

# SL Internal Assessment Guide

## Purpose of internal assessment

Internal assessment 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 internal assessment requirements at SL and at HL are different for the business management course. The SL internal assessment is a written commentary and the HL internal assessment is a research project.

## Guidance and authenticity

The written commentary (SL) and research project (HL) submitted for internal assessment must be the students' own work. However, it is not the intention that students should decide upon a title or topic and be left to work on the internal assessment 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, and 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 must 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 honesty, 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, it must be clear to all students what the difference is between collaboration and collusion.

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 publication *Academic honesty, The Diploma Programme: From principles into practice* and the relevant articles in the *General regulations: Diploma Programme*.

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 turnitin.com.

The same piece of work cannot be submitted to meet the requirements of both the internal assessment and the extended essay.

## Time allocation

Internal assessment is an integral part of the business management course, contributing 25% to the final assessment in the SL and the HL courses. 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 **15 hours (SL)** and 30 hours (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 internal assessment
- class time for students to work on the internal assessment component and ask questions
- time for consultation between the teacher and each student
- time to review and monitor progress, and to check authenticity.

## Requirements and recommendations

It is important for the integrity of the moderation process that the internal assessment 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 internal assessment, 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.

- Different 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

### Written commentary

**Duration:** 15 hours

**Weighting:** 25%

#### Introduction

The SL internal assessment is a written commentary that allows students to demonstrate the application of business management tools, techniques and theories to a business issue or problem.

#### Requirements

SL students are required to:

- select a real business issue or problem for their written commentary that must relate to the SL syllabus.
- refer directly to a single business organization, but may consider industry-wide issues that impact on that organization.
- base their written commentary on secondary research, selected for its suitability, depth and breadth. Primary research may be used as support.
- provide a title for the commentary that, to give focus and direction, must be framed as a question.
- produce a written commentary that does not exceed 1,500 words.
- attach to the commentary three to five supporting documents from which the majority of the information for the commentary has been obtained.
- fully reference all supporting documents and additional sources and include them in a bibliography.

#### 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 question.

The teacher should approve the 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 internal assessment process, students and the teacher should engage in dialogue supportive of the students' work. The teacher should comment on students' work plans and first draft of the commentary 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 written commentaries reflect the students' own individual research, interpretation and analysis.

If a student also writes an extended essay in business management, it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that students do not build their internal assessment and extended essay in business management on the same syllabus content. Also, given different requirements and assessment criteria, students should choose different organizations for these different tasks.

### **Examples of appropriate questions**

Examples of appropriate questions for the written commentary might be:

- “Can airline X successfully target segment Y?” The commentary could then examine business management topics such as market segmentation, consumer profiling, promotion, and measure of financial success.
- “Should company Y outsource its manufacturing?” The commentary could then examine areas within business management such as operations management and human resource management.

### **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.

The supporting documents must be of a contemporary nature and written within a maximum of three years prior to the submission of the written commentary to the IB. Submission of the written commentary occurs in April or November 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/audio material. The transcript must summarize the essential points of the video/audio file used for the purposes of the commentary. Only video/audio material published by a reliable organization (such as the business organization itself, an organization commissioned by the business or an NGO) should be used. Particular attention needs to be paid to referencing the original video/audio file so that this may be traced.

The commentary must be based on secondary sources and may include primary data.

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
- web-based surveys.

Examples of primary sources include:

- responses to questionnaires (students should include a blank copy of the questionnaire and a tally/summary of results)
- results of surveys
- transcripts of interviews and discussions with focus groups.

Students must select their own supporting documents, which must not be provided to the student by the teacher.

Students must highlight the parts of each supporting document that relate directly to their commentary. 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 commentary.

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.

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

### **Written commentary**

Although there is no required format for the written commentary, it should nonetheless be a structured piece of well-presented writing. An introduction that sets the scene, presentation, analysis and discussion of findings, and a conclusion that answers the commentary question provides an effective structure for the commentary. Good presentation additionally requires a title page, an accurate table of contents page, appropriate headings and sub-headings, consistent referencing, a complete bibliography and numbered pages.

The introduction should briefly demonstrate some background information about the business organization, to give a clear outline of the issue or problem under investigation and to explain the methodology used to investigate this issue or problem.

In the body of the commentary, findings from the supporting documents should be presented and analysed with the help of relevant business tools, techniques and theories. 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 commentary 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?

In the conclusion, the commentary question should be explicitly answered. The conclusion should not introduce facts or arguments that have not been discussed in previous sections of the commentary. Rather, it is good practice to include those aspects of the commentary question that

have not been fully answered in the commentary or that might need further investigation in order to be judged more effectively.

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

### **Word count**

The written commentary must not exceed 1,500 words. A word count must be included as part of the commentary. If the word limit is exceeded, the teacher’s assessment must be based on the first 1,500 words.

**Note:** Moderators will not read beyond 1,500 words for the commentary.

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

- acknowledgments
- contents page
- tables of statistical data
- diagrams or figures
- equations, formulae and calculations
- citations (which, if used, must be in the body of the commentary)
- references (which, if used, must be in the footnotes/endnotes)
- bibliography.

Please note that footnotes/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 commentary, which is then linked to the full reference in the bibliography.