Higher level and standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 20	21 - 26	27 - 31	32 - 37	38 - 45

This was the fourth May session for this syllabus and most centres have continued to improve in terms of working with the assessment criteria. There were a few exceptions. Overall the standard was good, and almost all candidates that completed three commentaries achieved a satisfactory level. Some schools produced excellent work. A few schools prepared their candidates poorly, and some were either unaware of the assessment criteria or were hugely generous in the marks awarded to their candidates.

Some portfolios did not include a summary portfolio coversheet. A template version of a summary portfolio coversheet and commentary coversheet are available in the Teacher Support Material (TSM). The 3/CS form does not give all the required information on sources, syllabus sections and word counts. A few centres did not accurately complete the 3/CS form. Centres should check the addition on the reverse side of the 3/CS form, and make sure the forms are signed by the candidate and the teacher.

Teachers should be aware that from May 2017 onwards, the summary portfolio coversheet and the commentary coversheet have been replaced with one single form (3/CSE) and there will no longer be any requirement to complete a 3/CS form. The new requirements for forms and coversheets, including links to the relevant forms, can be accessed in the 'Assessment' section of the online curriculum centre (OCC).

The maximum time lapse between the source article and the written commentary is one calendar year. The maximum word count is 750 words but there is no minimum word count. If a commentary is longer than 750 words, the moderator will stop reading at 750 words so the candidate could lose marks from their analysis and evaluation. Some schools and candidates have not adjusted to the requirement that footnotes are only used to provide references, but not for definitions. Specific definitions are not required: the important thing is to demonstrate that the terms are understood and used accurately.

It is important to carefully follow the rubric requirements. Many candidates lost a mark under criterion F because they did not provide a summary portfolio sheet with details of the sources, syllabus sections, the date commentaries were written and word counts. It is advisable to give the full URL (web address) of the articles. Articles should be complete, and the parts that the commentary is focusing on should be highlighted. If an article is in another language the candidate must provide a full, clear translation: google translate is not always adequate. Completing the front-page section "Titles and dates of work" of the 3/CS form does not replace a summary portfolio coversheet (or from May 2017 onwards, a 3/CSE form).

It is recommended that teachers include a comment on the portfolio, explaining the marks they have awarded. Teachers should make sure to consult the most recent information from the IB for guidance on how IA portfolios should be organized and presented as we move to electronic submission of

Economics IA. A few teachers marked on the scripts with red pen, which can create confusion during moderation.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Most candidates followed the rubric requirements and submitted three commentaries from different sources and covering three syllabus sections, within the word count. When this does not happen it is important that the teacher takes this into account when assessing the portfolio, as it will affect the moderating factor for the school.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Diagrams

Most candidates included relevant diagrams but these were not always explained well. Too many simply copied generic graphs from textbooks or internet sources without making them specific to the commentary. It is preferable that candidates create their own graphs, either by hand or using computer skills. If candidates have copied graphs they must give the source. Please note that the criterion descriptor assesses whether the candidate "is able to construct and use diagrams" so copy/paste diagrams will not achieve maximum marks.

Candidates should avoid very lengthy descriptions of graphs, especially where these are generic graphs that have been copied.

Some candidates made reference to colours on their graphs but then sent portfolios printed in black and white.

Criterion B: Terminology

Terminology needs to be used appropriately, but this does not mean every term must be defined. Terms like "price elasticity of demand" could be briefly explained with a comment such as "which measures how responsive the quantity demanded is to a change in price". If precise definitions are copied they must be in quotation marks and a source be given. They must not be in footnotes or they will be ignored. This criterion implies that the candidate displays understanding of the terms used. A number of candidates used an inappropriate dictionary definition for economic terms like deficit or depreciation. Most candidates achieved high marks in this criterion.

Criterion C: Application

This criterion tests whether the candidate has recognized the appropriate economic issues from the chosen article. It is important to make links to the article, and not simply present some economic theory that is faintly relevant. Some candidates made very little reference to the articles, and a few did not understand the articles. A common fault was to choose articles that were far too complex or dealt with issues not in the IB syllabus. Most candidates recognized the appropriate economic issues and achieved high marks.

Criterion D: Analysis

This criterion deals with explaining and developing economic theories linked to the article. It is important that the commentary makes repeated references to the article and integrates the theory and practice. An example might be discussing whether taxing alcohol is a better solution to market failure than regulating sales or prohibition.

A common fault was to simply summarize some economic theory without clearly linking it to the article. The descriptors for level 2 and 3 distinguish between "appropriate" and "effective" analysis: many commentaries were considered "appropriate" as the analysis was not developed enough.

Criterion E: Evaluation

A key issue in this criterion was whether the candidate "synthesizes his or her analysis". If candidates have simply paraphrased an article that has already done the analysis and evaluation of an issue it is not possible to access the top levels on this criterion: the evaluation is not of the candidate's own analysis. Many simply explained an article, generally agreeing with the author. Too many candidates gave opinions that were not backed up by appropriate economic reasoning. "I think" does not necessarily imply evaluation. It is not possible to reach the top level unless the candidate considers counter-arguments, and discusses benefits and disadvantages of a policy.

Criterion F: Rubric requirements

It is important to carefully follow the rubric requirements. Some candidates lost a mark under criterion F because they did not provide a summary portfolio coversheet with details of the sources, syllabus sections, the date commentaries were written and word counts. The descriptor about "different and appropriate sources" was designed to avoid candidates choosing excerpts from books, tutorial guides, government reports or personal blogs. A number of online media now include opinion columns that are technically "blogs" but these are acceptable if they are in a recognized news media source.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- The internal assessment (IA) should be an integral part of the IB course, not simply a set of assignments at the end of the course. The IA can be valuable to understanding the different parts of the syllabus and is especially important in providing examples that can be used in the externally assessed components. It is recommended that candidates read through their IA as part of their revision for examinations.
- It is recommended that the IA be spread across the teaching of the syllabus, with one or two of the commentaries completed in the first year of the IB course. This reduces stress on candidates in their second year and reduces the risk of incomplete portfolios being presented. Teachers should provide guidance in the selection of suitable articles but the candidate must make the choice. Some schools used a very limited selection of sources and topics for their IA, which gave the impression that teachers had selected the articles. Teachers are reminded that they are allowed to give feedback on a first draft of the commentary but the second draft is considered final.
- A few schools, or candidates, did not appear to have produced a first and subsequent final draft of the commentaries.
- It is important to stress the potential consequences of academic misconduct. Teachers should take care to verify the honesty of work presented, ensuring that the language and

analysis presented is really that of the candidate.

- It is also necessary to remind teachers against providing too much assistance to candidates. It is part of the candidates' task to find and analyse the articles: this should not be done by the teacher. A number of schools presented samples where many candidates had used the same articles.
- A small number of candidates did not fulfil the criteria by producing three commentaries that were on almost identical topics: this should be strongly discouraged by centres as it could be considered intellectual dishonesty. While very short commentaries do not get punished under Criterion F they are unlikely to score well on other criteria.

There were some cases where the candidate had completely misunderstood the article used: for example an article on production quotas for fishing was read as an article on import quotas; in another case the article was about the price of gas for consumers and the word "tariff" was used to describe the price but the candidate confused this with import tariffs. In such cases it is important that the teacher inform the candidate and suggest they choose another article. If candidates do not do this they risk having the graphs, analysis and evaluation being considered inappropriate or not relevant. This could affect the moderation of the school, not just the individual candidate.