Internal assessment

Purpose of internal assessment

Internal assessment (IA) is an integral part of the course and is compulsory for both SL and HL students. It enables students to demonstrate the application of their skills and knowledge and to pursue their personal interests, without the time limitations and other constraints that are associated with written examinations. The internal assessment should, as far as possible, be woven into normal classroom teaching and not be a separate activity conducted after a course has been taught.

The IA requirements at SL and at HL are the same. Students are expected to produce a business research project about a real issue or problem facing a particular organization using a conceptual lens.

Guidance and authenticity

The business research project (SL/HL) submitted for the IA must be the student's own work. However, it is not the intention that students should decide upon a title or topic and be left to work on the IA component without any further support from the teacher. The teacher should play an important role during both the planning stage and the period when the student is working on the internally assessed work. It is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that students are familiar with:

- the requirements of the type of work to be internally assessed
- the assessment criteria; students must understand that the work submitted for assessment must address these criteria effectively.

Teachers and students must discuss the internally assessed work. Students should be encouraged to initiate discussions with the teacher to obtain advice and information; students must not be penalized for seeking guidance. As part of the learning process, teachers should read and give advice to students on one draft of the work. The teacher should provide oral or written advice on how the work could be improved, but not edit the draft. The next version handed to the teacher must be the final version for submission.

It is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that all students understand the basic meaning and significance of concepts that relate to academic integrity, especially authenticity and intellectual property. Teachers must ensure that all student work for assessment is prepared according to the requirements and must explain clearly to students that the internally assessed work must be entirely their own. Where collaboration between students is permitted, the difference between collaboration and collusion must be clear to all students.

All work submitted to the IB for moderation or assessment must be authenticated by a teacher, and must not include any known instances of suspected or confirmed malpractice. Each student must confirm that the work is his or her authentic work and constitutes the final version of that work. Once a student has officially submitted the final version of the work it cannot be retracted. The requirement to confirm the authenticity of work applies to the work of all students, not just the sample work that will be submitted to the IB for the purpose of moderation. For further details refer to the IB publications *Academic integrity*, *Diploma Programme: From principles into practice* and the relevant articles in the "General regulations" section in *Diploma Programme Assessment procedures*.

Authenticity may be checked by discussion with the student on the content of the work, and scrutiny of one or more of the following.

- The student's initial proposal
- The first draft of the written work
- The references cited

- The style of writing compared with work known to be that of the student
- The analysis of the work by a web-based plagiarism detection service such as www.turnitin.com

The same piece of work cannot be submitted to meet the requirements of both the IA and the EE.

Time allocation

IA is an integral part of the business management course, contributing 30% to the final assessment in the SL course and 20% to the final assessment in the HL course. This weighting should be reflected in the time that is allocated to teaching the knowledge, skills and understanding required to undertake the work, as well as the total time allocated to carry out the work.

It is recommended that a total of approximately 20 hours (SL/HL) of teaching time should be allocated to the work. This should include:

- time for the teacher to explain to students the requirements of the IA
- class time for students to work on the IA component and ask questions
- time for consultation between the teacher and each student
- time to review, monitor progress and to check authenticity.

Requirements and recommendations

It is important for the integrity of the moderation process that the IA by the teacher is based on the same evidence as that available to the moderator. When there is more than one teacher teaching students in this component, internal standardization must take place.

Using assessment criteria for internal assessment

For the IA, a number of assessment criteria have been identified. Each assessment criterion has level descriptors describing specific achievement levels, together with an appropriate range of marks. The level descriptors concentrate on positive achievement, although for the lower levels failure to achieve may be included in the description.

Teachers must judge the internally assessed work at SL and at HL against the criteria using the level descriptors.

- The same assessment criteria are provided for SL and HL.
- The aim is to find, for each criterion, the descriptor that conveys most accurately the level attained by the student, using the best-fit model. A best-fit approach means that compensation should be made when a piece of work matches different aspects of a criterion at different levels. The mark awarded should be one that most fairly reflects the balance of achievement against the criterion. It is not necessary for every single aspect of a level descriptor to be met for that mark to be awarded.
- When assessing a student's work, teachers should read the level descriptors for each criterion until they reach a descriptor that most appropriately describes the level of the work being assessed. If a piece of work seems to fall between two descriptors, both descriptors should be read again and the one that more appropriately describes the student's work should be chosen.
- Where there are two or more marks available within a level, teachers should award the upper marks if the student's work demonstrates the qualities described to a great extent; the work may be close to achieving marks in the level above. Teachers should award the lower marks if the student's work demonstrates the qualities described to a lesser extent; the work may be close to achieving marks in the level below.
- Only whole numbers should be recorded; partial marks (fractions and decimals) are not acceptable.
- Teachers should not think in terms of a pass or fail boundary but should concentrate on identifying the appropriate descriptor for each assessment criterion.

- The highest-level descriptors do not imply faultless performance but should be achievable by a student. Teachers should not hesitate to use the extremes if they are appropriate descriptions of the work being assessed.
- A student who attains a high achievement level in relation to one criterion will not necessarily attain high achievement levels in relation to the other criteria. Similarly, a student who attains a low achievement level for one criterion will not necessarily attain low achievement levels for the other criteria. Teachers should not assume that the overall assessment of the students will produce any particular distribution of marks.
- It is recommended that the assessment criteria be made available to students.

Internal assessment details—SL and HL

Business research project

Duration: 20 hours

Weighting: 30% SL and 20% HL

Introduction

The IA is a research project in which students apply appropriate business management tools and theories to a real organizational issue or problem using a conceptual lens.

Requirements

The students are required to:

- select a real business issue or problem for their business research project that relates to any part of the syllabus
- refer directly to a single business organization but may consider industry-wide issues that impact on that organization
- provide a research question for the business research project that could either be forward looking or backward looking
- base their research on primary and/or secondary research, selected for its suitability, depth and breadth
- attach to the business research project three to five supporting documents from which the majority of the information for the project has been obtained
- produce a business research project that does not exceed 1,800 words
- fully reference all supporting documents and additional sources and include them in a bibliography.

Key concept

The business research project **must** use **only one** of the four key concepts (change, creativity, ethics or sustainability) as a lens through which to analyse the IA. This key concept may or may not be stated in the research question; however, it must be clearly indicated on the title page which key concept was used. Five marks are available for the identification and use of a relevant key concept; for these marks to be awarded, students must make explicit the conceptual lens they are applying to their work.

Role of teacher's guidance

With the teacher's support, students should choose an issue or problem for investigation, and develop a title in the form of a research question.

The teacher should approve students' questions before work is started, to ensure that they are suitable for investigation and allow access to all levels of the assessment criteria. It is highly advisable that every student is supplied with a copy of the assessment criteria. The teacher should also guide students in the selection of appropriate supporting documents.

Throughout the IA process, students and the teacher should engage in dialogue supportive of the students' work. The teacher should comment on the students' work plans and first draft of the project as part of the learning process.

If more than one student chooses the same organization for their research, it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that the business research projects reflect the students' own individual research, interpretation and analysis.

If a student also writes an EE in business management, it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that the student's IA and EE are distinct pieces of work using different research approaches. As there are different requirements and assessment criteria, students should choose different organizations for these different tasks.

Examples of appropriate questions

Examples of appropriate questions for the business research project might be as follows.

- Should company Y change its manufacturing to outsourcing?

  The project could then examine areas within business management such as operations management and human resource management using **change** as a conceptual lens.
- How can airline X successfully target segment Y?

  The project could then examine business management topics such as market segmentation, promotion, and measure of financial success using **sustainability** as a conceptual lens.

Supporting documents

The selection of supporting documents is very important. To achieve the highest levels of each assessment criterion, it is strongly recommended that the supporting documents present a range of ideas and views. For example, the selection of three to five documents published by a single company, or three to five surveys of similar populations, would not provide balance or objectivity.

Relevant supporting documents must be contemporary in nature and published within a maximum of three years prior to the submission of the business research project to the IB. Submission of the business research project occurs in April or October of the final year of the course, depending on the examination session of the school.

A maximum of one of the supporting documents may be a transcript of video or audio material. The transcript must provide the essential points of the video or audio file used for the purposes of the project. Only video or audio material published by a reliable organization should be used (such as the business organization itself, an organization commissioned by the business or an NGO). Particular attention needs to be paid to referencing the original video or audio file so that this may be traced.

The project can be based on primary and/or secondary sources that will form the basis of the supporting documents.

Primary sources provide first-hand information or direct evidence for the research. Examples of primary sources include:

- face-to-face and online surveys/questionnaires; students should include a blank copy of the questionnaire and a tally/summary of responses
- face-to-face and online interviews; students should include a copy of the interview questions and summary of the responses
- focus group discussions; students should include a copy of the focus group questions and summary of the findings.

Secondary sources provide second-hand information or already existing data for the research. Examples of secondary sources include:

- articles from the local, national or international press
- business accounts
- business plans

- extracts from company websites
- transcripts of a relevant audio-visual file
- financial reports
- government and other statistics
- journal publications
- market research surveys
- mission statements.

Students must select three to five of their own supporting documents, which must not be provided to the student by the teacher. Providing supporting documents with many pages is highly discouraged and hence it is recommended that no one supporting document should exceed the equivalent of five A4 pages.

Students must highlight the parts of each supporting document that relate directly to their project. Any highlighted parts of supporting documents that are not in the language for which the student is registered must be translated.

Students should label each supporting document clearly, such as "Supporting document 1", "Supporting document 2", and so on. This will help with referencing in the project. These should be located at the appropriate section at the end of the document.

It is expected that students will include in-text citations/references of the supporting documents and a bibliography, which should be formatted in an appropriate way. Refer to the IB publication *Effective citing and referencing* for further guidance.

Any additional sources such as textbooks and class notes must be referenced but will not be accepted as supporting documents.

Structure

The business research project is intended to be a structured piece of well-organized writing that effectively presents findings and conclusions. There are many different ways that a student might approach the project, but students should ensure that the submitted business research project evidences the following elements.

- An **introduction** that sets the context. The introduction should briefly demonstrate some background information about the business organization, give a clear outline of the issue or problem under investigation and explain the methodology used to investigate this issue or problem.
- The **main body** of the project in which findings from the supporting documents should be presented and analysed with the help of relevant business management tools and theories including integrating the key concept. The findings should also be interpreted: what main themes emerge from the analysis of the supporting documents, and why and how are they helpful (or not) to answering the research question? An evaluative approach to this discussion of findings should be pursued, for example, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the various positions on the issue or problem and what are their implications?
- A **conclusion** that answers the research question. In the conclusion, the research question should be explicitly answered. The conclusion should not introduce facts or arguments that have not been discussed in previous sections of the project. Rather, it is good practice to include those aspects of the research question that have not been fully answered in the project or that might need further investigation in order to be judged more effectively.

Presentation

Effectively presented projects require a title page, an accurate table of contents page, appropriate headings and sub-headings and numbered pages.

For the presentation of references and bibliography, please see the information on acknowledging the ideas or work of another person in the "The Diploma Programme" section of this subject guide.

Word count

The business research project must not exceed 1,800 words. The word count must be included on the cover page of the project. If the word limit is exceeded, the teacher's assessment must be based on the first 1,800 words.

Note: Moderators will not read beyond 1,800 words for the project.

The following are **not** included in the word count.

- Acknowledgments
- Contents page
- Tables of statistical data
- Diagrams or figures
- Equations, formulae and calculations
- Supporting documents
- Citations (which, if used, must be in the body of the project)
- References (which, if used, must be in the footnotes/endnotes)
- Bibliography

Please note that footnotes or endnotes may be used for references only. Definitions of business management terms and quotations, if used, must be in the body of the work and are included in the word count. Please note that citation is a shorthand method of making a reference in the body of the project, which is then linked to the full reference in the bibliography.

Please refer to the *Business management teacher support material* (TSM) for further guidance on how to prepare for the IA.

Internal assessment criteria

The business research project is assessed against seven criteria that are related to the assessment objectives for the business management course.

When the work to be assessed has been read, the descriptors for each criterion should be studied until a descriptor is reached that most appropriately describes the achievement level. If a piece of work seems to fall between two descriptors, both descriptors should be read again and the one that more appropriately describes the student's work chosen.

There are seven assessment criteria for the business research project.

- **Criterion A**: Integration of a key concept
- **Criterion B**: Supporting documents
- **Criterion C**: Selection and application of tools and theories
- **Criterion D**: Analysis and evaluation
- **Criterion E**: Conclusions
- **Criterion F**: Structure
- **Criterion G**: Presentation

Criterion A: Integration of a key concept

To what extent does the student effectively integrate the analysis of the connection between the key concept and the organization under study throughout the internal assessment?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	Either the work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below **or** the key concept identified is neither change, creativity, ethics nor sustainability.

Marks	Level descriptor
1	The student demonstrates knowledge of the key concept.
2	The student describes the connection between the key concept and the organization under study.
3	The student analyses the connection between the key concept and the organization under study.
4	The student partially integrates the analysis of the connection between the key concept and the organization under study in the internal assessment.
5	The student effectively integrates the analysis of the connection between the key concept and the organization under study throughout the internal assessment.

Criterion B: Supporting documents

To what extent does the student select three to five relevant supporting documents that address the research question in appropriate depth and breadth?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	There are only one or two, or more than five, supporting documents **or** they are of marginal relevance.
2	There are three to five supporting documents that are generally relevant but some lack depth.
3	There are three to five supporting documents that are relevant and sufficiently in-depth.
4	There are three to five supporting documents that are relevant, sufficiently in-depth and provide a range of ideas and views.

Criterion C: Selection and application of tools and theories

To what extent does the student effectively select and apply business management tools and theories that are relevant to the research question?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	There is a limited selection and application of business management tools and theories **or** these business management tools and theories are not relevant to the research question.
2	There are some business management tools and theories selected and applied to the research question. Their relevance to the research question is superficial.
3	The business management tools and theories are adequately selected and applied to the research question. Their relevance to the research question is not always clear.
4	The business management tools and theories are effectively selected and applied with clear relevance to the research question.

Criterion D: Analysis and evaluation

To what extent does the student effectively select and use data from the supporting documents in their analysis and evaluation of the research question?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	There is limited selection and use of data from the supporting documents with no analysis and evaluation of the research question.
2	The selection and use of data from the supporting documents is superficial, leading to limited analysis and evaluation of the research question.
3	The selection and use of data from the supporting documents is adequate with some analysis and evaluation of the research question.
4	The selection and use of data from the supporting documents is sufficient, leading to a mostly effective analysis and evaluation of the research question with some integration of ideas.
5	The selection and use of data from the supporting documents is effective, leading to a thorough analysis and evaluation of the research question. There is a sustained integration of ideas with consideration of the assumptions underpinning the arguments and implications.

Criterion E: Conclusions

To what extent is the student's conclusion consistent with the evidence presented and explicitly answers the research question?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	Conclusions are inconsistent with the evidence presented, or conclusions are superficial.
2	Some conclusions are consistent with the evidence presented.
3	Conclusions are consistent with the evidence presented and explicitly answer the research question.

Criterion F: Structure

To what extent is the student's research project organized using an appropriate structure?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	Limited structure.
2	Appropriate structure.

Criterion G: Presentation

To what extent is the student's business research project effectively presented with the use of required elements including a title page, an accurate table of contents, appropriate headings and sub-headings, and numbered pages?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	One or more of the required elements of a well-presented research project is missing.
2	All of the required elements of a well-presented research project are included.