

Diploma Programme Grade descriptors

(First assessment 2027)



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IB mission statement

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.



IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

As IB learners we strive to be:

INQUIRERS

We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.

KNOWLEDGEABLE

We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.

THINKERS

We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.

COMMUNICATORS

We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.

PRINCIPLED

We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

OPEN-MINDED

We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.

CARING

We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.

RISK-TAKERS

We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.

BALANCED

We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives—intellectual, physical, and emotional—to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.

REFLECTIVE

We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

The IB learner profile represents 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools. We believe these attributes, and others like them, can help individuals and groups become responsible members of local, national and global communities.

Contents

Diploma Programme	1
Introduction	1
Studies in language and literature grade descriptors	2
Language acquisition grade descriptors	4
Individuals and societies grade descriptors	10
Sciences grade descriptors	12
Mathematics grade descriptors	14
Arts grade descriptors	16
Interdisciplinary subjects grade descriptors	18
Extended essay grade descriptors	22
Theory of knowledge grade descriptors	24
Appendix	25
Updates to the publication	25

Introduction

This document is a compilation of descriptions (grade descriptors) of each grade for each group of subjects in the IB Diploma Programme. Grade descriptors consist of characteristics of performance at each grade. The descriptors apply to groups of subjects but substantial similarity exists across sets of group grade descriptors.

Senior examiners use these grade descriptors when determining grade boundaries for examination papers and coursework components. For each grade, qualities of a typical performance are given. However, the work of few students will be consistently characterized by a single grade descriptor, most work will display some of the characteristics of more than one grade. Senior examiners therefore review the work of many students to determine a grade boundary—the lowest mark at which characteristics of a grade are consistently shown in student work—allowing for some compensation across the different aspects.

The grade descriptors are also intended to help teaching staff explain the academic requirements of the IB Diploma Programme to students, undertake formative assessment, report progress and predict students' grades.

Studies in language and literature grade descriptors

Studies in language and literature

Grade 7

Demonstrates: excellent understanding and appreciation of the interplay between form and content in regard to the question or task; responses that may be convincing, detailed, independent in analysis, synthesis and evaluation; highly developed levels of expression, both orally and in writing; very good degree of accuracy and clarity; very good awareness of context and appreciation of the effect on the audience/reader; very effective structure with relevant textual detail to support a critical engagement with the thoughts and feelings expressed in the work(s).

Grade 6

Demonstrates: very good understanding and appreciation of the interplay between form and content in regard to the question or task; responses that are, mainly, convincing, as well as detailed and independent to some degree, in analysis, synthesis and evaluation; well-developed levels of expression, both orally and in writing; good degree of accuracy and clarity; good awareness of context and appreciation of the effect on the audience/reader; effective structure with relevant textual detail to support a critical engagement with the thoughts and feelings expressed in the work(s).

Grade 5

Demonstrates: good understanding and appreciation of the interplay between form and content in regard to the question or task; responses that offer generally considered and valid analysis, synthesis and/or evaluation; good levels of expression, both orally and in writing; adequate degree of accuracy and clarity; awareness of context and appreciation of the effect on the audience/reader; clear structure with relevant textual detail to support an engagement with the thoughts and feelings expressed in the work(s).

Grade 4

Demonstrates: adequate knowledge and understanding of the question or task; responses that are generally valid in analysis and/or synthesis; satisfactory powers of expression, both orally and in writing; few lapses in accuracy and clarity; some awareness of context and appreciation of the effect on the audience/reader; a basic structure within which the thoughts and feelings of the work(s) are explored.

Grade 3

Demonstrates: some knowledge and some understanding of the question or task; responses that are only sometimes valid and/or appropriately detailed; some appropriate powers of expression, both orally and in writing; lapses in accuracy and clarity; limited awareness of context and appreciation of the effect on the audience/reader; some evidence of a structure within which the thoughts and feelings of the work(s) are explored.

Grade 2

Demonstrates: superficial knowledge and understanding of the question or task; responses that are of generally limited validity; limited powers of expression, both orally and in writing; significant lapses in accuracy and clarity; little awareness of context and appreciation of the effect on the audience/reader; rudimentary structure within which the thoughts and feelings of the work(s) are explored.

Grade 1

Demonstrates: very rudimentary knowledge and understanding of the question or task; responses that are of very limited validity; very limited powers of expression, both orally and in writing; widespread lapses in accuracy and clarity; no awareness of context and appreciation of the effect on the audience/reader; very rudimentary structure within which the thoughts and feelings of the work(s) are explored.

Language acquisition grade descriptors

Language B (HL)

Grade 7

Speaks with clarity and fluency; uses a richly varied and idiomatic range of language very accurately; handles ideas effectively and skilfully with active and complex interaction; demonstrates a thorough understanding of the meaning and purpose of written, aural and spoken stimuli; has little difficulty with the most difficult questions; recognizes almost all the subtleties of specific language usage; writes detailed and expressive texts demonstrating an excellent command of vocabulary and complex structures with a consistently high level of grammatical accuracy; demonstrates clarity of thought in the organization of work and an ability to engage, convince and influence the audience.

Grade 6

Speaks clearly, fluently and naturally; uses a varied and idiomatic range of language accurately; handles ideas effectively with active and full interaction; demonstrates a very good understanding of the meaning and purpose of written, aural and spoken stimuli; has little difficulty with more difficult questions; recognizes most subtleties of specific language usage; writes detailed texts demonstrating a very good command of vocabulary and complex structures with a very good level of grammatical accuracy; adapts writing appropriately to suit the intended audience and purpose; expresses ideas and organizes work coherently and convincingly.

Grade 5

Speaks mostly clearly and fluently; uses a varied range of language mostly accurately; handles ideas mostly effectively with generally full interaction; demonstrates a good understanding of the meaning and purpose of written, aural and spoken stimuli; has some difficulties with more difficult questions; recognizes some subtleties of specific language usage; writes fairly detailed texts demonstrating a good command of vocabulary with a good level of grammatical accuracy; shows a reasonable ability to adapt writing to suit the intended audience and purpose; expresses ideas and organizes work coherently.

Grade 4

Speaks generally clearly; uses a basic range of language correctly; handles ideas adequately with full interaction at times; demonstrates an adequate understanding of the meaning and purpose of written, aural and spoken stimuli; has some difficulties with almost all difficult questions and some average questions; recognizes a few subtleties of specific language usage; writes texts demonstrating an adequate command of vocabulary with an adequate level of grammatical accuracy; shows some ability to adapt writing to suit the intended audience and purpose; expresses ideas and organizes work appropriately.

Grade 3

Speaks hesitantly and at times unclearly; uses a simple range of language correctly at times; handles ideas with some difficulty with fairly limited interaction; demonstrates some understanding of the meaning and purpose of written, aural and spoken stimuli; has difficulties with questions of average difficulty; writes texts demonstrating a basic command of vocabulary and some awareness of grammatical structure; produces an identifiable text type; makes some attempt at expressing ideas and organizing work.

Grade 2

Speaks hesitantly and generally unclearly; uses a limited range of language often incorrectly; handles ideas with difficulty with restricted interaction; demonstrates a fairly limited understanding of the meaning and purpose of written, aural and spoken stimuli; has difficulties with some easy questions; writes texts demonstrating a fairly limited command of vocabulary and little awareness of grammatical structure; produces an identifiable text type with limited success; makes some attempt at basic organization; content is rarely convincing.

Grade 1

Speaks hesitantly and unclearly; uses a very limited range of language mostly incorrectly; handles ideas with great difficulty with very restricted interaction; demonstrates a limited understanding of the meaning and purpose of written, aural and spoken stimuli; has difficulties even with the easiest questions; writes texts demonstrating a limited command of vocabulary and little awareness of grammatical structure; produces a barely identifiable text type; lacks organization to an extent that content is unconvincing.

Language B (SL)

Grade 7

Speaks clearly, fluently and naturally; uses a varied and idiomatic range of language accurately; handles ideas effectively with active and full interaction; demonstrates a very good understanding of the meaning and purpose of written, aural and spoken stimuli; has little difficulty with more difficult questions; writes detailed texts demonstrating a very good command of vocabulary and complex structures with a very good level of grammatical accuracy; adapts writing effectively to suit the intended audience and purpose; expresses ideas and organizes work coherently and convincingly.

Grade 6

Speaks mostly clearly and fluently; uses a varied range of language mostly accurately; handles ideas mostly effectively with generally full interaction; demonstrates a good understanding of the meaning and purpose of written, aural and spoken stimuli; has some difficulties with more difficult questions; writes fairly detailed texts demonstrating a good command of vocabulary with a good level of grammatical accuracy; adapts writing appropriately to suit the intended audience and purpose; expresses ideas and organizes work coherently.

Grade 5

Speaks generally clearly; uses a basic range of language correctly; handles ideas adequately with full interaction at times; demonstrates an adequate understanding of the meaning and purpose of written, aural and spoken stimuli; has some difficulties with almost all difficult questions and some average questions; writes texts demonstrating an adequate command of vocabulary with an adequate level of grammatical accuracy; shows a reasonable ability to adapt writing to suit the intended audience and purpose; expresses ideas and organizes work appropriately.

Grade 4

Speaks hesitantly and at times unclearly; uses a simple range of language correctly at times; handles ideas with some difficulty and with fairly limited interaction; demonstrates some understanding of the meaning and purpose of written, aural and spoken stimuli; has difficulties with questions of average difficulty; writes texts demonstrating a basic command of vocabulary and some awareness of grammatical structure; shows some ability to adapt writing to suit the intended audience and purpose; makes some attempt at expressing ideas and organizing work.

Grade 3

Speaks hesitantly and generally unclearly; uses a limited range of language, often incorrectly; handles ideas with difficulty and with restricted interaction; demonstrates a fairly limited understanding of the meaning and purpose of written, aural and spoken stimuli; has difficulties with some easy questions; writes texts demonstrating a fairly limited command of vocabulary and little awareness of grammatical structure; produces an identifiable text type; makes some attempt at basic organization; content is rarely convincing.

Grade 2

Speaks hesitantly and unclearly; uses a very limited range of language mostly incorrectly; handles ideas with great difficulty and with very restricted interaction; demonstrates a limited understanding of the meaning and purpose of written, aural and spoken stimuli; has difficulties even with the easiest questions; writes texts demonstrating a limited command of vocabulary and little awareness of grammatical structure; produces an identifiable text type with limited success; lacks organization to an extent that content is unconvincing.

Grade 1

Speaks very hesitantly and unclearly; uses a very limited range of language incorrectly; handles ideas unsuccessfully and with very restricted interaction; demonstrates a very limited understanding of the meaning and purpose of written, aural and spoken stimuli; has difficulties with almost all questions; writes texts demonstrating a very limited command of vocabulary and very little awareness of grammatical structure; produces a barely identifiable text type; lacks organization to an extent that content is confusing.

Language ab initio (SL)

Grade 7

Responds clearly and effectively to all basic and most complex information and ideas in all written, aural and spoken stimuli. Responds accurately, communicates effectively and demonstrates comprehension; pronunciation and intonation always facilitate understanding of the message; sustains participation and makes good independent contributions. The message is always clear. Develops ideas well using an effective, logical structure; successfully uses a range of simple and some complex cohesive devices; uses both basic and complex grammatical structures accurately. However, may make occasional errors in complex structures; uses varied and effective vocabulary and appropriate register. Demonstrates clear evidence of intercultural understanding where required.

Grade 6

Responds clearly to all basic and most complex information and ideas in all written, aural and spoken stimuli. Responds mostly accurately, communicates almost always effectively and demonstrates comprehension; pronunciation and intonation almost always facilitate understanding of the message; almost always sustains participation and makes independent contributions. The message is usually clear. Develops ideas well using a logical structure; successfully uses a range of basic and some complex cohesive devices; uses both basic and complex grammatical structures. However, may make several errors in complex structures; uses varied vocabulary and appropriate register. Almost always demonstrates clear evidence of intercultural understanding where required.

Grade 5

Generally responds clearly to basic and some complex information and ideas in all written, aural and spoken stimuli. Responds accurately and generally demonstrates comprehension; pronunciation and intonation often facilitate understanding of the message; generally sustains participation and makes some

independent contributions. The message is often clear. Develops some ideas using a logical structure; often uses a range of basic and some complex cohesive devices; uses basic grammatical structures accurately. However, complex structures are rarely accurate; uses a range of basic vocabulary and appropriate register. Often demonstrates evidence of intercultural understanding where required.

Grade 4

Responds clearly to most basic information and ideas in most written, aural and spoken stimuli. Responds accurately and demonstrates comprehension in simple exchanges; pronunciation and intonation usually facilitate understanding of the message; sustains participation in simple exchanges. The message is usually clear. Develops basic ideas using a logical structure; uses a range of simple cohesive devices successfully; uses most basic grammatical structures accurately; uses basic vocabulary and appropriate register successfully. Usually demonstrates evidence of intercultural understanding where required.

Grade 3

Sometimes responds clearly to basic information in most written, aural and spoken stimuli. Sometimes responds accurately and sometimes demonstrates comprehension in simple exchanges; pronunciation and intonation sometimes facilitate understanding of the message; sometimes sustains participation in simple exchanges. The message is sometimes clear. Sometimes develops basic ideas; sometimes uses simple cohesive devices successfully; sometimes uses basic grammatical structures accurately; sometimes uses basic vocabulary and appropriate register successfully. Sometimes demonstrates evidence of intercultural understanding where required.

Grade 2

Rarely responds clearly to basic information in some written, aural and spoken stimuli. Rarely responds accurately or demonstrates comprehension; pronunciation and intonation rarely facilitate understanding of the message; rarely sustains participation in simple exchanges. The message is rarely clear. Rarely develops basic ideas; rarely uses simple cohesive devices; rarely uses basic grammatical structures accurately; rarely uses basic vocabulary or appropriate register successfully. Rarely demonstrates evidence of intercultural understanding where required.

Grade 1

Very rarely responds clearly to basic information in any written, aural and spoken stimuli. Very rarely responds accurately or demonstrates comprehension; pronunciation and intonation very rarely facilitate understanding of the message; very rarely sustains participation in simple exchanges. The message is very rarely clear. Very rarely develops ideas; very rarely uses simple cohesive devices; very rarely uses basic grammatical structures accurately; very rarely uses basic vocabulary or appropriate register successfully. Very rarely demonstrates evidence of intercultural understanding where required.

Classical languages (Latin and classical Greek)

Grade 7

Demonstrates excellent content knowledge and understanding, conceptual and contextual awareness and critical, reflective thinking. Responses are logical and structured, make very effective use of well-selected examples, demonstrate awareness of alternative points of view and provide clear evidence of intercultural understanding. Translations are very accurate and convey the meaning of the original text, with use of grammar and vocabulary that is appropriate for the original text.

Highly effective research, investigation and technical skills are evident, as is the ability to analyse, evaluate and synthesize evidence in an insightful way.

Grade 6

Demonstrates very good content knowledge and understanding, conceptual and contextual awareness and critical, reflective thinking. Responses are mostly logical and structured, make effective use of well-selected examples, demonstrate sufficient awareness of alternative points of view and provide clear evidence of intercultural understanding. Translations are accurate and mostly convey the meaning of the original text, with use of grammar and vocabulary that is mostly appropriate for the original text.

Effective research, investigation and technical skills are evident, as is the ability to analyse, evaluate and synthesize evidence competently.

Grade 5

Demonstrates sound content knowledge and understanding, conceptual and contextual awareness, and critical, reflective thinking. Responses are generally logical and structured, make good use of examples, demonstrate generally accurate awareness of alternative points of view and provide some evidence of intercultural understanding. Translations are somewhat accurate and convey the general meaning of the original text, with use of grammar and vocabulary that is generally appropriate for the original text.

Good research, investigation and technical skills are evident; the ability to analyse, evaluate and synthesize evidence is evident but not consistently developed.

Grade 4

Demonstrates secure content knowledge and understanding (although there are some gaps), some conceptual and contextual awareness, and some critical, reflective thinking. Responses are somewhat logical and structured, make use of examples, demonstrate some awareness of alternative points of view and provide some evidence of intercultural understanding. Translations are partially accurate and convey some meaning of the original text, with use of grammar and vocabulary that is somewhat appropriate for the original text.

Some research, investigation and technical skills are evident; the ability to analyse, evaluate and synthesize evidence is evident but not consistently developed.

Grade 3

Demonstrates basic content knowledge and understanding, with some gaps, some conceptual and contextual awareness, and some critical, reflective thinking. Responses are valid, but lack clarity and structure, make use of limited examples, demonstrate limited awareness of alternative points of view and provide limited evidence of intercultural understanding. Translations are rarely accurate but convey the basic meaning of the original text, with use of grammar and vocabulary that is somewhat appropriate for the original text.

Basic research, investigation and technical skills are evident; the ability to analyse, evaluate and synthesize evidence is not always shown.

Grade 2

Demonstrates little content knowledge and understanding, with significant gaps, little conceptual and contextual awareness, and little critical, reflective thinking. Responses are rarely valid, lack clarity and structure, make use of weak/inappropriate examples, demonstrate very little awareness of alternative

points of view and provide very limited evidence of intercultural understanding. Translations are mostly inaccurate and rarely convey the basic meaning of the original text, with use of grammar and vocabulary that is rarely appropriate for the original text.

Limited research, investigation and technical skills are evident; the ability to analyse, evaluate and synthesize evidence is rarely shown.

Grade 1

Demonstrates almost no content knowledge and understanding, conceptual and contextual awareness, or critical, reflective thinking. Responses are rarely valid, lack clarity and structure, make use of irrelevant examples, demonstrate little or no awareness of alternative points of view and provide little or no evidence of intercultural understanding. Translations are mostly inaccurate and very rarely convey the basic meaning of the original text, with use of grammar and vocabulary that is rarely appropriate for the original text.

Very limited research, investigation and technical skills are evident; the ability to analyse, evaluate and synthesize evidence is not shown.

Individuals and societies grade descriptors

Individuals and societies

Grade 7

Demonstrates: conceptual awareness, insight, and knowledge and understanding which are evident in the skills of critical thinking; a high level of ability to provide responses which are fully developed, structured in a logical and coherent manner and illustrated with appropriate examples; a precise use of terminology which is specific to the subject; understanding of relevant research; the ability to analyse and evaluate evidence and to synthesize knowledge and concepts; awareness of alternative perspectives and subjective and ideological biases, and the ability to come to reasonable, albeit tentative, conclusions; consistent evidence of critical reflective thinking; a high level of proficiency in analysing and evaluating data/information or problem solving.

Grade 6

Demonstrates: detailed knowledge and understanding; responses which are coherent, logically structured and well developed; consistent use of appropriate terminology; an ability to analyse, evaluate and synthesize knowledge and concepts; knowledge of relevant research, theories and issues, and awareness of different perspectives and contexts from which these have been developed; consistent evidence of critical thinking; an ability to analyse and evaluate data/information or to solve problems competently.

Grade 5

Demonstrates: a sound knowledge and understanding of the subject using subject-specific terminology; responses which are logically structured and coherent but not fully developed; an ability to provide competent responses with some attempt to integrate knowledge and concepts; a tendency to be more descriptive than evaluative (although some ability is demonstrated to present and develop contrasting perspectives); some evidence of critical thinking; an ability to analyse and evaluate data/information or to solve problems.

Grade 4

Demonstrates: a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject; some ability to structure responses but with insufficient clarity and possibly some repetition; an ability to express knowledge and understanding in terminology specific to the subject; some understanding of the way facts or ideas may be related and embodied in principles and concepts; some ability to develop ideas and substantiate assertions; use of knowledge and understanding which is more descriptive than analytical; some ability to compensate for gaps in knowledge and understanding through rudimentary application or evaluation of that knowledge; an ability to interpret data/information or to solve problems and some ability to engage in analysis and evaluation.

Grade 3

Demonstrates: some knowledge and understanding of the subject; a basic sense of structure that is not sustained throughout the responses; a basic use of terminology appropriate to the subject; some ability to establish links between facts or ideas; some ability to comprehend data/information or to solve problems.

Grade 2

Demonstrates: a limited knowledge and understanding of the subject; some sense of structure in the responses; a limited use of terminology appropriate to the subject; a limited ability to establish links between facts or ideas; a basic ability to comprehend data/information or to solve problems.

Grade 1

Demonstrates: minimal knowledge and understanding of the subject; almost no organizational structure in the responses; inappropriate or inadequate use of terminology; a limited, barely present ability to comprehend data/information or to solve problems.

Sciences grade descriptors

Sciences

Grade 7

Displays comprehensive subject knowledge and a thorough command of concepts and principles. Selects and applies relevant information, concepts and principles in a wide variety of contexts. Analyses and evaluates quantitative and qualitative data thoroughly. Constructs detailed explanations of complex phenomena and makes appropriate predictions. Evidences great proficiency in solving problems, including those that are challenging or unfamiliar. Communicates logically and concisely using appropriate terminology and conventions. Shows insight or originality.

Approaches investigations in an ethical manner, paying full attention to environmental impact and safety where applicable. Investigations demonstrate insight and independence to design and complete innovative practical work with highly competent investigative and analytical techniques, and with innovative and effective conclusions to resolve authentic problems.

Grade 6

Displays very broad subject knowledge and a thorough understanding of concepts and principles. Selects and applies relevant information, concepts and principles in most contexts. Analyses and evaluates quantitative and qualitative data with a high level of competence. Constructs explanations of complex phenomena and makes appropriate predictions. Solves basic or routine problems and evidences competency in solving those that are challenging or unfamiliar. Communicates effectively using appropriate terminology and conventions. Shows occasional insight or originality.

Approaches to investigations in an ethical manner, paying significant attention to environmental impact and safety where applicable. Investigations demonstrate some innovative thinking and independence to design and complete practical work with competent investigative and analytical techniques, and with highly competent and reasonable conclusions to resolve authentic problems.

Grade 5

Displays broad subject knowledge and shows sound understanding of most concepts and principles, and applies them in some contexts. Analyses and evaluates quantitative and qualitative data competently. Constructs explanations of simple phenomena. Solves most basic or familiar problems and some new or difficult quantitative and/or qualitative problems. Communicates clearly with little or no irrelevant material.

Approaches investigations in an ethical manner, paying attention to environmental impact and safety where applicable. Investigations demonstrate appropriate investigative and analytical techniques with relevant and pertinent conclusions to resolving authentic problems.

Grade 4

Displays reasonable subject knowledge (though possibly with some gaps) and shows adequate understanding of most basic concepts and principles, but with limited ability to apply them. Demonstrates some analysis or evaluation of quantitative or qualitative data. Solves some basic or routine problems but shows limited ability to solve challenging or unfamiliar problems. Communicates adequately, although responses may lack clarity and include some repetitive or irrelevant material.

Generally approaches investigations in an ethical manner, with some attention to environmental impact and safety where applicable. Investigations demonstrate an ability to complete fairly routine practical work with some appropriate investigative and analytical techniques, and with some conclusions relevant to the problem under study.

Grade 3

Displays limited subject knowledge and shows a partial understanding of basic concepts and principles, and weak ability to apply them. Shows some ability to manipulate data and solve basic or routine problems. Communicates with a lack of clarity and some repetitive or irrelevant material.

Sometimes approaches investigations in an ethical manner, with some attention to environmental impact and safety where applicable. Investigations demonstrate an ability to complete a basic investigation with simple analytical techniques, and with some partial conclusions of some relevance to study.

Grade 2

Displays little subject knowledge and shows weak understanding of basic concepts and principles, and little evidence of application. Exhibits minimal ability to manipulate data and little or no ability to solve problems. Offers responses which are often incomplete or irrelevant.

Occasionally approaches investigations in an ethical manner, but shows very limited awareness of environmental impact and safety. Investigations demonstrate an ability to undertake basic investigative work requiring considerable guidance and instruction, and attempts at conclusions that are largely incorrect/irrelevant.

Grade 1

Fragmentary subject knowledge and shows very little understanding of any concepts or principles. Rarely demonstrates personal skills, perseverance or responsibility in investigative activities.

Rarely approaches investigations in an ethical manner, or shows an awareness of environmental impact and safety. Investigations demonstrate an ability to undertake very basic practical work with complete dependence on supervised instruction, with attempts at conclusions are either absent or completely incorrect/irrelevant.

Mathematics grade descriptors

Mathematics

Grade 7

Demonstrates a thorough knowledge and comprehensive understanding of the syllabus; successfully constructs and applies mathematical arguments at a sophisticated level in a wide variety of contexts; successfully uses problem solving techniques in challenging situations; recognizes patterns and structures, makes generalizations and justifies conclusions; understands and explains the significance and validity of results, and draws full and relevant conclusions; communicates mathematics in a clear, effective and concise manner, using correct techniques, notation and terminology; demonstrates the ability to integrate knowledge, understanding and skills from different areas of the course; uses technology correctly in challenging situations—makes efficient use of calculator's functionality when required.

Grade 6

Demonstrates a broad knowledge and comprehensive understanding of the syllabus; successfully constructs and applies mathematical arguments in a variety of contexts; uses problem solving techniques in challenging situations; recognizes patterns and structures, and makes some generalizations; understands and explains the significance and validity of results, and draws relevant conclusions; communicates mathematics in a clear and effective manner, using correct techniques, notation and terminology; demonstrates some ability to integrate knowledge, understanding and skills from different areas of the course; uses technology correctly in routine situations—makes efficient use of calculator's functionality when required.

Grade 5

Demonstrates a broad knowledge and good understanding of the syllabus; applies mathematical arguments in performing routine tasks; successfully uses problem solving techniques in routine situations; successfully carries out mathematical processes in a variety of contexts, and recognizes patterns and structures; understands the significance of results and draws some conclusions; communicates mathematics effectively, using appropriate techniques, notation and terminology; demonstrates an awareness of the links between different areas of the course; makes use of calculator's functionality when required (this use may occasionally be inefficient).

Grade 4

Demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the syllabus; applies mathematical arguments in performing some routine tasks; uses problem solving techniques in routine situations; successfully carries out mathematical processes in straightforward contexts; shows some ability to recognize patterns and structures; has limited understanding of the significance of results and attempts to draw some conclusions; communicates mathematics adequately, using some appropriate techniques, notation and terminology; makes some use of calculator's functionality, but perhaps not always when required (this use may occasionally be inefficient).

Grade 3

Demonstrates partial knowledge of the syllabus and limited understanding of mathematical arguments in performing some routine tasks; attempts to carry out mathematical processes in straightforward contexts; makes an attempt to use problem solving techniques in routine situations; communicates some

mathematics, using some appropriate techniques, notation or terminology; occasionally uses calculator's functionality, but often inefficiently—does not always use it when required and may use an inefficient analytic approach.

Grade 2

Demonstrates limited knowledge of the syllabus; attempts to carry out mathematical processes at a basic level; communicates some mathematics, but often uses inappropriate techniques, notation or terminology; unable to use calculator correctly when required—questions exclusively requiring the use of the GDC are generally not attempted.

Grade 1

Demonstrates minimal knowledge of the syllabus; demonstrates little or no ability to use mathematical processes, even when attempting routine tasks; communicates only minimal mathematics and consistently uses inappropriate techniques, notation or terminology; is unable to make effective use of technology.

Arts grade descriptors

Arts

Grade 7

The work demonstrates accomplished inquiry and subject-knowledge acquisition, and excellent use of subject-specific terminology.

The development of artistic ideas and intentions is accomplished.

The work demonstrates accomplished subject-specific skills, techniques and competencies.

The work demonstrates excellent critical reflection on both work created and work in progress.

Grade 6

The work demonstrates effective inquiry and subject-knowledge acquisition, and purposeful use of subject-specific terminology.

The development of artistic ideas and intentions is effective.

The work demonstrates effective subject-specific skills, techniques and competencies.

The work demonstrates effective critical reflection on both work created and work in progress.

Grade 5

The work demonstrates competent inquiry and subject-knowledge acquisition, and competent use of subject-specific terminology.

The development of artistic ideas and intentions is competent.

The work demonstrates competent subject-specific skills, techniques and competencies.

The work demonstrates competent critical reflection on both work created and work in progress.

Grade 4

The work demonstrates adequate inquiry and subject-knowledge acquisition, and adequate use of subject-specific terminology.

The development of artistic ideas and intentions is adequate.

The work demonstrates adequate subject-specific skills, techniques and competencies.

The work demonstrates adequate critical reflection on both work created and work in progress.

Grade 3

The work demonstrates basic inquiry and subject-knowledge acquisition, and basic use of subject-specific terminology.

The development of artistic ideas and intentions is basic.

The work demonstrates basic subject-specific skills, techniques and competencies.

The work demonstrates basic critical reflection on both work created and work in progress.

Grade 2

The work demonstrates limited inquiry and subject-knowledge acquisition, and limited use of subject-specific terminology

The development of artistic ideas and intentions is limited.

The work demonstrates limited subject-specific skills, techniques and competencies.

The work demonstrates limited critical reflection on both work created and work in progress.

Grade 1

The work demonstrates little to no inquiry and subject-knowledge acquisition, and little to no use of subject-specific terminology.

The development of artistic ideas and intentions is very limited.

The work demonstrates little to no subject-specific skills, techniques and competencies.

The work demonstrates little to no critical reflection on both work created and work in progress.

Interdisciplinary subjects grade descriptors

Literature and performance

Grade 7

Demonstrates: excellent understanding and appreciation of the interplay between form and content in regard to the question or task; responses that may be convincing, detailed, independent in analysis, synthesis and evaluation; highly developed levels of expression, both orally and in writing; very good degree of accuracy and clarity; very good awareness of context and appreciation of the effect on the audience/reader; very effective structure with relevant textual detail to support a critical engagement with the thoughts and feelings expressed in the work(s); refined appreciation of literary style and a full engagement with the act of transforming literature into performance; the personal qualities necessary to work with others in a purposeful and effective manner.

Grade 6

Demonstrates: very good understanding and appreciation of the interplay between form and content in regard to the question or task; responses that are, mainly, convincing, as well as detailed and independent to some degree, in analysis, synthesis and evaluation; well-developed levels of expression, both orally and in writing; a good degree of accuracy and clarity; good awareness of context and appreciation of the effect on the audience/reader; effective structure with relevant textual detail to support a critical engagement with the thoughts and feelings expressed in the work(s); clear appreciation of literary style and a solid engagement with the act of transforming literature into performance; willingness to work with others in a constructive manner.

Grade 5

Demonstrates: good understanding and appreciation of the interplay between form and content in regard to the question or task; responses that offer generally considered and valid analysis, synthesis and/or evaluation; good levels of expression, both orally and in writing; an adequate degree of accuracy and clarity; awareness of context and appreciation of the effect on the audience/reader; clear structure with relevant textual detail to support an engagement with the thoughts and feelings expressed in the work(s); an appreciation of literary style and an engagement with the act of transforming literature into performance; recognizable involvement to work with others in a cooperative manner.

Grade 4

Demonstrates: adequate knowledge and understanding of the question or task; responses that are generally valid in analysis and/or synthesis; satisfactory powers of expression, both orally and in writing; few lapses in accuracy and clarity; some awareness of context and appreciation of the effect on the audience/reader; a basic structure within which the thoughts and feelings of the work(s) are explored; some appreciation of literary style and some commitment in the act of transforming literature into performance; an acceptance of the need to work with others.

Grade 3

Demonstrates: some knowledge and some understanding of the question or task; responses that are only sometimes valid and/or appropriately detailed; some appropriate powers of expression, both orally and in writing; lapses in accuracy and clarity; limited awareness of context and appreciation of the effect on the

audience/reader; some evidence of a structure within which the thoughts and feelings of the work(s) are explored; little appreciation of literary style and modest commitment to the act of transforming literature into performance; little apparent attempt to work with others effectively.

Grade 2

Demonstrates: superficial knowledge and understanding of the question or task; responses that are of generally limited validity; limited powers of expression, both orally and in writing; significant lapses in accuracy and clarity; little awareness of context and appreciation of the effect on the audience/reader; a rudimentary structure within which the thoughts and feelings of the work(s) are explored; very little appreciation of literary style and little commitment to the act of transforming literature into performance; sparse evidence of involvement in working with others effectively.

Grade 1

Demonstrates: very rudimentary knowledge and understanding of the question or task; responses that are of very limited validity; very limited powers of expression, both orally and in writing; widespread lapses in accuracy and clarity; no awareness of context and appreciation of the effect on the audience/reader; a very rudimentary structure within which the thoughts and feelings of the work(s) are explored; very little appreciation of literary style and negligible involvement with the act of transforming literature into performance; inability to work with others.

Environmental systems and societies

Grade 7

Demonstrates: comprehensive and sound knowledge and understanding of relevant environmental systems and societies (ESS) concepts and issues; well-structured, clearly expressed accounts with consistently appropriate and precise use of ESS terminology; effective use of pertinent, well-explained examples that show some originality; some informed appreciation for a range of perspectives or value systems alongside own point of view; thorough, well-balanced and insightful analysis or argument with thorough evaluations; ability to solve complex and unfamiliar problems; explicit judgments or conclusions that are well-supported by evidence or arguments, and that include some critical reflection. Analyses and evaluates quantitative and/or qualitative data thoroughly.

Practical work demonstrates: insight and independence to design and complete innovative practical investigations with thorough regard to ethical issues and highly competent investigative and analytical techniques; innovative and effective conclusions to resolve authentic problems; an appreciation and effective attempt to minimize the potentially harmful impacts of the study; thorough discussion of an environmental issue that provides a detailed explanation of the research question.

Grade 6

Demonstrates: a wide breadth of sound knowledge and understanding of relevant ESS concepts and issues; structured, clearly expressed accounts with appropriate and precise use of ESS terminology; effective use of pertinent, well-explained examples that may show hints of originality; some informed acknowledgement of a range of perspectives or value systems alongside own point of view; thorough, well-balanced analysis or argument with valid evaluations; some ability to solve complex and unfamiliar problems; explicit judgments or conclusions that are well-supported by evidence/arguments. Analyses and evaluates quantitative and/or qualitative data with a high level of competence.

Practical work demonstrates: some innovative thinking and independence to design and complete investigations in an ethical manner with competent investigative and analytical techniques; highly competent and reasonable conclusions to resolve authentic problems; an appreciation and valid attempt to minimise the potentially harmful impacts of the study; highly competent discussion of an environmental issue that provides a clear explanation of the research question.

Grade 5

Demonstrates: several areas of sound knowledge and understanding of relevant ESS concepts and issues; generally clearly expressed accounts with largely appropriate use of ESS terminology; effective use of relevant examples that include some explanation; some informed awareness of a range of perspectives or value systems alongside own point of view; clear analysis or argument that shows a degree of balance and attempts at evaluation; some ability to engage effectively with complex or unfamiliar problems; identifiable judgments or conclusions that are partially supported by evidence/arguments. Analyses and evaluates quantitative and/or qualitative data competently.

Practical work demonstrates: some independence to complete investigations in an ethical manner with appropriate investigative and analytical techniques; relevant and pertinent conclusions to resolving authentic problems; some appreciation of the potentially harmful impacts of the study and some reasonable attempts at minimising them; a competent discussion of an environmental issue that generally explains the research question.

Grade 4

Demonstrates: one or two areas of sound knowledge and understanding of relevant ESS concepts and issues; sometimes clearly expressed accounts and largely appropriate use of ESS terminology; some use of relevant examples with very limited explanation; some awareness of other perspectives or value systems alongside own point of view; some clear but patchy analysis or argument with a limited attempt at balance; some ability to solve simple or familiar problems; identifiable judgments or conclusions that are supported by very limited evidence or argument. Demonstrates some analysis or evaluation of quantitative or qualitative data.

Practical work demonstrates: an ability to complete fairly routine investigations in an ethical manner with some appropriate investigative and analytical techniques; some conclusions relevant to the problem under study; occasional appreciation of the potentially harmful impacts of the study; an outline of the environmental issue and identifies a link to the research question.

Grade 3

Demonstrates: only vague, partial knowledge and understanding of relevant ESS concepts and issues; generally unclear accounts and relevance with some isolated use of ESS terminology; examples that lack relevance and explanation; very limited awareness of perspectives or value systems other than own point of view; analysis/argument is lacking or no more than a list of facts/ideas; very limited ability to solve simple or familiar problems; judgments or conclusions are unclear and not supported by evidence or argument.

Practical work demonstrates: an ability to complete a basic investigation, with vague recognition of ethical issues and simplest of analytical techniques; some partial conclusions of some relevance to study; very limited appreciation of the potentially harmful impacts of the study; a limited grasp of environmental issue and link to the research question.

Grade 2

Demonstrates: fragmented or limited knowledge but little understanding of relevant ESS concepts and issues; generally incomprehensible accounts with very little, if any, use of ESS terminology; examples (if any)

that are incomplete and or irrelevant; limited ability to express their own viewpoints or value system; no evidence of real analysis/argument; attempts to solve simple or familiar problems are incorrect/unsuccessful; no clear attempt to make judgments/conclusions.

Practical work demonstrates: an ability to undertake basic investigations with little recognition of ethical issues and requiring considerable guidance and instruction; attempts at conclusions that are largely incorrect or irrelevant; no valid appreciation of the potentially harmful impacts of the study; identification of environmental issue is unclear or absent, and may not be linked to the research question.

Grade 1

Demonstrates: very little knowledge of relevant ESS concepts and issues; incomprehensible accounts with no use of ESS terminology; no recognisable use of examples; expresses no clear viewpoint/value system; no analysis/argument; no significant attempts to solve simple or familiar problems; no judgments/conclusions.

Practical work demonstrates: an ability to undertake very basic investigations with limited regard for ethical issues and completely dependent on supervised instruction; attempts at conclusions are either absent or completely incorrect/irrelevant; no recognition of the potentially harmful impacts of the study; no identification of an environmental issue.

Extended essay grade descriptors

Extended essay

(For first assessment 2027)

Grade A

Demonstrates: effective research skills resulting in a well-focused and appropriate research question that can be explored within the scope of the chosen topic, adherence to effective structural conventions facilitating the communication of ideas; effective engagement with relevant research areas, methods and sources; excellent knowledge and understanding of the topic in the wider context of the relevant discipline; the effective application of source material and correct use of subject-specific terminology and/or concepts further supporting this; consistent and relevant conclusions that are proficiently analysed; sustained reasoned argumentation supported effectively by evidence; critically evaluated research.

Reflection on the process is evaluative, evidence is convincing, growth and the transfer of learning is explicit.

Grade B

Demonstrates: appropriate research skills resulting in a research question that can be explored within the scope of the chosen topic, adherence to suitable structural conventions facilitating the communication of ideas; reasonably effective engagement with relevant research areas, methods and sources; good knowledge and understanding of the topic in the wider context of the relevant discipline; a reasonably effective application of source material and use of subject-specific terminology and/or concepts; consistent conclusions that are accurately analysed; reasoned argumentation often supported by evidence; research that at times evidences critical evaluation.

Reflection on the process is clear, evidence is generally convincing, there are indications of growth and the transfer of learning.

Grade C

Demonstrates: evidence of research undertaken, which has led to a research question that is not necessarily expressed in a way that can be explored within the scope of the chosen topic, adherence to partially consistent structural conventions facilitating the communication of ideas; partially effective engagement with mostly appropriate research areas, methods and sources—discrepancies in the processes are present, but do not interfere with the planning and approach; some knowledge and understanding of the topic in the wider context of the discipline, which is mostly relevant; the attempted application of source material and appropriate terminology and/or concepts; an attempted synthesis of research results with partially relevant analysis; conclusions partly supported by the evidence; discussion that is descriptive rather than analytical; attempted evaluation.

Reflection on the process is attempted, evidence is present, there are some indications of growth.

Grade D

Demonstrates: a lack of thorough research, resulting in unsatisfactory focus and a research question that is not answerable within the scope of the chosen topic; attempts at structural conventions which at times obstruct the communication of ideas; at times visible engagement with appropriate research, methods and sources, but discrepancies in those processes that occasionally interfere with the planning and approach; some relevant knowledge and understanding of the topic in the wider context of the discipline, which sometimes are irrelevant; the attempted application of source material, but with inaccuracies in the use of, or underuse of, terminology and/or concepts; irrelevant analysis and inconsistent conclusions as a result of a descriptive discussion; a lack of evaluation.

Reflection on the process is limited, evidence is inconsistent, there are some indications of growth but these are not explicit.

Grade E

Demonstrates: an unclear nature of the essay; a generally unsystematic approach and resulting unfocused research question and absence of structural conventions; limited engagement with limited research and sources; generally limited and only partially accurate knowledge and understanding of the topic in the wider context of the relevant discipline; ineffective connections in the application of source material and inaccuracies in the terminology and/or concepts used; a summary of results of research with inconsistent analysis.

Reflection on the process is limited and not evidenced.

Theory of knowledge grade descriptors

Theory of knowledge

Grade A

Knowledge questions are thoroughly and effectively explored. Analysis is clear and coherent with a sustained focus on knowledge and knowing throughout. Links are clearly made and well-explained. Points are well-developed, with examples and evidence used effectively to support the exploration. Discussions include consideration of implications, assumptions and different points of view.

Grade B

Knowledge questions are explored. Analysis is clear, coherent and focused on knowledge and knowing. Links are made and explained, although these explanations may lack precision. Examples and evidence are used to support the exploration. Discussions identify some implications and/or assumptions and include some consideration of different points of view.

Grade C

There is some consideration of knowledge questions. Discussions are focused on knowledge and knowing but are more descriptive than analytical. Some relevant links are made. Examples and evidence are included. Different points of view are identified but are not evaluated.

Grade D

There is limited consideration of knowledge questions. Discussions are simplistic and mainly descriptive, with some focus on knowledge and knowing. Superficial links are made. Where examples and evidence are included, they do not support the points being made. There is little reference to different points of view.

Grade E

There is little consideration of knowledge questions. Discussions are simplistic and highly descriptive, with minimal focus on knowledge and knowing. Where links are made, these are inappropriate or lack relevance. Discussions consist of unsupported assertions. Different points of view are not identified.

Updates to the publication

This section outlines the updates made to this publication over the past two years. The changes are ordered from the most recent to the oldest updates. Minor spelling and typographical corrections are not listed.

Changes for June 2026

Throughout the publication

Alignment of language with other IB documentation.

Minor language corrections to reflect the IB inclusive language approach, and to align vocabulary used across various subject groups. Please note those changes are purely for the alignment, and they do not introduce any changes to the grading practice that is currently in place.

Diploma Programme > Language acquisition grade descriptors

“Language ab initio (SL)”

Alignment of language with other IB documentation.

Separate language skills have been merged into one descriptive paragraph, holistic in nature, in line with what is already in place for language B SL and HL grade descriptors. The qualities listed under each grade have been retained.

Diploma Programme > Sciences grade descriptors

“Computer science”

Removal of out-of-date or incorrect content.

Starting with the first assessment of the new course (May 2027), computer science will no longer have separate grade descriptors. Instead, it will share the same grade descriptors already in place for other subjects in the sciences group.

Diploma Programme > Arts grade descriptors

“Arts”

Introduction of revised or improved content.

The language of the arts grade descriptors has been adapted to more closely align with group assessment objectives and new course assessment criteria.

Diploma Programme > Extended essay grade descriptors

“Extended essay > Grade E”

Alignment of language with other IB documentation.

The reference to a “failing condition” has been removed to align with the wording used in the theory of knowledge and Career-related Programme reflective project grade descriptors. The grade itself, however, still constitutes a failing condition under the assessment framework.