How the IB will award results for the May 2021 examination session: Diploma Programme and Career-Related Programme
How the IB will award results for the May 2021 examination session: Diploma Programme and Career-Related Programme
How the IB will award results for the May 2021 examination session:
Diploma Programme and Career-Related Programme

Published February 2021

Published on behalf of the International Baccalaureate Organization, a not-for-profit educational foundation of 15 Route des Morillons, 1218 Le Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland by the
International Baccalaureate Organization (UK) Ltd
Peterson House, Malthouse Avenue, Cardiff Gate
Cardiff, Wales CF23 8GL
United Kingdom
Website: ibo.org

© International Baccalaureate Organization 2021

The International Baccalaureate Organization (known as the IB) offers four high-quality and challenging educational programmes for a worldwide community of schools, aiming to create a better, more peaceful world. This publication is one of a range of materials produced to support these programmes.

The IB may use a variety of sources in its work and checks information to verify accuracy and authenticity, particularly when using community-based knowledge sources such as Wikipedia. The IB respects the principles of intellectual property and makes strenuous efforts to identify and obtain permission before publication from rights holders of all copyright material used. The IB is grateful for permissions received for material used in this publication and will be pleased to correct any errors or omissions at the earliest opportunity.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the IB’s prior written permission, or as expressly permitted by the Rules for use of IB Intellectual Property.

IB merchandise and publications can be purchased through the IB Store (email: sales@ibo.org). Any commercial use of IB publications (whether fee-covered or commercial) by third parties acting in the IB’s ecosystem without a formal relationship with the IB (including but not limited to tutoring organizations, professional development providers, educational publishers and operators of curriculum mapping or teacher resource digital platforms etc) is prohibited and requires a subsequent written license from the IB. License requests should be sent to copyright@ibo.org. More information can be obtained on the IB public website.
IB mission statement

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.
IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

As IB learners we strive to be:

**INQUIRERS**
We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.

**KNOWLEDGEABLE**
We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.

**thinkers**
We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.

**COMMUNICATORS**
We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.

**PRINCIPLED**
We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

**OPEN-MINDED**
We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.

**Caring**
We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.

**risk-takers**
We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.

**Balanced**
We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives—intellectual, physical, and emotional—to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.

**Reflective**
We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

The IB learner profile represents 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools. We believe these attributes, and others like them, can help individuals and groups become responsible members of local, national and global communities.
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 is working hard to ensure that we provide fair and valuable certification to all students, irrespective of whether their school is able to run examinations in May 2021 or not.

The IB is providing an alternative route to awarding students with results in those schools in which examinations cannot take place, as well as supporting schools that are able to safely administer examinations.

Guiding principles for awarding grades

Approximately three quarters of students in the May 2021 session are expected to complete the reduced assessment route of coursework and examinations, while the remaining quarter 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 are guiding the IB approach to awarding in May 2021:

• 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 will be receiving the same certificate.

Most of the coursework that students completed for assessment this year will be 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, will help us 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 are able to complete the reduced 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 is easier or harder for example.

The IB expects that grade boundaries for examination papers in May 2021 will be lowered to allow May 2021 students, whose learning has been affected by COVID-19-related disruption, to achieve a distribution of grades similar to those achieved by students in previous years. Where exact placement of a grade boundary is in question, the decision will be made in candidates' favour.

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. Although it is impossible to perfectly reflect what students would have achieved in examinations without those examinations being taken, in the absence of actual exam scores, the IB will model what a student would have achieved on an “normal” exam day using their teacher’s predicted grade and combine this with the student’s coursework mark to arrive at an overall grade.
How is the IB making sure the results are the best estimation?

• The IB is supporting schools with making accurate grade predictions by providing recommended predicted grades based on three years of school student performance (wherever available).

• 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 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 include a school-submitted predicted grade element in the calculation to reflect skills and understanding that are not assessed in coursework. 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 an approach that takes this difference into account.
In the 2020 examination sessions that were disrupted by the pandemic, teachers tended to predict higher grades for their students than in previous years. This is not surprising given that teachers had 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 still endeavoured to represent what their students would achieve under optimal conditions. For May 2021 the IB is supporting the consistency and accuracy of teachers’ grade predictions through provision of guidance and recommended predicted grades. It is essential to foster a common approach among teachers to determining predicted grades, so that these grades can fairly contribute to students’ final grades.