The Business Management IA Structure (May 2024 Onward)

ibmastery.com/blog/the-business-management-ia-structure



You're in the right place.

Most of the online resources with IB Business Management IA advice are not up to date, but this one is. Here you will find all of the best tips for the Business IA, as well as exactly how to structure your work. This page is up-to-date **for students graduating on May 2024 or later**. We'll show you step-by-step, exactly what to do

First, we'll go through all of your initial decisions, so you'll have a good question and resources. Then I'll go through the actual structure of your IA and show you what to write in each section. You can always use the 'Jump to' links below to move to the part you need.

The New Business IA

The word limit is 1800 words and it's out of 25 marks. The Business Management IA requirements (and the rubric) are now the same for SL and HL students. For SL students, it's worth 30% of your final grade, but it's only worth 20% of the final grade for HL students.

In this assignment **you'll mainly rely on just 3 to 5 supporting documents to answer a question** which is related to a real organization (i.e. a business or non-profit). That question also must relate to one of the course core concepts: change, creativity, ethics or sustainability.

Choosing your organization and your issue or problem

You can choose any real organization to do your IA on. However, it shouldn't be the same one you're using for your EE (if you're doing a Business Management EE). Given all of this freedom, it can be hard to decide. I recommend choosing a company you're very interested in and asking a question you're interested in. It can take some time to figure that out, but it's very doable. Get some initial ideas down on paper and you'll probably find some overlap between your issue-interests and your organization-interests. For example, if you're interested in sustainable fashion, you can find a specific fashion company and a certain option for them, which could make their clothes more environmentally friendly.

Your question can be forward looking (i.e. “Should company X change it’s manufacturing to outsourcing”) in order to increase profitability?”) or backward looking (i.e. What was the effect on sustainability of company A using approach B?)

Two final things to consider are whether your question is related to a key concept and answerable using course tools. More on both of those below.

Choosing your Business IA Key Concept

The business research project must use only one of the four key concepts (change, creativity, ethics or sustainability) as a lens through which to analyse the IA.

One option is to include that key concept right in your question. For example, **"Should Honda invest $40 billion in Electric Vehicle research and development, to increase it's sustainability?"**

- Be careful to not include a second concept or an additional concept (ie. culture, globalisation or innovation). This would likely result in you getting zero out of 5 for Criterion A. That's the part of the rubric where you score on your insights into the key concept aspect.
- As you write, you'll want to show a deep understanding of the key concept you’ve chosen. This is more than just referring to the key concept. Instead you'll want to use the key concept as a "conceptual lens" for your analysis and again you'll want to make sure these links are clear and developed. I can talk you through this or anything else you're struggling with if you'd like to meet for a tutoring session.

Choosing your tools

The key is determining which of the tools and theories are going to help you answer your question and then using those ones well -- to clearly relevance to the research question. I've **bolded** all of those business management toolkit tools that are taught to SL and HL students, but **you should not feel limited by this list**. The key again is figuring out which

tools and theories are going to help you the most in answering your question and using those.

- **SWOT analysis**
- **Ansoff matrix**
- **STEEPLE analysis**
- **Boston Consulting Group (BCG) matrix**
- **Business plan**
- **Decision trees**
- **Descriptive statistics**. These include: Mean, Mode, Median, Bar charts, Pie charts, Infographics, Quartiles, and Standard deviation
- **Circular business models.** These include: Circular supply models, Resource recovery models, Product life extension models, Sharing models, and Product service system models.
- Force field analysis (HL only)
- Gantt chart (HL only)
- Hofstede's cultural dimensions (HL only)
- Porter's generic strategies (HL only)
- Contribution (HL only) These include: Make or buy analysis, Contribution costing, and Absorption costing
- Critical path analysis (HL only) These include: Completion and analyses of a critical path diagram (drawing of the diagram is not expected), Identification of the critical path, Calculation of free and total float.
- Simple linear regression (HL only). This includes: Scatter diagrams, Line of best fit and Correlation/Extrapolation.

Jump to: **Overview**, **Question**, **Concept**, **Tools**, **Sources**, **Structure**

Choosing Your 3 to 5 Supporting Documents

These will be where the majority of your information comes from. You'll want to choose sources which will allow you to complete 3 or 4 Business Tools, so keep that in mind when you're considering which documents to choose. Your supporting documents should also be:

- **Recent** - They must have been published within a maximum of three years prior to the submission of your research project to the IB. That means: If your final IB exams are in May of 2025, your sources can't be older than April 2022. If your final IB exams are in November 2025, your sources must be no older than October 2022.
- **Diverse** - Altogether your sources must cover a range of views and ideas. This could mean different perspectives, opinions, or focusing on different types of information.
- **Reliable** - From a reliable source

- **Detailed** - Be sufficiently in depth that you can share and explore details. Ideally the sources would do much more than include a mention of your key concept and your organization. Instead they should include a variety of data you can link to your key concept and use in 1 or 2 of your tools.
- **5 pages or shorter** - Each source should be five normal A4 pages or less. (Business Guide, P.55)
- **Highlighted** - Highlight the aspects of each document that relate to your project.
- **Translated** (if applicable) - If your document (i.e. article or video) is in a different language, all of the highlighted aspects of the document (the points you relied on for your project) need to be translated.
- **Possibly a Video or Audio file** - If you use a (reliable) video or audio file, include a transcript with the essential points of the video or audio file that you refer to in the project.
- **Traceable** - You'll need to include the source details as a citation, so keep track of where you got it from.
- **Not your textbook** - None of your 3 to 5 main sources an be your textbook or class notes.
- **Attached** to the end of your document - You'll have to your 3-5 supporting documents. You are able to use additional sources, such as your textbook or similar sources for extra information, but your IA will rely on your 3-5 supporting documents for the majority of the information.
- **Primary and/or secondary**. They can all be primary sources (i.e. an interview, a questionnaire), all be secondary sources (i.e. news articles, business accounts, or company website pages) or some combination of both.
    - Examples of primary sources:
        - Surveys. If you use surveys or questionnaires (online or face-to-face), include a blank copy of the questionnaire and a summary of the responses as a supporting document.
        - Interviews. If you use an interview (online or face-to-face), include a copy of the interview questions and a summary of the responses as a supporting document.
        - Focus groups. If you use a focus group, include a copy of the focus group questions and summary of the findings.
    - Examples of secondary sources:

      Articles (i.e. local, national or international press), Business accounts and financial reports. Business plans, Extracts from company websites, Transcripts of a relevant audio-visual file, Statistics (i.e. from the government), Journal publications, Market research surveys, and Mission statements.

Now I'll show you exactly how you can structure your IA and exactly what you should include in each section.

The Business Management IA Structure

(for May 2024 Onward)

Title Page

Include:

- Your Research Question
- Your Key Concept (Change, Creativity, Ethics or Sustainability)
- The IB Number (Something in the format "abc123" (i.e. fjk932)
- Session (i.e. May 2024)
- IA word count. (1800 words or fewer). (See the blue note at the bottom, for clarification on what words are included).
- (Also, notice that the student's name, school, candidate number and student number should not be on the cover sheet anymore).

Include:

- Introduction
- Analysis
- Conclusion
- Bibliography
- Supporting Documents

Introduction - Around 200 words

In this section, include:

- Clarify the context of your question.
- Provide brief background information about the business organisation (i.e. their name and what they do).
- State the issue or problem under investigation and how it links to your chosen key concept.
- Explain the methodology used to investigate this issue or problem. Convince us that you chose your sources thoughtfully and that they give a range of viewpoints/perspectives, which will aid your analysis.
- Use in-text citations as necessary here and in the Main Body and Conclusion sections.
- (No research proposal or executive summary are needed).

Analysis (The Main Body) - Approximately 1350 words

This is where you present your analysis (use business management tools and theories) and link this to the key concept.

In this section, make sure to:

- Present the findings and analysis from your supporting documents
- Relevant business management tools and theories including integrating the key concept. There is no set limit to the number of tools you can use for your IA. However, using 4 is often appropriate. Be careful to select tools which are definitely relevant, which will definitely help you address your research question.
- Consider using the JAM (Justification, Analysis, Mini-Conclusion) approach for your Business Management Analysis. If you do, then try to include at least one link to the key concept in each of your "Justification" and "Mini-conclusion" sections.
- As you write, comment on the reliability of your sources. Remember that we want to be convinced that you have chosen generally reliable sources. However, it can be useful to comment on the limitations of each.
- In each mini-conclusion:
    - How your insights (from course tools and theories) relate to the key concept
    - Explore what insights and themes emerge from your analysis of that tool and why and how are they helpful (or not) in answering the research question.
    - Evaluate your findings. For example, state any relevant assumptions or implications involved in your analysis
    - Synthesize your insights, from the tools and theories you've used in that section and to the insights from previous tools, if appropriate.
    - Make it really clear how the insights of your tool have been helpful (or not) in answering your research question.

Conclusion (Around 250 words)

In this section, make sure to:

- Answer your research question explicitly
- Refer to your key concept several times, showing how your insights (from course tools and theories) relate to the key concept
- Share your insights into what main themes emerge from your analysis and how these relate to your question.
- Clearly refer back to the insights from each tool and theory you have used (i.e. mention the key insights from each of your mini-conclusions) and show how these insights support your conclusion.
- Don't introduce facts or arguments that have not been discussed in previous sections of the project.
- Share some implications of your insights
- Share which aspects of the research question have not been fully answered in the project or that might need further investigation in order to be judged more effectively.
- No recommendations for the organizations are needed.

Bibliography

In this section, include:

- Include details of your 3-5 main sources and any other sources you used as well (if any).
- Ensure the reader can clearly see which reference in your bibliography refers to which supporting document. For example, “Supporting Document 1: Bezos, Jeff. Interview. Conducted by T. Woods.”
- Remember to include full referencing for the video or audio file (if you used one), so that the original source is clear.
- Sources such as textbooks and class notes should also be referenced, if they are used.
- Use a standard referencing system, such as MLA.

Supporting Documents

In this section, make sure to:

- Include your sources (i.e. articles, transcripts) after your bibliography. This can be done using embedded pictures of each page. However do ensure that all words are all clearly readable and that the highlighting can also be seen.
- Label each supporting document clearly, such as “Supporting document 1”, “Supporting document 2”, and so on.

Final things to check, before you hand in your work:

- To help with the two "Criterion G: Presentation" marks, make sure you have:
  - Included clear subheadings and page numbers, and
  - Make sure your document is easy to read (i.e. the numbers on diagrams are easy to read) and it looks professional.
- Make sure you haven't gone over the 1800 word limit. Only the first 1800 words can be marked. However, the following are not included in this word count: Acknowledgments, Contents page, Tables of statistical data, Diagrams or figures, Equations, formulae and calculations, Supporting documents, Citations (which, if used, must be in the body of the project), References (which, if used, must be in the footnotes/endnotes), and your Bibliography.