IBDP Business and Management

IA – Data Gathering and Organisation

Things to remember

- The expectation is that a student should gather **primary research** from the organisation.
- This should be supported by business theory gained from **secondary sources**.
- The appendices should contain only information/data that is required in support of the text, and should be clearly referred to at relevant points.

Collecting the Data

There are two questions that underpin this process:

1. How is the research data linked to business tools and techniques?
2. How reliable and significant is the research data?

1 - Business Tools and Techniques

The purpose of the internal assessment is to apply business tools and techniques learned in the classroom. Below is a list of potential tools that can be used to collate and organise the data for the purpose of analysis:

SWOT analysis
PEST analysis
Decision Trees
'Fishbone' analysis
Ratio analysis
Budgeting including variance analysis
Ansoff's matrix
Force Field analysis

Break-even analysis
Critical Path Analysis
The BCG matrix
Positioning maps
Porter's generic strategies
Sales Forecasting

Given the maximum word limit of 2,000 words a student should be looking to use **only 3 or 4** of these.

The data gathered can be presented in the **Appendices** and referred to in the report.

2 - Reliability and Significance

One of the worst mistakes made by students is to rely on only one source of data - usually produced by the firm they are investigating. If a single source is used there is likely to be bias.

Single sources are often in the form of a questionnaire, which may have a limited sample size and a poor sampling frame. If the data is taken from an interview or from the firm's website, it is likely that this data will be subjective and little more than PR for the firm.

The methodology should include some examination of *sampling techniques*, with the student preferably understanding the difference between a random sample and a convenience sample - the latter being where the student asks the first people who happen to pass them. Unfortunately, students perceive the latter as random, which it is not.

The way to achieve valid data is to back findings from at least one other source, either primary or secondary. Secondary data is likely to be more reliable if it has been collected by a professional organisation.

Organising the Data

The data should be arranged, presented and sourced.

Students are encouraged to use a range of presentation techniques:

- Graphs
- Photographs
- Maps
- Tables
- Bar charts, pie charts and histograms
- Calculations
- Charts
- Accounts
- Mind and position maps

All data **must be sourced**. This is evidence that the student has undertaken reliable and detailed research and avoids the accusation of plagiarism.

Data used **must** also be relevant. It is not good policy for students to 'dump' entire annual reports in the appendices.

Sourcing Secondary Data

Think OWL and MLA

Keep a record of the source you accessed/researched – you will need this later when you write your in-text references and bibliography.

- Create a 'Word' document with a table like this for book/magazines/journals etc....

Title	Author	Publisher	Year of publication	Place of publication	Page(s)

- ...and like this for electronic/internet sources...

Weblink	Author?	Last modified (copyright?)	Date you accessed it

Secondary Sources

- Textbooks
- Magazines/journals (Business Review?)
- Websites (NOT Wikipedia)
- Reports/databases
  - keynote.co.uk, datamonitor.com and mintel.com (for market/industry information)
- Company literature (end-of-year/annual reports, policies, mission statements etc.)

B Use of theoretical concepts, sources and data (written report)

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	There is no use of theoretical concepts, sources or data.
1	There is a very limited understanding of relevant theoretical concepts, and these concepts have been misused. The sources and data are irrelevant or insufficient.
2	There is a limited understanding of relevant theoretical concepts, but these have not been applied effectively. The sources and data are generally relevant, but insufficient.
3	There is an understanding of relevant theoretical concepts and evidence of some of them being applied effectively. The sources and data are relevant and sufficient.
4	There is an understanding of relevant theoretical concepts and evidence of them being applied effectively. The sources and data are relevant and sufficient. There is some evidence of the sources and data being used effectively and related to the theoretical framework.
5	There is an in-depth understanding of relevant theoretical concepts and consistent evidence of them being applied effectively. The sources and data are relevant and sufficient. There is consistent evidence of the sources and data being used effectively and integrated with the theoretical framework.

Checklist for data collection:

	Yes/No?
• Is there sufficient data, and is it balanced?	
• Is there both primary and secondary data?	
• Is there an adequate explanation of methodology e.g. sampling techniques?	
• Has the data been properly sourced?	
• Is the data adequately organised and presented?	
• Is the data relevant to the topic under investigation?	