

# Assessment

## Internal assessment details

### Mathematical exploration

**Duration: 10 to 15 hours**

**Weighting: 20%**

#### Introduction

The internally-assessed component in this course is a mathematical exploration. This is a short report written by the student based on a topic chosen by him or her, and it should focus on the mathematics of that particular area. The emphasis is on mathematical communication (including formulae, diagrams, graphs, tables and so on), with his or her own focus, with the teacher providing feedback via, for example, discussion and interview. This will allow the students to develop areas of interest to them without a time constraint as in an examination, and allow all students to experience a feeling of success.

The final report should be approximately 12-20 pages long with double line spacing. It can be either word processed or handwritten. Students should be able to explain all stages of their work in such a way that demonstrates clear understanding. While there is no requirement that students present their work in class, it should be written in such a way that their peers would be able to follow it fairly easily. The report should include a detailed bibliography, and sources need to be referenced in line with the IB academic honesty policy. Direct quotes must be acknowledged.

#### The purpose of the exploration

The aims of the Mathematics: analysis and approaches and Mathematics: applications and interpretation courses at both SL and HL are carried through into the objectives that are formally assessed as part of the course, through either written examination papers or the exploration, or both. In addition to testing the objectives of the course, the exploration is intended to provide students with opportunities to increase their understanding of mathematical concepts and processes, and to develop a wider appreciation of mathematics. These are noted in the aims of the course. It is intended that, by doing the exploration, students benefit from the mathematical activities undertaken and find them both stimulating and rewarding. It will enable students to acquire the attributes of the IB learner profile.

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The specific purposes of the exploration are to:

- develop students' personal insight into the nature of mathematics and to develop their ability to ask their own questions about mathematics
- provide opportunities for students to complete a piece of mathematical work over an extended period of time
- enable students to experience the satisfaction of applying mathematical processes independently
- provide students with the opportunity to experience for themselves the beauty, power and usefulness of mathematics
- encourage students, where appropriate, to discover, use and appreciate the power of technology as a mathematical tool
- enable students to develop the qualities of patience and persistence, and to reflect on the significance of their work
- provide opportunities for students to show, with confidence, how they have developed mathematically.

### Management of the exploration

Work on the exploration should be incorporated into the course so that students are given the opportunity to learn the skills needed. Time in class can therefore be used for general discussion of areas of study, as well as familiarizing students with the criteria. Further details on the development of the exploration are included in the teacher support material.

### Internal assessment criteria—SL and HL

The exploration is internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated by the IB using assessment criteria that relate to the objectives for mathematics.

Each exploration is assessed against the following five criteria. The final mark for each exploration is the sum of the scores for each criterion. The maximum possible final mark is 20.

**Students will not receive a grade for their mathematics course if they have not submitted an exploration.**

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|                    |                            |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Criterion A</b> | Presentation               |
| <b>Criterion B</b> | Mathematical communication |
| <b>Criterion C</b> | Personal engagement        |
| <b>Criterion D</b> | Reflection                 |
| <b>Criterion E</b> | Use of mathematics         |

## Criterion A: Presentation

| <b>Achievement level</b> | <b>Descriptor</b>   |
|--------------------------|---|
| 0                        | The exploration does not reach the standard described by the descriptors below. |
| 1                        | The exploration has some coherence or some organization.                        |
| 2                        | The exploration has some coherence and shows some organization.                 |
| 3                        | The exploration is coherent and well organized.                                 |
| 4                        | The exploration is coherent, well organized, and concise.                       |

The “presentation” criterion assesses the organization and coherence of the exploration.

A **coherent** exploration is logically developed, easy to follow and meets its aim. This refers to the overall structure or framework, including introduction, body, conclusion and how well the different parts link to each other.

A **well-organized** exploration includes an introduction, describes the aim of the exploration and has a conclusion. Relevant graphs, tables and diagrams should accompany the work in the appropriate

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place and not be attached as appendices to the document. Appendices should be used to include information on large data sets, additional graphs, diagrams and tables.

A **concise** exploration does not show irrelevant or unnecessary repetitive calculations, graphs or descriptions.

The use of technology is not required but encouraged where appropriate. However, the use of analytic approaches rather than technological ones does not necessarily mean lack of conciseness, and should not be penalized. This does not mean that repetitive calculations are condoned.

### Criterion B: Mathematical communication

| Achievement level | Descriptor  |
|-------------------|---|
| 0                 | The exploration does not reach the standard described by the descriptors below.                   |
| 1                 | The exploration contains some relevant mathematical communication which is partially appropriate. |
| 2                 | The exploration contains some relevant appropriate mathematical communication.                    |
| 3                 | The mathematical communication is relevant, appropriate and is mostly consistent.                 |
| 4                 | The mathematical communication is relevant, appropriate and consistent throughout.                |

The “mathematical communication” criterion assesses to what extent the student has:

- used appropriate mathematical language (**notation, symbols, terminology**). Calculator and computer notation is acceptable only if it is software generated. Otherwise it is expected that students use appropriate mathematical notation in their work
- defined **key terms** and variables, where required

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- used **multiple forms of mathematical representation**, such as formulae, diagrams, tables, charts, graphs and models, where appropriate
- used a **deductive method** and set out proofs logically where appropriate

Examples of level 1 can include graphs not being labelled, consistent use of computer notation with no other forms of correct mathematical communication.

Level 4 can be achieved by using only one form of mathematical representation as long as this is appropriate to the topic being explored. For level 4, any *minor* errors that do not impair clear communication should not be penalized.

### Criterion C: Personal engagement

| Achievement level | Descriptor  |
|-------------------|---|
| 0                 | The exploration does not reach the standard described by the descriptors below. |
| 1                 | There is evidence of some personal engagement.                                  |
| 2                 | There is evidence of significant personal engagement.                           |
| 3                 | There is evidence of outstanding personal engagement.                           |

The “personal engagement” criterion assesses the extent to which the student engages with the topic by exploring the mathematics and making it their own. It is not a measure of effort.

Personal engagement may be recognized in different ways. These include thinking independently or creatively, presenting mathematical ideas in their own way, exploring the topic from different perspectives, making and testing predictions. Further (but not exhaustive) examples of personal engagement at different levels are given in the teacher support material (TSM).

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There must be evidence of personal engagement demonstrated in the student's work. It is not sufficient that a teacher comments that a student was highly engaged.

Textbook style explorations or reproduction of readily available mathematics without the candidate's own perspective are unlikely to achieve the higher levels.

**Significant:** The student demonstrates authentic personal engagement in the exploration on a few occasions and it is evident that these drive the exploration forward and help the reader to better understand the writer's intentions.

**Outstanding:** The student demonstrates authentic personal engagement in the exploration in numerous instances and they are of a high quality. It is evident that these drive the exploration forward in a creative way. It leaves the impression that the student has developed, through their approach, a complete understanding of the context of the exploration topic and the reader better understands the writer's intentions.

### Criterion D: Reflection

| Achievement level | Descriptor  |
|-------------------|---|
| 0                 | The exploration does not reach the standard described by the descriptors below. |
| 1                 | There is evidence of limited reflection.  |
| 2                 | There is evidence of meaningful reflection.                                     |
| 3                 | There is substantial evidence of critical reflection.                           |

The "reflection" criterion assesses how the student reviews, analyses and evaluates the exploration. Although reflection may be seen in the conclusion to the exploration, it may also be found throughout the exploration.

Simply describing results represents **limited reflection**. Further consideration is required to achieve the higher levels.

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Some ways of showing **meaningful reflection** are: linking to the aims of the exploration, commenting on what they have learned, considering some limitation or comparing different mathematical approaches.

**Critical reflection** is reflection that is crucial, deciding or deeply insightful. It will often develop the exploration by addressing the mathematical results and their impact on the student's understanding of the topic. Some ways of showing critical reflection are: considering what next, discussing implications of results, discussing strengths and weaknesses of approaches, and considering different perspectives.

**Substantial evidence** means that the critical reflection is present throughout the exploration. If it appears at the end of the exploration it must be of high quality and demonstrate how it developed the exploration in order to achieve a level 3.

Further (but not exhaustive) examples of reflection at different levels are given in the teacher support material (TSM).

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## Criterion E: Use of mathematics—SL

| Achievement level | Descriptor  |
|-------------------|---|
| 0                 | The exploration does not reach the standard described by the descriptors below.   |
| 1                 | Some relevant mathematics is used.  |
| 2                 | Some relevant mathematics is used. Limited understanding is demonstrated.   |
| 3                 | Relevant mathematics commensurate with the level of the course is used. Limited understanding is demonstrated.  |
| 4                 | Relevant mathematics commensurate with the level of the course is used. The mathematics explored is partially correct. Some knowledge and understanding are demonstrated. |
| 5                 | Relevant mathematics commensurate with the level of the course is used. The mathematics explored is mostly correct. Good knowledge and understanding are demonstrated.    |
| 6                 | Relevant mathematics commensurate with the level of the course is used. The mathematics explored is correct. Thorough knowledge and understanding are demonstrated.       |

The “Use of mathematics” SL criterion assesses to what extent students use mathematics that is **relevant** to the exploration.



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**Relevant** refers to mathematics that supports the development of the exploration towards the completion of its aim. Overly complicated mathematics where simple mathematics would suffice is not relevant.

Students are expected to produce work that is **commensurate with the level** of the course, which means it should not be completely based on mathematics listed in the prior learning. The mathematics explored should either be part of the syllabus, or at a similar level.

A key word in the descriptor is **demonstrated**. The command term demonstrate means “to make clear by reasoning or evidence, illustrating with examples or practical application”. Obtaining the correct answer is not sufficient to demonstrate understanding (even some understanding) in order to achieve level 2 or higher.

For knowledge and understanding to be **thorough** it must be demonstrated throughout.

The mathematics can be regarded as **correct** even if there are occasional minor errors as long as they do not detract from the flow of the mathematics or lead to an unreasonable outcome.

Students are encouraged to use technology to obtain results where appropriate, but **understanding must be demonstrated** in order for the student to achieve higher than level 1, for example merely substituting values into a formula does not necessarily demonstrate understanding of the results.

The mathematics only needs to be what is required to support the development of the exploration. This could be a few small elements of mathematics or even a single topic (or sub-topic) from the syllabus. It is better to do a few things well than a lot of things not so well. If the mathematics used is relevant to the topic being explored, commensurate with the level of the course and understood by the student, then it can achieve a high level in this criterion.