The Business Research Project

The internal assessment, the same task at SL and HL: a real issue facing one organization, analysed through one key concept.

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KNOWLEDGE. INSIGHT. IMPACT.

Word limit	Marks	Weighting	Documents	Key concept
1,800	25	30% | 20%	3 to 5	1 of 4
words at most	criteria A to G	of the grade, SL | HL	within three years	on the title page

For students assessed from May 2024 onwards, under the IB *Business management guide* (first assessment 2024, updated July 2024): SL and HL do the same project. A page describing an SL written commentary refers to the previous course.

1 How the project works

What do I produce, and where are the 25 marks earned?

The project journey

■ IB requirement ◆ Recommended strategy

Issue	Question	Concept	Documents	Analysis	Conclusion
A real issue or problem facing one organization	Forward or backward looking, answerable	One of four, as an explicit lens	Three to five, your own selection	Tools applied to document data, then evaluated	An explicit answer, in at most 1,800 words
		A 5	B 4	C 4 D 5	E 3 F 2 G 2
Your teacher	approves the question before work starts		comments on your work plans and on the first draft		marks it; the IB moderates

Stages and the teacher's role come from the guide; the order of work is our suggestion. Criteria are marked best fit.

The seven criteria

■ IB requirement

Criterion	Marks	The top level, in brief
A Integration of a key concept	5	Its link to the organization, **integrated throughout**
B Supporting documents	4	Relevant and in depth, with **a range of ideas and views**
C Selection and application of tools and theories	4	**Selected and applied effectively**, clearly relevant
D Analysis and evaluation	5	**Document data** used effectively; assumptions weighed
E Conclusions	3	Consistent with the evidence; **explicitly answer** the question
F Structure	2	An appropriate structure
G Presentation	2	Title page, accurate contents, headings, numbered pages

How to read the labels

- ■ **IB requirement** IB guide or examiner instructions
- ◆ **Recommended strategy** our technique, not a rule
- ● **Examiner emphasis** IB subject reports
- □ **Illustrative example** invented for this guide

Sources: IB *Business management guide* (first assessment 2024, updated July 2024); teacher support material; IB subject reports, May 2024 to May 2026. Crumb & Co. and its documents are invented for this guide.

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2 Research question and key concept

How do I frame a question my documents can answer, through one lens?

From topic to research question

◆ Recommended strategy ☐ Illustrative example

Syllabus area
Growth and evolution (Unit 1)

Real issue, one organization
Crumb & Co.'s only bakery turns customers away at weekends

Research question
Should Crumb & Co. open a second shop in Eastgate?

Six tests before your teacher approves it

- ☑ **Focused:** one decision, one place
- ☑ **Real:** a live issue, not a hypothetical
- ☑ **One organization:** named, and central
- ☑ **Researchable:** three to five recent documents can answer it
- ☑ **Concept-aligned:** the lens fits the issue
- ☑ **Answerable:** an explicit answer within 1,800 words

Choosing the form of the question

■ IB requirement ● Examiner emphasis

Forward looking	"Should Crumb & Co. open a second shop in Eastgate?" A decision still to be made.
Backward looking	"How effectively has Crumb's seasonal range attracted new customers?" A decision already taken.
"To what extent...?"	Allowed, but it needs a precise judgement. Reports (May 2025, May 2026) warn that a vague "to some extent" cannot reach 3 marks in E; a closed question can be easier to answer explicitly.

The guide allows forward- or backward-looking questions; your teacher approves the question before work starts.

The four key concepts, as lenses on one organization

■ IB requirement ☐ Illustrative example

Change Crumb's lens	Creativity	Ethics	Sustainability
In the guide Moving from one form or state to another: causes, processes, consequences.	In the guide New ideas, or existing ideas from new perspectives, and their value.	In the guide Moral principles that govern behaviour, and their consequences for stakeholders.	In the guide Meeting present needs without compromising future generations: people, planet, profit.
The lens asks What does growing from one shop to two change, and is it worth it?	The lens asks Has a new idea created value for the business?	The lens asks Is the decision right, and who bears its cost?	The lens asks Does it serve people, planet and profit together?
A question Should Crumb & Co. open a second shop in Eastgate?	A question How effectively has Crumb's seasonal range attracted new customers?	A question Should Crumb & Co. switch to fair-trade cocoa despite the higher cost?	A question Should Crumb & Co. sell unsold bread through a food-waste app?

In the course

All four concepts **underpin every unit**. In the examinations they support synthesis and evaluation, even though questions may not be explicitly concept based.

In your project

You choose **one** and use it explicitly as a lens, from question to conclusion. Any other idea, such as globalization, scores 0 for criterion A.

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3 Supporting documents

Which documents are allowed, and what makes a strong set?

The supporting documents (SDs) are where most of your information must come from. Choose them in three passes.

A selection framework

■ IB requirement ◆ Recommended strategy

Gate 1
Is it allowed?
■ Rules in the guide

- ■ Published within **three years** before submission
- ■ Chosen by you, **not supplied** by your teacher
- ■ At most **one transcript** of audio or video, from a reliable organization, original traceable
- ■ Primary research: the **blank questionnaire and a tally**, or interview questions and a summary
- ■ Not a textbook or class notes: reference those instead

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Gate 2
Is it useful?
◆ Our quality checks

- ◆ **Relevant:** it speaks to your question, not just your topic
- ◆ **Data-rich:** figures or findings you can analyse with a tool
- ◆ **In depth:** more than a headline or a summary
- ◆ **Credible:** a known author, date and purpose
- ◆ **Focused:** the relevant part highlighted

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Gate 3
Is the set balanced?
■■ Guide and our checks

- ■ **Three to five** documents: any other number scores at most 1 for B
- ■ A **range of ideas and views**: needed for 4 marks in B, and strongly recommended
- ◆ Inside and outside voices: the firm, independent data, your own research, a sceptic
- ◆ Each one adds something the others do not

Recommended, not required: no document longer than the equivalent of five A4 pages. Highlight the parts you use, translate highlighted parts not in your registered language, and label each document (SD1, SD2).

Crumb & Co.'s set

□ Illustrative example

	Document	Voice	What it adds
SD1	Crumb & Co. accounts, 2025	The business	Average sale, ingredient costs, wages and overheads
SD2	Council footfall survey of Eastgate, 2025	Independent	About 9,000 shoppers a day
SD3	Estate agent's listing for the site, 2026	Commercial	Rent of $36,000 a year
SD4	Own survey of 80 Eastgate shoppers: blank questionnaire and tally	Primary	24 of 80 (30%) would visit weekly
SD5	Local newspaper report on two café closures, 2026	Sceptical	Evidence that demand may not last

Five documents from Crumb's own website would lack balance, as would five surveys of similar people: the guide gives both as examples.

Where document sets go wrong

● Examiner emphasis

- A "document" built from several sources, such as SD1.1 to SD1.4: treated as more than five SDs, usually B1, and an integrity concern.
- A list of links or summaries instead of the documents themselves.
- Documents published more than three years before submission: the event can be older, but the publication date counts.
- Your own SWOT or calculations filed as an SD: they belong in your work or an appendix.

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4 Criteria B, C and D

How do the same documents earn three different sets of marks?

One evidence set, three questions

■ IB requirement □ Illustrative example

B Supporting documents 4

Are the three to five documents relevant, in depth, and varied in their views?

At Crumb
Accounts, council footfall data, a rent listing, a shopper survey, a report on two closures.

Not credited here
How well you use them: that is D.

C Tools and theories 4

Are the tools right for this question, and applied to Crumb's figures?

At Crumb
Break-even analysis for the new shop; a force field analysis of the change (HL).

Not credited here
A SWOT that does not help answer the question.

D Analysis and evaluation 5

Is document data selected and used to analyse, weigh and question the evidence?

At Crumb
Break-even needs under 1% of passers-by, but the survey was run only on Saturdays.

Not credited here
Statistics quoted without being used.

From evidence to conclusion

◆ Recommended strategy □ Illustrative example

1 · Evidence
From the SDs
$8 a sale, $3 ingredients, $64,000 wages and overheads (SD1); $36,000 rent (SD3); 9,000 shoppers a day (SD2).

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2 · Analysis
A tool applied
($64,000 + $36,000) ÷ $5 = 20,000 sales a year: about 67 a day over 300 trading days, under 1% of passers-by.

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3 · Evaluation
Assumptions tested
SD1 costs are the current shop's; the survey ran on two Saturdays (SD4); two cafés closed (SD5).

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4 · Conclusion
An explicit answer
Open, but only after a weekday trial confirms the demand that the costs require.

The change lens runs through every step: what the move from one shop to two changes in costs, staffing and risk, and whether that change is worth making now.

Criterion D is not quoting statistics

● Examiner emphasis □ Illustrative example

Quoting	"SD2 says 9,000 shoppers pass each day, and 30% of those surveyed would visit weekly (SD4)."
Using	"Break-even is 20,000 sales a year, about 67 a day over 300 trading days: under 1% of the 9,000 daily shoppers (SD2)."
Integrating	"That margin looks safe, but it rests on two assumptions: Eastgate costs matching the current shop's (SD1), and Saturday interest (SD4) holding on weekdays. With two cafés closed nearby (SD5), the change is only worth making once weekday demand is tested."

The top level of D asks for sustained integration of ideas, with the assumptions underpinning the arguments and their implications. Always show where a figure comes from (SD1, SD2).

Criterion E: an explicit answer

■ IB requirement ● Examiner emphasis □ Illustrative example

Weaker	"To some extent, a second shop could be a good idea for Crumb & Co."
Stronger	"Crumb & Co. should open the Eastgate shop, but only after a weekday trial: it needs under 1% of passing shoppers to break even; the main risk is weekday demand, and Eastgate costs also need confirming."

The stronger version answers the question as asked and adds no new facts. If the question names two things, answer both.

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5 Structure, word count and submission

How do I organize, count and present a project that meets every rule?

Criteria F and G

■ IB requirement ● Examiner emphasis

F · A structure that serves the argument

- **Introduction:** the organization, the issue and the question, and briefly how you investigated.
- **Main body:** findings analysed with tools, organized by argument, not one SD after another.
- **Conclusion:** an explicit answer, with what remains open.

The guide's elements, not compulsory headings. Reports advise against a long research proposal or methodology section.

G · The four required elements

- ☐ A title page
- ☐ An accurate table of contents
- ☐ Appropriate headings and subheadings
- ☐ Numbered pages

G is limited to these elements: fonts and layout preferences are not assessed.

The 1,800-word limit

■ IB requirement

Not counted	Counted
Acknowledgements · contents page · tables of statistical data · diagrams or figures · equations, formulae and calculations · supporting documents · **citations**, which must be in the body · **references**, which must be in footnotes or endnotes · bibliography	Everything else in the text, **including headings and subheadings**, definitions of business terms and quotations. Footnotes and endnotes may hold references only. The word count goes on the cover page; moderators stop reading at 1,800.

Submission compliance

■ IB requirement ● Examiner emphasis

Mandatory

the guide requires it, though not all is marked

- ■ A **research question** about one organization
- ■ The **key concept** on the title page
- ■ The **word count** on the cover page
- ■ Three to five **SDs** attached, highlighted and labelled
- ■ Citations and a **bibliography**
- ■ The four **presentation elements** of G

Recommended

the guide advises it

- ◆ No SD longer than **five A4 pages**
- ◆ A **range of views** across the SDs, needed for B4
- ◆ A brief account of **how you investigated**, in the introduction
- ◆ Noting what the project **could not fully answer**

Not required

reports: not penalized if absent

- – Recommendations or limitations sections
- – A separate methodology section
- – Appendices: your own work, never extra SDs
- – A set font, or set heading names

Before you submit

◆ Recommended strategy

- ☐ One concept, explicit in every section
- ☐ Three to five SDs, all within three years
- ☐ Every figure traced to its SD
- ☐ Every tool helps answer the question
- ☐ Every part of the question answered
- ☐ Within 1,800 words; count on the cover

Submission to the IB is in April or October of the final year, depending on your examination session; your school sets earlier internal deadlines.

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