Paper 1 Assessment Guide

The case study paper, sat by SL and HL students alike.

ARJUN AGRAWAL
KNOWLEDGE. INSIGHT. IMPACT.

Duration	Marks	Weighting	Case study
1 h 30 min	**30**	**35% | 25%**	**Pre-released**
plus 5 minutes' reading time	Section A 20 · Section B 10	of the final grade, SL | HL	statement issued earlier

For students assessed from May 2024 onwards, under the IB *Business management guide* (first assessment 2024, updated July 2024).

1 How Paper 1 works

What do I receive before the examination, and what happens on the day?

One case study about a fictitious organization, assessing AO1 to AO4 on Units 1 to 5 without HL extension topics. Questions are mainly qualitative; minor calculations can appear.

From pre-release to examination day

■ IB requirement ◆ Recommended strategy

About three months before

The pre-released statement

Context: a few topics not in the guide but building on syllabus topics, to research for about five hours.

The opening: about the first 200 words of the case.

The weeks before

Your preparation

Understand the organization and its situation; research each context topic as a live issue; practise applying syllabus tools to this organization rather than memorizing answers.

The examination

The full case study

About **800 to 1,000 words**: the opening you studied, then new information. Every question is unseen.

The opening you already know

New information on the day

Two sections, drawn to scale

■ IB requirement ◆ Recommended strategy

	Section A	Section B
Marks	20	10
Suggested time	About 54 minutes	About 36 minutes

Section A · 20 marks

Answer **every** structured question: six in 2024 and 2025, five in May 2026 (the guide does not fix the number). Marked with an analytic markscheme.

Section B · 10 marks

Answer **one** of two extended response questions, usually *discuss* or *evaluate*. Marked with markbands, best fit, and a question-specific markscheme.

Suggested times follow the teacher support material's advice of about 60% for Section A; they are not an IB rule.

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 (TSM); IB subject reports, May 2024 to May 2026. Juniper Juice and its questions are invented for this guide.

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2 Understanding the questions

What does each command term ask me to demonstrate?

The IB glossary places each **command term** at an assessment objective, and no question uses a term above the level of its syllabus content. The whole question and its markscheme decide what is rewarded: read the term as the thinking required.

Command terms by demand

■ IB requirement

AO1 Knowledge and understanding	AO2 Application and analysis	AO3 Synthesis and evaluation
Accurate knowledge of a term, theory or feature.	Knowledge used on the case: reasons, effects, links.	Arguments and evidence weighed into a judgement.
define, describe, identify, list, outline, state	**analyse, apply, comment, demonstrate, distinguish, explain, suggest**	**compare, compare and contrast, contrast, discuss, evaluate, examine, justify, recommend, to what extent**

AO4 · skills annotate, calculate, complete, construct, determine, draw, label, plot, prepare

Less demanding → More demanding

Five terms, one topic

■ IB requirement □ Illustrative example

Juniper Juice sells juice from three kiosks, plans to supply two chains with 140 stores, has taste-tested new flavours, and claims a new pressing machine would pay for itself within a year.

Term	Asks you to give	Applied to primary market research at Juniper
Define	The precise meaning	First-hand data gathered by a business to answer its own question.
Describe	A detailed account	Shoppers tried each new flavour in store and scored it.
Explain	Reasons or causes	Designed around the launch decision, the tests show what Juniper's own target shoppers prefer.
Analyse	Elements and links	Beetroot's 6.2 average hides a split: over-50s liked it; the core 18 to 30 group did not.
Evaluate	Strengths and limits weighed	Current and specific, but 120 shoppers in two city stores may not represent 140 stores.

How the marks signal depth

● Examiner emphasis

2 marks

Often *define* or *state*. A definition needs two precise elements; over-concise ones miss a mark.

4 marks

Often *describe two*, marked 2 + 2 in recent papers: two features, each developed.

6 marks

Often *explain two*, marked 3 + 3 in recent papers, as on the next page.

Patterns from recent subject reports; each paper's markscheme decides how marks divide.

Decode the question before you write

◆ Recommended strategy □ Illustrative example

Term: *explain*, so reasons, not a list.

Number: *two*, kept distinct.

Focus: *disadvantages* only.

Context: *for Juniper*, via *the chains*.

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3 Mastering Section A

How do I turn knowledge of the course into marks on this case?

Copying the case shows reading; stating theory shows memory. Application joins the two and follows the consequence for this business.

From case fact to applied point

● Examiner emphasis ☐ Illustrative example

	Case fact: what the case says	Business knowledge: why it matters	Consequence for this organization
Restates the case shows reading only	● Juniper's juices last five days.	○ Missing	○ Missing
Generic fits any business	○ Missing	● Retailers can return unsold stock to suppliers.	○ Missing
Applied knowledge used on the case	● Five-day shelf life.	● Sale-or-return shifts unsold stock to the supplier.	● Unsold bottles return at Juniper's cost.

The TSM notes that AO2 answers without appropriate application are typically limited to about half of the marks.

An annotated 6-mark answer

● Examiner emphasis ☐ Illustrative example

Explain two disadvantages for Juniper of selling through the supermarket chains. [6] Illustrative markscheme: for each disadvantage, identify (1), explain with business knowledge (1), apply to Juniper (1).

Mark	Extract from the response	Why it scores
Identify	One disadvantage is that the chains may insist on **sale-or-return** terms.	Names the point
Explain	Retailers with buying power can push the cost of unsold stock back onto suppliers.	Knowledge the case lacks
Apply	Juniper's juices last five days, so bottles not sold in time return at its cost.	This case, and its effect
Identify	A second is **lower revenue per bottle**, and so a lower margin.	A distinct point
Explain	The retailer's price must cover its own costs and profit, so the supplier receives only part.	Its own reasoning
Apply	At its kiosks Juniper receives the full $4 a bottle; through the chains it receives less.	Its own evidence

This is one question's markscheme, not a universal formula: the paper's markscheme decides. From May 2027 the case has no line numbers; questions quote the text they need (May 2026 subject report).

Definitions that score

● Examiner emphasis

- The full meaning in your own words; an example is not a definition.
- Never define a term with the term itself.
- *State* and *identify* need a line, not a paragraph.

Where marks are lost

● Examiner emphasis

- Sentences lifted from the case ("reading comprehension").
- Two points that overlap or share evidence.
- Writing far beyond the marks, which costs Section B time.

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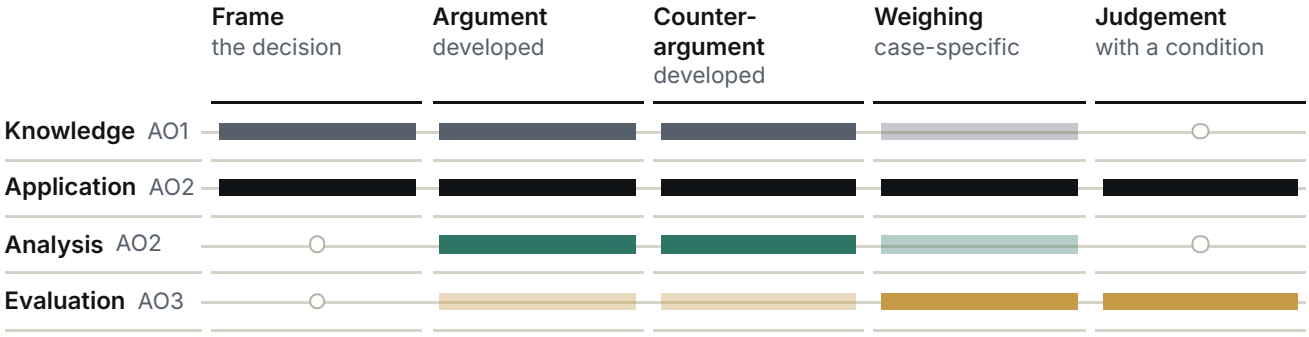
4 Mastering Section B

How do knowledge, application, analysis and evaluation work together in one answer?

The 10-mark response is read as a whole. Knowledge and application run through every argument, analysis carries each argument to its consequence, and evaluation grows from weighing the arguments into a judgement.

Four skills woven through one response

◆ Recommended strategy



A recommended construction, not an IB template. When evaluating one option, the TSM suggests at least two arguments for and two against.

An annotated response

☐ Illustrative example

Discuss whether Juniper should sell its juices through the two supermarket chains. [10] Extracts:

Stage	Extract	Skills shown
Argument	The chains' 140 stores reach far more shoppers than three kiosks. Higher volume would spread the fixed cost of the new pressing machine over more bottles, lowering average cost, so profit could rise despite a lower price per bottle.	Knowledge, application, analysis
Counter-argument	However, the machine raises fixed costs before supermarket income arrives, and sale-or-return terms move the risk of a five-day shelf life onto Juniper: if bottles do not sell in time, returns could erase the volume gain.	Knowledge, application, analysis
Weighing	The volume gain is likely; its profit depends on bottles selling within five days, which the taste tests cannot show: 120 shoppers in two city stores are not 140 stores.	Evaluation, with a limitation
Judgement	Juniper should supply the chains, but trial a limited number of stores first and buy the machine only if bottles sell within their shelf life at the forecast rate.	A decision and its condition

When a final judgement is expected

■ IB requirement ◆ Recommended strategy

Discuss	Evaluate	To what extent	Recommend
A balanced review, with conclusions presented clearly.	An appraisal of strengths and limitations.	The merits or otherwise, with a supported conclusion.	An advisable course of action, with evidence.

Paraphrased from the IB glossary. Our reading: each expects a supported conclusion, and the strongest state the condition the decision depends on.

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5 Reaching the highest markband

What separates 7 or 8 marks from 9 or 10, and am I ready?

How the markbands progress

■ IB requirement

Strand	1 to 2	3 to 4	5 to 6	7 to 8	9 to 10
The question	Little understanding	Some understanding	Understood, partly addressed	Mostly addressed	Clear focus on its demands
Tools and theories	Little use; irrelevant or inaccurate	Mostly inaccurate or irrelevant	Some relevant, accurate use	Mostly relevant and accurate	Relevant and accurate
The case study	Little or no reference	Superficial, often only names	Beyond names, not effectively in support	Generally supports the argument	Integrated effectively in support
Arguments	None made	Mostly unsub-stantiated	Substantiated, mostly one-sided	Substantiated, some balance	Substantiated and balanced, with the limitations of the case explained

Paraphrased from the IB markbands for the 10-mark response, applied best fit; zero when the first band is not reached.

The step from 8 to 9

■ IB requirement ● Examiner emphasis

Every strand rises from 7 to 8: clear focus, evidence integrated rather than generally supportive, full balance, and an **explanation of the limitations of the case study**. Subject reports (May 2024, November 2024) state that without it, marks are limited to 8 out of 10, and later reports stress that it must show how the gap weakens the judgement, for this case.

Too generic

"We need more financial information."

Specific and explained

"The case does not say how many bottles sell within five days, so the claim that the machine pays for itself within a year may be optimistic."

Common mistakes

● Examiner emphasis

- A verdict in the introduction, then a one-sided answer.
- Theory with no case evidence: never sufficient for full marks (November 2025, Section A).
- SWOT or PEST on its own: typically the 3 to 4 band (May 2026 report).
- A one-line conclusion that repeats earlier points.

Examination checklist

◆ Recommended strategy

Reading time

- ☐ Questions first, then the case.
- ☐ Match questions to evidence.
- ☐ Notice what the case omits.

Section A

- ☐ Term and marks respected.
- ☐ Every *explain* point applied.
- ☐ Distinct evidence per point.

Section B

- ☐ Both sides developed.
- ☐ One limitation explained.
- ☐ A judgement and its condition.

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