

Grade descriptors

This document contains descriptions (grade descriptors) of each grade for the reflective project which forms part of the IB career-related programme. Grade descriptors consist of characteristics of performance at each grade

Senior moderators and examiners use grade descriptors across IB programmes 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 characterised by a single grade descriptor, most work will display some of the characteristics of more than one grade. Senior moderators and 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 intended to help teaching staff explain the academic requirements of this element of the IB career-related programme to students who undertake formative assessment, and as an extra check once first-line marking of each reflective project has been completed internally.

Grade A

Demonstrates excellent knowledge and understanding of an identified issue in a field of study; coherent analysis of an ethical dilemma related to the identified issue; clear evidence of engagement with different cultural perspectives and an understanding of why these perspectives differ; an evident persuasive personal viewpoint which is supported by appropriate research and insightful reflection; fully developed, reasoned and convincing arguments with insightful conclusions; information that is communicated in a cohesive and structured manner; a clear structure.

Grade B

Demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of an identified issue in a field of study; clear understanding of an ethical dilemma related to the identified issue; an awareness of different cultural perspectives which are explained, but not always analysed; a personal viewpoint that is supported by appropriate research and explanatory reflection; reasoned arguments with logical conclusions which are consistent with the evidence produced; information that is communicated in a clear and structured manner; a clear structure where minor inconsistencies do not hinder understanding.

Grade C

Demonstrates satisfactory knowledge and understanding of an identified issue; an identified ethical dilemma with only a tenuous link to the issue; an attempt to explain different perspectives, but the differences are not clearly expressed; a personal viewpoint that indicates some reflection, but lacks supporting research; basic arguments with some conclusions; information that is not always communicated clearly; a lack of structure which sometimes impedes understanding.

Grade D

Demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of an issue; little, if any, consideration of an ethical dilemma; an attempt to describe different perspectives that is not always clear; a personal viewpoint that is not supported by relevant evidence; little evidence of reflection; unsupported and undeveloped arguments and conclusions; information that is not communicated clearly; a confused structure that impedes understanding.

Grade E

Demonstrates little, if any, knowledge and understanding of an issue; no explicit or implicit identification of an ethical dilemma associated with the chosen issue; a lack of awareness of different perspectives; sometimes irrelevant or incoherent viewpoints; reflections and conclusions are not supported by research; a lack of structure which impedes understanding.

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.