of each specification, please contact the Pearson Languages team:

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