

How the IB awarded results for the November 2020 examination session: Diploma Programme and Career-Related Programme

The IB cares deeply about our students and aims to ensure that the best possible experience and outcome for students is provided during this session so that they can successfully progress to the next stage of their education.

The IB has worked hard to ensure that we provide fair and valuable certification to all students, irrespective of whether their school is able to run examinations or not.

The IB worked closely with schools to understand how many were able to safely administer examinations, for those who could not, an alternative route was provided to award student's results.

Guiding principles for awarding grades

Approximately half of students in the November 2020 session completed the full assessment route of coursework and examinations, the remaining half will be awarded grades through the non-exam route. In order to be fair to both groups of students, it is vital that awarding of grades does not privilege one group over the other.

The following principles have guided the IB approach to awarding in November 2020:

- It is fair for students to receive a grade even if exams cannot be taken because of COVID-19.
- It is fair to give students the same certificate as if they had taken examinations because an alternative certificate may be treated less favourably by universities.
- It is unfair if students on one route (exam or non-exam) are systematically advantaged over students on the other route because all are receiving the same certificate.
- It is unfair for students to receive lower (or higher) grades this year because of the impact of COVID-19 on their learning and teaching.

Most of the coursework that students completed for assessment this year has been marked externally by trained IB examiners, as well as by their teachers. In a normal year, much of this coursework would be marked by teachers and only a sample of it would be then be marked again by IB examiners in a process that is known as moderation. By marking student coursework, irrespective of whether they sit the examinations or not helps ensure common standards of assessment are applied to those who are able to sit examinations and those who are not.

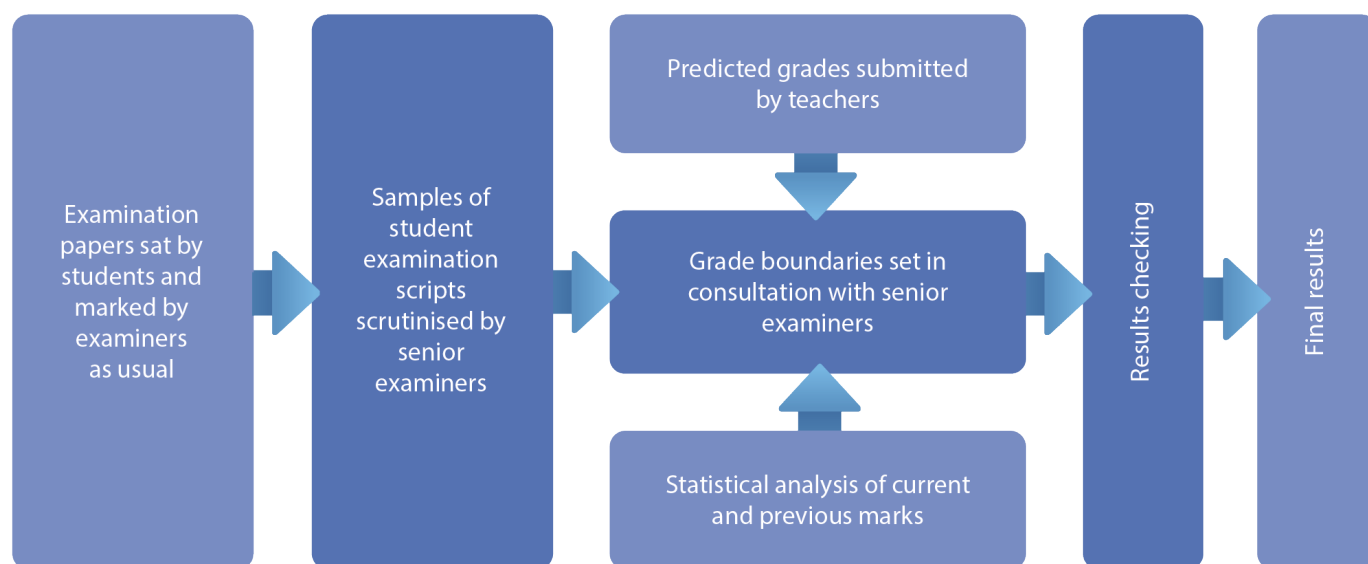
How the IB will award grades for the exam route

Grades will be awarded as normal for students who were able to complete the full assessment route however the IB understands that because of the teaching time lost this session, the quality of the answers given by students during exams may be generally weaker than those seen in previous years.

The IB will address this by adjusting grade boundaries, so that students are not disadvantaged by COVID-19-related school closures and disruption.

What does adjusting grade boundaries mean?

As part of the awarding process the IB adjusts grade boundaries each year, taking into consideration feedback from our expert senior examiners, teacher feedback and looking at how students have performed in the examination. This process means that grades always reflect the same level of achievement, even if an exam was easier or harder for example.



The IB expects that grade boundaries for examination papers in November 2020 will be lowered to allow November 2020 students, whose learning has been affected by COVID-19-related disruption, to achieve a distribution of grades comparable to those achieved by students in previous years.

In addition, a series of checks has been designed to ensure that fair grades are awarded to all students. The quality assurance of student grades will rely on careful scrutiny and human judgement rather than automated processes.

How the IB will award grades for the Non-exam route

The non-exam route represents a best endeavour for awarding of grades in exceptional circumstances. In the absence of actual exam scores, the IB will model what a student would have achieved on an “normal” exam day using student coursework marks and predicted grades. It is impossible to perfectly reflect what students would have achieved in examinations without those examinations being taken, however, IB analyses applied to school results for earlier years (when examinations were sat) suggest that in 95% of cases, using coursework and predicted grade data, student results can be modelled to within one grade of their final grade awarded.

How is the IB making sure the results are the best estimation?

- The IB will be using three years of school student performance and prediction history (wherever available) to help account for variations in relative student performance on coursework and in

exams and in the accuracy of teachers' predicted grades.

- As well as drawing upon extensive experience in assessment design and analysis, the IB has consulted external academic and educational assessment specialists.
- The IB tested, using data from previous sessions, to see whether using either predicted grades or coursework marks alone was better than using both together, but the evidence indicated that a combination provided the most accurate approximations to marks students have been awarded historically.

Extensive checking of individual student results will take place prior to release of results in order to identify and correct occasions where the approach has systematically underestimated or overestimated a student's achievement. The IB will check that students' individual subject grades and overall diploma point scores (out of 45) are plausible and justified by the information available.

This quality assurance of student grades will rely on focussed scrutiny and human judgement rather than automated processes and the IB has set aside additional time to do this.

To be fair to all students, grades achieved on the non-exam route should be comparable to those on the exam route. The IB will carefully ensure that patterns of student performance on the exam route and non-exam route are consistent with patterns of student performance in each group of schools over recent years, so that students are not disadvantaged by the route they are on.

Why the IB cannot award based on only Predicted Grades or only coursework marks.

On average students perform better on their coursework than in exams. Therefore, simply giving coursework grades to non-exam route students is not fair to those who do take the examinations. The IB could account for this, for example, by giving students one grade lower than their coursework grade, but it is fairer and more accurate to reflect trends in each school for each subject, rather than apply a simple global adjustment. Schools vary in the extent to which their students' coursework performance exceeds (or falls short of) examination performance, and in order to be fair we need to take this difference into account.

There is evidence that in general teachers have tended to predict higher grades for their students this year than in previous years, and this is not surprising given that teachers have been unable to spend as much time with their students as they would in a normal year nor gather as much evidence of learning and yet are still endeavouring to represent what their students would achieve under optimal conditions. Where schools have departed from historical patterns of predicting grades, the IB will need to adjust predicted grades in order to prevent groups of students being unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged, ensuring fair grades are awarded to all. The IB has worked with schools where there is evidence that their pattern of predicted grades has changed to help them understand any adjustments that might be made.