

Advice from the IB Chief Examiner 2015

Diagram

May 2015 IB Examiner Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Long Essay Comments (HP1):

Definition

Encourage candidates to learn **Definitions** more thoroughly. Many candidates are aware of the need to define terms, particularly those used in the question, **but the definitions are often given very casually and lack the accuracy required.** Candidates should be **encouraged to integrate Examples** into their responses **even if they are generic ones.** The assessment criteria for level 3 and level 4 make the point that where appropriate examples should be used and it makes it more difficult for a candidate to access these higher levels if they fail to use them. (page 10)

Example

Apart from a lack of examples, there was also a lack of definitions. These are also mentioned in the markscheme achievement levels and without them the examiner has difficulty gauging the level of understanding of the candidate even before the question is answered. Some able candidates are able to convey understanding of definitions within their response but for the rest, it remains important. (page 7)

Answer

Long Essay Comments (SP1): in addition to comments re definitions and examples

Candidates need to be aware of the assessment criteria well in advance of the examination and to be taught how to build their responses to integrate the criteria into their answer. There needs to be a degree of **Planning** so that the answer focuses on **the question and unfolds seamlessly building on definitions, knowledge and understanding, analysis and finally evaluation.** Diagrams and examples should be integrated along the way to help enrich the quality of the response but need to be appropriate to the question.

Planning/
Paragraph

The **balance between analysis and evaluation in part (b)** **(Answerability)** of the essays should be encouraged towards the discussion. Candidates should be taught that evaluation is more than just a simple reference to stakeholders or the timeframe; it is an opportunity to critically reflect upon the points that have been made.

Advice from the IB Chief Examiner 2015

HP2 + SP2

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Many will note that these suggestions have appeared in previous examiner reports, at both standard and higher level, for the past syllabus. However, since the structure of the questions, as well as the expectations, have not changed with the new syllabus, the advice remains largely the same.

- Teachers should encourage their candidates to learn precise **definitions**, as the use of precise and accurate economic terminology will enhance performance on all assessment components. If the candidates are confident in their knowledge of definitions, they can proceed quickly through the first part of each data response question. To help candidates in this important skill, candidates might be encouraged to compile a glossary of terms. Candidates must be taught to include appropriate economic words in their definitions, in order to distinguish themselves from people who have simply picked up some information without having taken an economics course.
- In part (a) questions, candidates should be encouraged to write no more than two sentences.
- Many part (b) and (c) questions require the use of a **diagram**, and these are generally all standard diagrams from the syllabus. Candidates would thus benefit if they compiled a glossary of all the diagrams. Where a diagram is used in part (b) or (c) questions, candidates should be sure to use/explain the diagram by making references to it in the response. The diagram and the explanation must be integrated with each other. Since diagrams are meant to be dynamic (*i.e.* they illustrate a change to a situation) candidates should explain reasons for any changes and use (dotted) lines to the axes and notation such as (q_1 to q_2) or (AD_1 to AD_2) in their written work.
- Diagrams should not be placed at the end of the answer booklet. They should be drawn exactly where the accompanying explanation is written.
- Candidates should take about a third of a page to draw their diagrams, and should use a ruler to make sure that it is drawn neatly so that the information is clear. All curves/lines and axes must be labelled. **(Size of diagram and ruler)**
- It is the policy that candidates are not allowed to use coloured pens/pencils on their examinations. Therefore, there should not be references to different coloured lines in the diagram, as these will not show up on the scanned examinations. However, they should be sure to use arrows to indicate the direction of change of any variables. **(Use of colour)**

Diagram

Definition

Example

Answer

Planning/
Paragraph

HP 2 and SP2: May 2015 subject reports Group 3, Economics TZ1

Diagram

- **Diagrams** should be made appropriate to the question and/or the market in the question.
- Candidates must also be able to distinguish between macroeconomic and microeconomic labelling. Failure to label diagrams correctly prevents candidates from achieving full marks.
- Candidates must be taught to carefully identify what a question is asking for in part (b) and (c) questions. They should make sure that their diagrams address the specific question that is asked, rather than write all about every aspect of a diagram.

Definition

- Where a diagram is required, the questions always stipulate which diagram is to be used. Despite this, candidates often draw different ones. This is yet another reason why it is so important to read the question carefully. (**Answerability**)
- Candidates could be advised to re-read a question once they have finished writing their answer. This can serve as a self-check to make sure that the question is actually answered. In many cases, candidates come very close, but do not actually **answer the question** set and they would easily get the full marks if they added just one line to present a clear answer to the actual question.

Example

- Candidates must be reminded that to achieve top marks in part (d) questions, they must make reference to the text. Encourage candidates to use quotation marks, or make references to the paragraphs or texts. (**Quote**)

Answer

- Answers to part (d) questions also require candidates to apply and develop the economic theory that is relevant to the text/data. It is not enough to simply mention the relevant theory; answers which reach the top level must illustrate that the candidate can clearly use/apply that theory. Candidates need to show an examiner that they have studied an economics course, not simply that they can use some economic words that appear in a question or in the text.

Quote

- Candidates must be aware of the different command terms that may be employed in part (d) questions and the evaluation/synthesis skills that are being tested. The synthesis/evaluation command terms are 'compare', 'compare and contrast', 'discuss', 'evaluate', 'examine', 'justify', and 'to what extent...'. Each of the command terms has an explanation in the syllabus guide and candidates and teachers need to be aware of these. (**Answerability**)
- Theory provided in part (d) questions must be directly linked to the text/data to avoid delivering a pre-learned mini-essay. Candidates should be encouraged to really 'engage' with the text, in order to be able to apply the theory.
- There is concern at the extent to which candidates are uncritically paraphrasing the texts in their answers to part (d) questions. Candidates should be encouraged to think critically about the information in the text and challenge the viewpoints held by the authors or people quoted in the articles. Candidates often seem oblivious to the source of the information in the text, missing an ideal opportunity to carry out some evaluation.

HP 3 (HL Only)

Diagram

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Candidates should be reminded to show workings, use appropriate units and round correctly. It would be helpful if teachers could insist on rounding to 2 decimal places throughout the course, not just in assessment activities.

Definition

- Candidates should be reminded that answers must be written in the spaces provided, or on additional sheets. Several candidates this examination session provided their answers with a portion written outside of the boxes provided, contrary to the instructions.

- Teachers should make candidates aware of the need for clear explanation of more complex concepts such as the terms of trade and price rigidities under oligopoly.

Example

- Teachers should be mindful that any of the learning outcomes stated in the subject guide may be examined. Candidates should be able to **define** terms used in the guide, such as “satisficing” and should be prepared for all learning outcomes, such as “Explain why the AD curve has a negative slope”.

- Candidates should be reminded to refer to a **diagram**/data directly when asked to do so in the question.

Answer

- Candidates should be made aware of the requirements of addressing the command term “explain” when attempting the 4-mark questions. (**Answerability**)

- Candidates should be given practice in reading questions carefully. For example, when required to calculate a change or an increase, a subtraction of the initial value from the new value must be performed. There remains a tendency for candidates to omit this part of the question, or to provide a positive number when the correct response is a negative number. (**Answerability**)

Planning /
Paragraph

Not much has changed since 2006... note that this relates to the old syllabus!
What the Ib chief examiners report said in 2006 (student performance targets remain unchanged):

2006- general comments in relation to all 5 exam papers (sl+hl)

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

1. **Diagrams** should be used in answers. They should be clear and explained in the text of the answer. This gives greater theoretical content to candidate answers and enables examiners to more readily credit economic knowledge and its application.

As always, diagrams are an area that often lets students down. Although not always the case, the more diagrams a student used, the better they performed in both Criteria B and Criteria D as diagrams helped them to analyse and apply their knowledge well. Diagrams should be explained in detail and referred to directly.

2. **Use examples** but provide some facts or figures in them. Simply saying the name of a country, does not give the feel of an example that is well employed, data provides substance and enables understanding to be more readily judged.

3. Tell students to clearly identify what the command words in a question are, and what they mean.

4. Provide **definitions** of key terms. This enables students to focus on pertinent theory and helps keep them on track.

5. If candidates make sure they refer to the question at various points throughout their response they are less likely to wander off the point. **(Answerability)**.

6. Continued work on evaluation. Students need to be more familiar with the possibilities to evaluate in a question.

paper specific guidance:

Paper 1 sl+hl advice

There are, however, some important things for centres and candidates to work on in preparation for paper 1; **better planning stuck out as a crucial aspect of producing a good answer** to this extended response paper.

.....Paper 1 gives a plenty of time for planning and many candidates would benefit from a more measured approach which would come with more effective planning.

Sometimes it is clear that candidates have just **rushed into the question without planning**, which means their answers can become repetitive, or they are rushing to add in crucial points at the end of the exam or, worse still, trying to write answers in the margin as a footnote.

Group

Paper 2/3 sl+hl advice

There were a few cases where candidates seemed to be a little short of time but, interestingly, the candidates involved tended to be stronger ones, who simply got carried away and wrote in far too great detail in some of the question parts. In more than one case, candidates were writing almost two sides per definition, when three lines would have sufficed. In another case, a candidate wrote eight sides on the first part (d), seven on the next and, not surprisingly, ran out of time by the last part (d).

As always, the drawing and labelling of diagrams was not all that it might be. Too many candidates are drawing diagrams freehand, without rulers, and making it very difficult for examiners to identify the movement of curves. Labels on axes are often completely omitted or, at best, sketchy.

In an alarming number of cases, there seemed to be confusion between supply and demand and aggregate supply and aggregate demand. In many cases, market demand and supply curves were labelled AD and AS.

Diagram

Definition

Example

Answer

Paragraph

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.

- Centres should provide guidance in selection of suitable articles but the choice must be made by the candidate. Some centres 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 centres, 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 article: this should not be done by the teacher. A number of centres presented samples where many candidates had used the same articles. Articles must not be given to the class by the teacher, and the production of the commentary must be each candidate's individual work.

May 2015