

CRITICAL THINKING IN EXTENDED RESPONSE QUESTIONS (ERQs)

Importance of critical thinking in ERQs

Examiners focus closely on critical thinking when assessing your ERQ answers. Although only one assessment criterion focuses solely on critical thinking (criterion D, 0-6 marks), critical thinking should be an essential holistic element in your essay answers. Critical thinking should be woven into every aspect of your ERQ answer.

Examiners emphasize that critical thinking should be genuine. It shouldn't be memorized critical thinking e.g. "Because this study was conducted in laboratory environment, it lacks ecological validity." Genuine critical thinking is holistic and creative. This can manifest itself through inventive choices of key contents and their analysis. The following advices should help you with achieving genuine critical thinking in your essays.

Advices for critical thinking in IB Psychology ERQs

The acronym **PEEL** helps you organize critical thinking:

- **Point:** What is your point? Make your point clear about critical thinking in relation to the theories and research you are referring in your essay.
- Provide **Evidence** AND **Examples:** Back your point up. What is the evidence for your point? What is the evidence behind the theories and research in your essay? Provide examples, exemplify.
- **Explain** AND **Evaluate:** How does the evidence support your point? How can theories, research and evidence be evaluated with your point?
- **Link everything:** How is your point linked to the all other parts of your essay? How is your point linked to the question? How is your point linked to the theories, research and evidence in your essay?

The acronym **MAGEC** helps you to evaluate general features in studies:

- **Methods:** What was the *research design*? What was the *research setting*? What were the *data-collecting methods*? What was the *sampling method*? Were the procedures *ethical*? What is the state of *credibility*? (*Reliability* and *validity*) How were *reflexivity* applied? Did the *expectations* of the researcher influence the results? Was there any *triangulation*? How *generalizable* the results are?
- **Alternative explanation AND Application:** Are there any alternative models, theories, research or levels of analysis (LoAs) that could explain the results?
- **Gender:** Were there any *gender biases* in sampling? Can the results be *generalized* in both/all genders?
- **Ethics:** What were the *ethical considerations*? See **Peter Piper Cried When Charles Dickens Died** below.
- **Culture:** How *cultural dimensions* were taken into consideration? Was the study done from an *individualistic* or from a *collectivistic* perspective? Was the study done from an *emic* or from an *etic* approach?

See the file *Magec.pdf* for more detail in peda.net.

The acronym **GRENADÉ** helps you evaluate general features in studies as well:

- **Gender bias:** Was the study focused on one gender exclusively?
- **Reductionism vs. holism:** On what level did the study examine the phenomenon? Were the variables *reduced*? Were the variables examined as a *whole*?
- **Ethical issues:** What were the *ethical considerations*? See **Peter Piper Cried When Charles Dickens Died** below.
- **Nature vs. nurture:** Did the study focus more on *biological* or *environmental* factors? Did the take into account the *interaction* of these factors?
- **Approach:** Did the study aim for a *general law* or a *unique interpretation*?
- **Determinism vs. free will:** What was the *driving force* of the researched behaviour according to the study?
- **Ethnocentrism:** Was the study *culturally biased*?

See the file *Grenade.pdf* for more detail in peda.net.

The acronym **TEACUP** helps you to evaluate theories:

- **Testable:** Is it possible to set up experimental study to test the theory?
- **Empirical evidence:** Is there empirical evidence to support the theory? Is there research that challenges the theory?
- **Application:** Can the theory be used to explain or change behaviour?
- **Construct validity:** Are the concepts that make up the theory well defined? Can the concepts be operationalized and observed/measured?
- **Unbiased AND Uncertainty:** Is the theory ethnocentric? Androcentric? Is the research upon which the theory is based representative of a global population? Are there any areas of uncertainties or unknowns within the theory?
- **Predictive validity:** Does the theory enable us to predict behaviour? Can we use it to predict trends in behaviour in a larger population or can we use it to predict an individual's behaviour?

The phrase **Peter Piper Cried When Charles Dickens Died** helps you to memorize key concepts in evaluating ethics of research:

- **Protection from harm:** Were the participants protected from harm?
- **Privacy:** Was the privacy of the participants secured?
- **Confidentiality:** Did the procedures and results secure the confidentiality of the participants and their behaviour?
- **Withdrawal:** Was it possible for the participants to withdraw from the research at any point? How was this secured?
- **Consent:** Did the participants give their consent? How? Were the participants allowed to give their consent?
- **Debriefing:** Were the participants debriefed after the study? How?
- **Deception:** Were there any deception involved in the study? How was it implemented? Did the deception relate to other ethical considerations?

You can come up with other more elaborate advices and acronyms, but here are some relevant ones for starters!