

## IB Business Management SL Internal Assessment Guide

The SL internal assessment is a written commentary that allows students to demonstrate the application of business management tools, techniques and theories to a REAL 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. This is NOT a primary research project, which is different from HL.
- 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.

### SL IA Research Question:

**The best questions tend to have yes/no answers.** 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***.

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.

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.

## 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.

### **How to Structure Your SL Business Management IA** (Adapted from Tim Woods)

#### Title Page

Include:

- Your Research Question
- Intended Audience (i.e. To Company X)
- The IB Number (Something in the format "abc123" (i.e. fjk932)
- Session (i.e. May 2021)
- IA word count.
- (Also, notice that the student's name, school, candidate number and student number should not be on the cover sheet anymore).

#### Contents page

Include (with corresponding page numbers):

- Introduction
- Methodology
- Analysis and Discussion
- Conclusion
- Works Cited
- Acknowledgments (Not included in the word count)
- Supporting Documents (this will be submitted as a separate file)

You're allowed to have an Acknowledgments section, where you thank people like your teacher and anyone else (i.e. a Librarian) who helped you with your IA. It's customary in Business IAs. It's not mandatory though.

#### Introduction (approx. 150 words)

The IB says they want the introduction to "set the scene".

- State the company name and clearly explain what the company does.
- State and briefly explain your research question.
- Explain why this topic (your research question) is important for the company to understand.

#### Methodology (approx. 200 words)

Overall this is where you can begin to convince us that you chose your sources thoughtfully and that they give a range of viewpoints/perspectives, which aided your analysis.

Mention the parts of the course (chapters and tools) that you're going to use to explore the issue and why you chose these. (Watch this YouTube clip if you aren't sure about how to choose your tools, because using the right tools is essential to scoring well in your IA.) Here is detailed advice for members for what to watch out for with each of the most popular course tools. (You can join here).

Explain some of the sources of information you used and why you chose them (i.e. what data they provided).

Explain how valid and reliable your data collection was. We actually want to see you noting some potential weaknesses here. For example, how there may have been room for bias or a limited scope to your research.

Mention at least one change made to your IA approach (i.e. a change of tool, source, or question) as the work progressed. Ideally there would be several.

#### Analysis and discussion (approx. 900 words)

This is the section where you'll do your analysis. Use the [JAM](#) structure, using one of the analytical techniques of the course. Use 3 or 4 techniques for analyzing. Give yourself around 300 words per tool, if you're using 3 tools.

If you haven't watched this yet, here is a [YouTube video](#) on choosing your tools.

In your mini-conclusions, make sure to explore what insights and themes emerge from your analysis of that tool. And try to do some synthesis as you go --linking the insights of this tool with the insights of the tools that have preceded it. Make it really clear how the insights of your tool have been helpful (or not) in answering your research question.

As you write, comment on the reliability of your sources. You will get points (in Criterion E) for these insights.

A few more tips that will make your Analysis work better:

Don't rely too much on just one or two documents.

Of course make sure you've cited all of the facts. The majority of these will come from your 3 to 5 documents, but you should cite all of your sources using standard MLA formatting, even though you've put copies of all of your documents in the Appendix.

Include a clear justification of the use of the theory (how it will help answer the RQ),

Include as much of your information as possible within the tools (rather than in paragraph form).

Make sure your mini-conclusions are linked to the research question.

Try to include at least one financial tool. If you do, it should go after your qualitative tools. In general we like to see qualitative tools (such as SWOT and PEST) come before the quantitative ones (like ratio analysis and decision trees). Partly this is because the qualitative tools set the scene and provide context for the financials. Also it's just conventional in this course.

As much as possible, try to use key words from the course in the main body. (Here are some words you can use). This will help you with Criterion F.

Make sure that you've used data from all of your sources in your tools.

### Conclusion (Approx. 250 words)

The conclusion should not introduce facts or arguments that have not been discussed previously in your analysis.

Make sure the conclusions are well supported by your analysis.

Don't hold your best insights for the conclusion. Instead try to include them in an earlier analysis part (and mini-conclusions) and then (in your big conclusion) synthesize them with other parts of your analysis to make more nuanced/interesting points.

Make sure you've included a clear answer to your question.

Try to include some "evaluative insights". For example, consider the pros and cons, short-term vs long-term effects, or possible stakeholder conflicts of the insights you've come up with.

Mention some limitations to your research. There needs to be at least one, probably two. Show you have really reflected on your work. You could discuss other information would it be very valuable to have, but which you couldn't access. You could discuss possible inaccuracies in your work and the reasons for those.

### Works Cited (No word limit)

Include:

- All of the 3-5 sources, using MLA. (Do this, even though you've attached the sources in your appendix).
- Any additional sources you used for minor additional information, but this should be very limited (i.e. definitions or additional facts).

Supporting Documents

- Include copies of all of your 3-5 supporting documents. Label them clearly, with labels like “Supporting document 1”, “Supporting document 2” and so on. This will help with referring to them in the commentary (even though you will use proper MLA referencing throughout the commentary).
- Highlight the parts of your supporting documents that you used in your analysis.

### **Assessment Criteria**

The SL business management written commentary 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 written commentary.

- Criterion A: Supporting documents
- Criterion B: Choice and application of business tools, techniques and theories
- Criterion C: Choice and analysis of data and integration of ideas
- Criterion D: Conclusions
- Criterion E: Evaluation
- Criterion F: Structure
- Criterion G: Presentation

#### **Criterion A: Supporting documents**

This criterion assesses the extent to which the student selects three to five relevant supporting documents that address the issue or problem selected for commentary in appropriate depth and breadth. The criterion also assesses whether the student’s choice and presentation of the supporting documents meets formal requirements.

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	The supporting documents are generally relevant but some lack depth, or they were published more than three years prior to the submission of the IA to the IB, or they are not all translated in the language of submission.
3	The supporting documents are relevant and sufficiently in-depth.
4	The supporting documents are relevant, sufficiently in-depth and provide a range of ideas and views.

### **Criterion B: Choice and application of tools, techniques and theories**

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.

### **Criterion C: Choice and analysis of data and integration of ideas**

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.

### Criterion D: Conclusions

This criterion assesses the extent to which the student is able to draw relevant conclusions based on the analysis of the supporting documents and answer the commentary 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 commentary question.

### Criterion E: Evaluation

This criterion assesses the extent to which the student evaluates his or her arguments and makes judgments that are well substantiated.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	There is limited evidence of evaluation.
2	There is evidence of evaluation, and some judgments are substantiated.
3	There is evidence of evaluation, and judgments are substantiated.
4	There is thorough evidence of evaluation, and judgments are well substantiated.

### 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.

#### *Top tips from students...*

- *Do an IA on a business you are confident that you can find information about. Big companies work best.*
- *Try to use quantitative analysis and tools because these help give clearer conclusions.*
- *Refer to your title frequently to ensure that you won't stray off topic.*