

Research Agenda for Diploma Assessment



Purpose of Document

This research agenda aims to provide the reader with an understanding of the current and future direction of the IB's research within the assessment directorate. It does not provide a detailed account of future research projects. Instead, it is intended to be a summary of the broad, major areas of research that IB assessment will focus upon over the next two years.

Background

The IB is currently going through a period of sustained growth. This, together with significant changes in how assessment can and should be administered in light of continued advances in technology, presents assessment with both great opportunity and a number of challenges over the coming years. It is therefore crucial that the assessment directorate has a research agenda that helps the IB maintain, and seek to improve upon, the quality of its assessment instruments and procedures through this continued period of change. This is achieved by ensuring that potential issues as a result of the IB's growth are continually anticipated and planned for and decisions about changes to our assessment methods are informed by thorough and robust evidence.

Key Research Ideas

The following areas are where the main focus of research within assessment will lie in order to meet the aims of the agenda. These areas are by no means exhaustive, nor are they mutually exclusive.

Support of the Curriculum Review Process

A vital part of any curriculum review process is to ensure that the assessment model associated with the subject being reviewed produces valid, reliable and fair results. It is therefore crucial that the curriculum review process is appropriately supported throughout by research within assessment. The nature of research within this area will naturally take many forms, depending upon the requirements of the subject in question. However, research will primarily help to address the following questions:

- To what extent does the current assessment model help to produce valid and reliable results that are free from bias?
- How well does the current assessment model link to the assessment objectives of that subject?
- Are any issues resulting from the questions above linked to a specific area within the current assessment model?
- Are any proposed changes to an assessment model likely to result in improvements to the assessment of that subject?

The Impact of Technology on Assessment

Recent advances in technology have led to a number of potential new approaches to the way in which the assessment is undertaken, examined and administered, the most significant of which involves the move from a conventional, paper-based, approach to an electronic one. It is crucial that any proposed developments within IB assessment are underpinned by relevant research to ensure that the IB is able to improve the quality of its procedures without risking the integrity of its results.

It is envisaged that research within assessment will add to the growing body of literature surrounding computer assisted assessment, with an emphasis on the unique challenges that the IB faces in implementing the change. The main focus of this area of research will be to help answer the following questions:

- How can the IB ensure that the move from paper-based to on-screen marking of externally assessed components both improves the reliability of its results and maintains the validity of its assessment?
- To what extent will the change from the current moderation system to one of a pre-marking qualification process and regular and immediate feedback (seeding) for examiners marking externally assessed components improve the reliability of the IB's results?
- What are the challenges that the IB faces in moving from the conventional, paper based, moderation of internal assessment components to a moderation process in an electronic environment?
- How can the IB use digital technologies to change the way in which candidates are assessed?

Ensuring that the current high quality of IB assessment is maintained

It is of fundamental importance to the IB that the integrity of its results is maximised and therefore it is vital that the quality of the IB's assessment instruments are maintained at their current high level. Although a significant amount of research at the curriculum review stage minimises issues within the assessment of an individual subject, regular research must also be undertaken whilst a subject's assessment model is being used, including research into how that subject compares to other subjects within the Diploma Programme. Furthermore, any issues relating to IB assessment must be discovered and action taken to remedy them before they have an impact on candidates' results.

The research done here will be wide-ranging in nature and largely done on an ad hoc basis, but will generally focus on the following areas:

- How does the IB's standards within certain subjects compare with the standards of other examination boards across the world?
- How can the IB ensure that its standards remain consistent over time?
- Is gender, cultural or any other form of demographic bias present within any subject within the Diploma Programme, in terms of both the make-up of the cohort involved and the grades achieved within each subject?
- To what extent are standards consistent across subjects within the Diploma Programme?