

IB Assessment for May 2020 examination session during COVID-19 pandemic

Introduction

The spread of COVID-19 has caused unprecedented change for our global society. Its impact on education continues to be profound. The International Baccalaureate, in line with other educational organisations, is working hard to minimize the impact of the pandemic on our Diploma (DP) students in IB World Schools.

This document explains the broad principles that will underpin the award of Diplomas and course results in July 2020. It also outlines the steps that we are taking to ensure that our results continue to uphold our assessments as valid, reliable and authentic. Students develop many skills throughout their learner journey as part of IB programmes; you can read more about these skills [here](#). IB Assessments aim to measure not only knowledge recall but also the application of these skills. Our assessment strategy for May 2020 has the objective of recognizing and rewarding these skills as accurately as we can.

The underlying principles that guide our assessment methods in this unprecedented time are set out in Appendix A. These principles, agreed and shared with other educational organisations, are designed to produce a level playing field for as many students as possible this session.

How we will assess student work

In order to award a Diploma or certificate following the cancellation of all external written components of our examinations for the May 2020 session:

- Students complete their Internal Assessment coursework as usual.
- Schools submit their registered student coursework as required.
- Schools submit predicted grades for each subject taken by a student.

Following the submission of the above the IB will be using historical assessment data to ensure that we follow a rigorous process of due diligence in what is a truly unprecedented situation. We will be undertaking significant data analysis from previous exam sessions, individual school data and subject data.

This is an outline of the processes for marking our assessments for May 2020:

- Every item of coursework in most subjects will be fully marked by trained and experienced Examiners. Normally, only a sample of marks in one subject from an individual school is moderated to ensure uniform standards between schools, so this is a major change for us.
- The IB has well-established processes with built in quality controls to ensure that Examiners and Moderators work to the same standards as each other. These processes will be used exactly as in previous sessions. You can find out more about ensuring marking reliability [here](#).
- Extended essay and theory of knowledge coursework are being externally examined in the usual way. The deadline for submission of this material by schools had passed before the widespread impact of COVID-19 and students should have completed it well in advance of this date.
- Predicted grades will play a larger role in determining grades this year. Usually they provide an indication of how our schools believe this year compares to previous years which supports any changes to the overall outcomes. This year they are an active element of determining what final mark each student receives.
- We are able to award grades for schools for which we have no historic data. In these instances, in place of the historic data, we will use a formula based on the pooled information from every school taking that subject, based on coursework marks and predicted grades.
- Our commitment to stakeholders and schools is that this year the overall outcomes will look similar to May 2019 unless there is clear evidence why the overall cohort has changed. In particular we will be mitigating for the difficulties of the pandemic in setting boundaries rather than tightly adhering to the standards set in the grade descriptors.
- As we do every session, we will undertake quality checks to identify students where we need to review the marking due to unexpected results.
- The Final Award Committee will convene before results are issued. This committee consists of IB staff, the Chair of the IB Examining Board, and members of the Examiner community. The committee examines the results before publication to ensure that all assessment processes have been carried out fairly, with due diligence, and that these processes comply with our own *General Regulations* as agreed with national regulators.
- As usual, the *General Regulations* have provision for schools and students to appeal against our results.

How we will award the final grades.

We know that there are links between coursework marks, predicted grades and final awarded grades. Our historical data, together with this session's coursework marking and predicted grades, will allow us to set the grade boundaries for each subject this May.

IB staff are working with an education organisation that specializes in data analysis, standards, assessment and certification. Together we have developed a method that uses data, both historical and from the present session, to arrive at the subject grades for each student. In our usual way, these grades will be converted into points that contribute to the student's overall Diploma Programme results. We have provided more detail about why we are not relying on predicted grades alone in Appendix B.

Implications for retake and anticipated students

Anticipated students

Anticipated students will be treated like all other students this year and will be awarded a grade based on the work submitted to the IB. Grades received in the May 2020 session will count towards a final Diploma in the usual way. Students will also be able to retake any anticipated subjects in future sessions, if these subjects are available.

Retake students

Retake students will need to submit new coursework in order to receive a new grade. This is because the IB is only assessing coursework now that the May examinations have been cancelled. We cannot base grades on a coursework result from a previous year. Subject teachers will be required to confirm that a student's submitted work is new and the IB may request a copy of the previous coursework to validate this as part of its sampling processes.

In principle, "new coursework" means that entirely different work should be submitted for assessment. It is not acceptable for a student to make minor changes to work that has been submitted previously. However, we recognize that for very substantial coursework tasks (for example: the design project for Design Technology) this may not be feasible. In such cases, *substantial* modification of the original work is acceptable. Modified work that has been submitted will be marked as though it is new.

Release of Results

The IB intends to release results as planned on 5 July 2020. It is important for students to receive their Diploma certificates promptly so that they can proceed to the next stage

of their life. Should there be a change to this date we will communicate with schools as soon as we can.

Recognition

The IB has been in regular communication with universities across the globe and in particular has been focusing on those which we know from historic data are the most popular with IB students. The IB has provided university partners with clear information about the coursework that have been completed during the students' participation in the two years of the DP, and the overall process by which final marks were determined in this unprecedented event. We will continue to ensure the validity and the reliability of our assessment protocols

The IB has also been in dialogue with ministries of education, education regulators and other similar bodies across the world to ensure that they too are confident with our approach and that students will be appropriately recognised where required.

Conclusion

These assessment arrangements represent the fairest approach we can take for all our students. We intend that the results awarded to our IB graduates of May 2020 will reflect, with validity and reliability, the high standards and dedication to learning that our students have shown throughout their learner journey in their IB World Schools.

APPENDIX A

FROM JOINT STATEMENT: *These have been agreed in collaboration with other international bodies – Cambridge International Education, Oxford AQA, Pearson*

1. We will follow the principles set out by the regulators.
2. As in previous years, we will maintain the same standards.
3. We will develop a process that will provide a calculated grade which reflects students' performance as fairly as possible
4. We will ask teachers, who know their students well, to submit their judgement about the grade that they believe the student would have received if exams had gone ahead.
5. To produce this, teachers may be asked to consider a range of evidence and data.
6. We will combine this information with other relevant data and statistical information where this is available, and use this to produce a calculated grade for each student
7. We will aim to ensure that the distribution of grades follows a similar pattern to that in other years, so that this year's students aren't disadvantaged.
8. We will issue results on the usual day. If this changes we will let you know.
9. The graded certificates we produce will look the same as usual.
10. We will work with university associations and universities around the world to ensure that the grades awarded this year are valued equally to those awarded in any other year.

APPENDIX B

Why isn't the IB using teacher predicted grades in the same way as UK examination boards?

IB Diploma programme and Career-related programme assessments aim to measure the extent to which students have mastered advanced academic skills, for example analyzing and presenting information, evaluating arguments and creative problem solving, alongside knowledge and understanding. In addition to academic skills, DP assessment encourages an international outlook and intercultural skills, wherever appropriate. Student results are determined by performance against set standards, not by each student's position in the overall rank order. The IB uses a variety of assessments in order to do this including coursework.

While our schools are generally good at predicting the grades that will be achieved by their student, it is still only a prediction. The five-year average (2010-2015) in our data shows that in 55% of cases students achieved at least a grade differently to what was predicted by their teacher.

As an organization, it is critical for us to ensure that the options we provide our global community of IB World Schools are based on compassion for our students and teachers and, fairness for the difficult circumstances our students and educators are experiencing.

IB Diploma Programme and Career-related programme results will be awarded for each student with a grade for each of their registered subjects using a calculation that considers their coursework marks and their predicted grade, as submitted to the IB by their school. For most components we will externally mark work that is usually marked by teachers, instead of taking samples and applying moderation.