

Best-fit approach and markbands

Assessment criteria must be used in conjunction with the relevant specific-subject interpretations as these interpretations articulate how the generic assessment criteria are understood and applied to each subject.

Levels of performance are described using multiple indicators per level. In many cases the indicators occur together throughout the essay, but not always. Also, not all indicators are always present. This means that a student can demonstrate performances that fit into different levels. To accommodate this, the IB assessment models use markbands and advise examiners and teachers to use a **best-fit approach** in deciding the appropriate mark for a particular criterion. From various assessment trials we know that introducing markbands and using the best-fit model is not always self-evident, and guidance is needed to help with their application. While the extended essay is an externally assessed component of the DP, supervisors are required to submit a predicated grade and understanding the way in which the criteria are applied by examiners will assist with the guidance given to students. The following explains how markbands are used by examiners. The aim is to find the descriptor that conveys most accurately the level attained by the student's work, using the best-fit approach. A best-fit approach means that compensation will be made when a piece of work matches different aspects of a markband at different levels. The mark awarded will be one that most fairly reflects the balance of achievement against the markband. It is not necessary for every indicator of a level descriptor to be met for that mark to be rewarded. (For example, if student work matches two of the three requirements within a markband but one is seriously lacking, the student should be awarded for the strands that have been met well, but the mark awarded should be at the lower end of the markband to compensate for what is lacking in one strand. If the level of student work spans multiple markbands, compensation depends on the performance in the higher order skills of evaluation (AO3), discussion (AO3) and analysis (AO2) (see the example below). The assessment objective levels for a given subject can be found at the back of that subject's DP subject guide.

Criterion C: Critical thinking

Research	Excellent (10–12)	Research	Good (7–9)
Analysis	Good (7–9)	Analysis	Good (7–9)
Discussion/evaluation	Adequate (4–6)	Discussion/evaluation	Adequate (4–6)
Mark awarded	8/9 (The 7–9 markband is appropriate because communication of research is a lower order skill compared to analysis and evaluation.)	Mark awarded	7 (The bottom end of the 7–9 markband is appropriate since the achievement level is lower for the higher order skill of discussion/evaluation.)

- When assessing a student's work, in light of the IB approach to positive marking, examiners will read the level descriptors from the highest markband down until they reach a descriptor that most appropriately describes the level of the work being assessed.

- If a piece of work seems to fall between two descriptors, both descriptors will be read again and the one that more appropriately describes the student's work will be chosen. In relation to criterion C, examiners will bear in mind the higher order skills being assessed.
- There are a number of marks available within a level; examiners will award the upper marks if the student's work demonstrates the qualities described to a greater extent. Examiners will award the lower marks if the student's work demonstrates the qualities described to a lesser extent.
- The highest level descriptors do not imply faultless performance and should be achievable by a student. Examiners will not hesitate to use the extremes if they are appropriate descriptions of the work being assessed.