

IB Business &
Management

Internal Assessment

SL Guide Book

Introduction

The aim of the IB Business & Management IA is to demonstrate the application of your business skills and knowledge.

SL Written Commentary

Background

Your IA this year is a written commentary. You will need to demonstrate the application of business and management tools, techniques and theories to a real business issue or problem.

You must select a **real organization** for this, not a fictional one, and the issue or decision under investigation must also be real.

The Commentary

You must produce a commentary with a title presented as a **question**. Your commentary must refer directly to a single business organization, but you may consider industry-wide issues that impact on that organization.

Your commentary must be based on **primary and/or secondary data**, selected for its suitability, depth and breadth.

Your commentary must not exceed more than **1,500 words**. A word count must be included as part of the commentary.

The commentary requires analysis and evaluation of the business issue/problem. Judgements can be made throughout the commentary, but are essential within the conclusion.

You must attach **three to five** supporting documents from which the majority of the information for the commentary has been obtained. Any additional sources, such as textbooks, class notes and DVDs/videos, must be referenced, but will NOT be accepted as supporting documents.

All supporting documents and additional sources must be fully referenced and included in bibliography.

SELECTING YOUR SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Your supporting documents have to be up-to date. They have to be written a maximum of two years before the submission of your written commentary.

You must select your own supporting documents. Teachers are not allowed to provide these for you. It is also recommended that you do not use the same supporting documents as other students in the school.

Any supporting documents in other languages must be translated.

Examples of secondary sources of information for your commentary:

- Market research surveys
- Articles from the local, national or international press
- Financial reports
- Business accounts
- Business plans
- Mission statements
- Web-based surveys
- Extracts from the company websites
- Government and other statistics
- Academic publications

Examples of primary sources might include:

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

The selection of your documents is very important. To achieve the highest level of each assessment criterion, it is strongly recommended that the supporting documents present a range of ideas and views.

e.g. “Can company X, an independent food retailer, survive?”

The commentary could then examine business concepts such as economies of scale, mergers and acquisitions, distribution chains, the marketing mix and the external environment.

Your commentary may include tables and graphs. The supporting documents and supplementary information such as diagrams, figures, tables or data and references are not included in the 1,500 words.

Finally, you should spend 15 hours on this written commentary.

Suggested structure - SL IA Written Commentary

The following is a suggested structure for your IA written commentary.

1. Title (in the form of a question)
2. Introduction (including a description of methodology)
3. Findings (based on the supporting documents)
4. Analysis of the findings
5. Conclusion(s)
6. Bibliography and references

Appendices: supporting documents

Don't forget – you can present a SWOT as a document in the appendix and then you could reference it in the text of the body. This is because it is NOT about where the SWOT is, but more about how it is used and APPLIED!!

When choosing your title consider the following:

We think "How should..." is better than "How can..." since the former requires you to justify (critically) your answer, whereas the latter tends to lead to descriptive answers.

Information in tables is not included in word counts *providing it is concise* (for example, like sets of numbers, lists of counties, etc.).

The following is extracted from the IBO website:

Written commentary—overview

The internal assessment for SL is a written commentary that answers a question based on a problem or issue of a single business organization. The problem or issue must be related to the business and management SL syllabus. While the problem or issue must be chosen in relation to a specific organization, it may affect a number of organizations or the industry as a whole. However, the focus of the commentary is the individual organization.

The written commentary enables SL students to demonstrate the application of business and management tools, techniques and theories to a real business issue or problem. Students must select a real and contemporary issue or problem, not a fictional one, facing a single business organization.

- The title of the written commentary must be phrased in the form of a question.
- The commentary can be based on primary and/or secondary sources.
- The commentary requires analysis and evaluation of the issue or problem, and the student must form judgments, and incorporate them into the commentary in light of the question posed in the title.
- The maximum number of words for the written commentary is 1,500 words.
- Students must provide a declaration of authenticity on the coversheet of the written commentary.

Although there is no mandatory format for the written commentary, the following is a suggested format that might help students organize their work.

- Title (in the form of a question)
- Introduction (including a description of methodology)
- Findings (based on the supporting documents)
- Analysis of the findings
- Conclusion(s)
- Bibliography and references
- Appendices: supporting documents



Written commentary—details

Title	<p>The title question must be clear and focused, allowing the student to answer it by carrying out a limited amount of research, supported by chosen documents. If sufficient sources are not available for the research to be carried out, the question should be replaced. The following are examples of suitable questions.</p> <p>Is including a line for male customers a profitable decision for company X?</p> <p>Is an increase in wages an effective way to increase productivity and motivation in company Y?</p> <p>Is company Z's decision to increase productive capacity by building a new plant a sound financial decision?</p>
Introduction	<p>A brief and focused introduction should explain the purpose of the commentary and the methodology used to investigate the problem or issue. Business tools, techniques and theory should be included to present the commentary in appropriate business format and to support the analysis and the judgments with relevant business concepts and theory.</p>
Findings	<p>In order to write the commentary the student should refer to secondary sources and may collect primary sources depending on the issue or problem investigated. These sources provide a vast and varied amount of information for the student to analyse and answer the question.</p> <p>Three to five of these sources have to be selected and presented as supporting documents for the commentary. They should be included in the appendices, with the relevant sections highlighted by the student.</p> <p>Although it is mandatory to include three to five sources as supporting documents, this does not mean that the investigation should be limited to these documents. Any sources consulted by the student but not chosen as supporting documents should be referenced in the body of the commentary and included in the bibliography.</p>
Analysis of the findings	<p>The above findings have to be analysed in the light of the title question, taking into account business theory and using, as far as possible, business tools and techniques. This analysis could be included as a separate section, or it could be included together with the findings (findings and analysis). The different supporting documents should be analysed in such a manner that their relevance to the question is clearly established. The analysis should also show how the supporting documents relate to each other.</p>

Conclusion

The title question must be answered, based on the analysis of the findings and, in particular, on the analysis of the supporting documents. The conclusion should not introduce ideas or judgments that have not been discussed in previous sections of the commentary. It is good practice to include those aspects of the question that have not been fully answered in the commentary or that might need further analysis or investigation to be judged more effectively.

Bibliography and references

The commentary should contain correctly presented references and a bibliography. Only books and web pages actually consulted should be included. The access dates to the web pages consulted should be specified. If the student refers to sources of any type, these should be referenced through the use of footnotes.

Appendices: supporting documents

The appendices should only include the three to five supporting documents, chosen by the students as the structuring documents for the commentary. The chosen documents have to be included in their complete form, although relevant parts to the investigation have to be clearly highlighted.

SL written commentary**A Supporting documents**

If fewer than three supporting documents are presented, a maximum of three marks can be awarded.

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	There are no documents presented in support of the commentary.
1	The supporting documents are irrelevant.
2	The supporting documents are generally relevant but some lack depth.
3	The supporting documents are relevant and sufficient in depth.
4	The supporting documents are relevant, sufficient in depth and provide a range of ideas and views.

B Choice and application of business tools, techniques and theory

This criterion assesses the extent to which the student chooses business management tools, techniques and theories that are relevant to the issue or problem and applies these so that a greater insight into the situation of the organization ensues.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	There is a limited selection of business management tools, techniques and theories, and these are not applied.
2	There is a limited selection of business management tools, techniques and theories, and these are superficially applied.
3	There is an appropriate selection of business management tools, techniques and theories, but these are superficially applied.
4	There is an appropriate selection of business management tools, techniques and theories, and these are suitably applied.
5	There is an appropriate selection of business management tools, techniques and theories, and these are skillfully applied.

C Use, analysis and synthesis of data

This criterion assesses the extent to which the student uses data from the supporting documents effectively in order to understand and explain the issue or problem and is able to integrate ideas coherently.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	There is a limited selection of data from the supporting documents but no analysis.
2	There is a limited selection of data from the supporting documents with superficial analysis.
3	There is an appropriate selection of data from the supporting documents with satisfactory analysis.
4	There is an appropriate selection of data from the supporting documents with good analysis and some integration of ideas.
5	There is an appropriate selection of data from the supporting documents with skillful analysis and a coherent integration of ideas.

D Conclusions

Achievement level	Descriptor
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0	There are no conclusions.
1	Conclusions are inconsistent with the evidence presented.
2	Some of the conclusions are consistent with the evidence presented.
3	The conclusions are consistent with the evidence presented and answer the commentary question.

E Evaluation

Criterion F: Structure

This criterion assesses the extent to which the student organizes his or her ideas into a structured commentary with an argument that is easy to follow.

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

This criterion assesses the extent to which the student presents the written commentary well. This involves a title page, an accurate table of contents, appropriate headings and sub-headings, consistent referencing, a complete bibliography 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 above elements of a well presented commentary is missing.
2	All of the above elements of a well presented commentary are included.

Selecting a topic

Selecting a topic for the research project or written commentary

It is important that students, with the teacher's guidance, choose an issue that:

- engages their interest
- is realistic in terms of resources
- meets the criteria for assessment.

Using the library

The school library should be used actively to enable students to acquire the skills of individual research through a variety of media such as books, periodicals and electronic databases. The ability to locate and use appropriate sources effectively is essential for worthwhile research in business and management.

The professional librarian is a trained information specialist, whose knowledge of, and insight into, information will complement that of the subject specialist teacher. The librarian can help students and teachers with information gathering and research skills at all stages of the research project or written commentary.

The teacher may wish to build on the work of the librarian with study skills sessions to ensure that students make the best use of their time. Noting down resources in a standard format, prescribed by the teacher, can be a useful starting point. In addition, teachers can give general guidance on information gathering, note taking and the construction of a well-organized file of preparatory material.

Word limits

Students and teachers must ensure that the word limit is not exceeded. If a student does exceed the word limit, he or she will lose 3 marks (from a maximum of 25 marks). Moderators are instructed not to read beyond the word limit. This means, apart from the loss of 3 marks, students could potentially lose more marks.



Referencing

References must be included to show where statements, ideas and evidence come from. It is very important to cite all sources used. **If students do not reference their work, issues about the authenticity of the work may be raised.**

Sources should be referred to in the text, and a standard referencing format should be used for the bibliography and footnotes. Students should ensure that their method of referencing is consistent throughout, and that all the relevant information is provided. The referencing system must enable the reader to locate the original sources easily.

How to reference sources

The following guidance is based on the Harvard author–date system. It is offered only as an example: the IBO permits any accepted convention for citing and acknowledging sources.

Body text

Use brackets or parentheses to set off a reference in the text. Give the author's last name, if it is not part of the text, the page number(s) and the date of publication.

- (Johnson, p98, 2006)

A full reference should appear in the bibliography at the end of the piece of work.

Footnotes

Footnotes provide related information that does not belong in the text. There should be as few of these as possible and they should be identified with a superscript number¹ and placed at the bottom of the same page.

Bibliography

The bibliography, or list of references used, should appear at the end of the piece of work.

List sources alphabetically by the last names of authors or editors. If there is no author or editor, list sources by titles and put them in order by date.

Books: Author's last name and first name, or initial if name is unknown. Date. Title (in italics). Place of publication. Publisher's name.

- Hall, D, Jones, R, Raffo, C. 2001. *Business Studies* (2nd edition). Ormskirk United Kingdom. Causeway Press Ltd.

Articles in journals: Author. Date. Title of the article (in quotation marks). Name of the journal (in italics). Volume number, first and last pages.

- Lindner, James R. June 1998. "Understanding employee motivation". *Journal of Extension*. Volume 36 Number 3, pages 23–38.

Information from the Internet: Author's name if possible. Title (in italics). Date site was visited. URL (address for the home page). Heading as listed on the web page (if there is one).

- Webber, Sheila. *The marketing mix*, visited July 17 2006.
<http://dis.shef.ac.uk/sheila/marketing/mix.htm>. The marketing mix.



