

Clarification about Grading the IB Diploma Programme Visual Arts Course 2027

There Is No “Magical 7”

First, let’s be clear:

There is no secret formula.

There is no perfect number of artworks.

There is no “IB trick.”

A **7** simply means that your work consistently meets the **highest descriptors in each assessment criterion**, across multiple components.

And as an 11th Grade - Year 1 of the Programme, you are not finished with those components. Your final grade is based on **three assessment components**, so your predicted grade **cannot be granted a “7”**.

How IB Actually Assesses You (New 2027 Guide)

Your final grade is based on **three assessment components**.

Each component has its own criteria and maximum marks.

1. Art-Making Inquiry Portfolio

External Assessment

This shows your experimentation, development, investigation, and refinement.

Assessment Criteria:

- Criterion A: Exploration and experimentation - Max. Mark/Grade - 8
- Criterion B: Practical investigation - Max. Mark/Grade - 8
- Criterion C: Lines of inquiry - Max. Mark/Grade - 8
- Criterion D: Critical review - Max. Mark/Grade - 8

Each criterion is marked out of **8 marks**.

Maximum total: 32 marks

2. Connections Study (SL)

External Assessment

This shows how you connect ideas, artists, contexts, and your own intentions.

SL – Connections Study

Criteria assess:

- A: Connections with context(s) - Max. Mark/Grade - 8
- B: Connections with artworks - Max. Mark/Grade - 8
- C: Investigation of cultural significance - Max. Mark/Grade - 8
- Each criterion is marked out of **8 marks**.

Maximum total: 24 marks

HL – Artist Project

Criteria assess:

- A: Proposal—up to three screens, maximum 500 words - Max. Mark/Grade - 8
- B: Connections—up to four screens, maximum 1,000 words - Max. Mark/Grade - 8
- C: Dialogues—up to two screens, maximum 500 words - Max. Mark/Grade - 6
- D: Curation and realization in context—up to three minutes of video - Max. Mark/Grade - 10
- E: Post-production evaluation—up to two screens, maximum 300 words - Max. Mark/Grade - 4
- F: Future development—up to one screen, maximum 200 words - Max. Mark/Grade - 4

Maximum total: 40 marks

3. Selected Resolved Artworks

Internal Assessment (moderated by IB)

This is your curated body of finished works. Please note that the marks/grades are different for SL & HL Students.

Criteria assess for SL Students:

- A: Coherence of body of artworks - Max. Mark/Grade - 8
- B: Conceptual realization - Max. Mark/Grade - 12
- C: Technical resolution - Max. Mark/Grade - 4

Maximum total: 32 marks

Criteria assess for HL Students:

- A: Coherence of body of artworks - Max. Mark/Grade - 8
- B: Conceptual realization - Max. Mark/Grade - 12
- C: Technical resolution - Max. Mark/Grade - 12
- D: Understanding of artistic context - Max. Mark/Grade - 8

Maximum total: 40 marks

What This Means

Your final IB grade (1-7) is based on:

- The total marks across components
- The weighting of each component
- Grade boundaries set by IB globally

A 7 is awarded only when a student:

- Consistently meets the highest markband descriptors
- Demonstrates sustained conceptual depth
- Shows technical control
- Makes intentional curatorial decisions
- Clearly articulates inquiry and reflection
- Connects research meaningfully to practice

It is not about talent.

It is about sustained, documented evidence.

Why a Predicted 7 Is Not Realistic Right Now

At this stage:

- You have not completed your Art-Making Inquiry Portfolio.
- You have not finalized your Connections Study / Artist Project.

- You have not resolved your final Selected Artworks.
- You have not curated your final exhibition body of work.

A predicted 7 requires:

- ***Evidence across ALL components***
- ***Final resolved artworks***
- ***Completed documentation***
- ***Clear sustained inquiry from start to finish***

Right now, you are still in development.

You cannot predict a final grade based on unfinished evidence.

That would not be fair, accurate, or aligned with IB standards.

The Truth About the “7”

A 7 is not magic.

A 7 is not personality.

A 7 is not “I worked hard.”

A 7 is not “my art looks good.”

A 7 is:

Sustained, documented, critically engaged, coherent artistic inquiry across time.

And that takes completion.

The Better Question

Instead of asking:

“How do I get a 7?”

Ask:

“What evidence am I building this week?”

Because **IB grades evidence, not potential.**

The Weighting of Each Component

Not all components count the same.

IB assigns a percentage weight to each one.

For example:

Art-Making Inquiry Portfolio → 40%

Artist Project (HL) → 30%

Connections Study (SL) → 20%

Selected Resolved Artworks → 40%

(Exact percentages depend on SL vs HL.)

So even if you do very well in one component, if another component is weak, your overall grade changes. This is why there is no “magic 7.” You must perform strongly across components.

Grade Boundaries Set Globally by IB

After all students worldwide are marked:

IB analyzes global performance.

They set **grade boundaries**.

Example (hypothetical):

- 80–100 = Grade 7

- 70–79 = Grade 6
- 60–69 = Grade 5

These boundaries change every year.

So:

There is no fixed number that always equals a 7.

It depends on global performance and statistical analysis.

But the grade number are different when sum up the three components, so the grade boundaries might look like this:

Example (Hypothetical Numbers)

HL (Out of 112)

Maybe the boundary ends up like:

- 92–112 = 7
- 81–91 = 6
- 69–80 = 5
etc.

SL (Out of 88)

Maybe the boundary ends up like:

- 73–88 = 7
- 63–72 = 6
- 53–62 = 5
etc.

Notice something?

Both are roughly around the same **percentage range** — but different raw totals.

That's because HL has more assessment components and more marks available.

Raw Marks Are NOT Compared Directly

HL students are **only compared to HL students globally**.

SL students are **only compared to SL students globally**.

They are never mixed.

So:

- HL grade boundaries are calculated out of 112.
- SL grade boundaries are calculated out of 88.

Two completely separate statistical groups.

Grade Boundaries Are Percent-Based (Not Fixed Numbers)

IB does NOT say:

“80 marks = 7 every year.”

Instead, they analyze:

- Global performance
- Distribution of marks
- Difficulty of the session
- Statistical modeling
- Senior examiner recommendations

Then they set boundaries that reflect performance.

Who Marks Your Work?

Your Teacher

- Assesses internal components (like Selected Resolved Artworks)
- Predicts grades
- Applies the official IB criteria

But your teacher does NOT decide your final grade alone.

External Examiner

- Mark your externally assessed components
- Apply IB criteria
- Follow strict markscheme guidance

They are trained and standardized.

Principal Examiner

- Leads the subject globally
- Trains examiners
- Creates standardization materials
- Ensures marking consistency
- Reviews borderline cases

They are responsible for maintaining fairness across countries.

What Is Moderation?

Moderation ensures fairness.

It checks:

- Is this teacher marking too high?
- Is this teacher marking too low?
- Are the criteria applied correctly?

Moderation is not random guessing.

It is statistical and evidence-based.

If most trained examiners apply the criteria and consistently land in the 6 markband, and one mark is dramatically different (like a 3), that mark would be reviewed because it does not align with the descriptors or global standard.

The key idea:

IB looks for consistency with criteria, not majority vote.

What Is Most Likely to Happen?

If several trained examiners, using the same criteria, independently place work in the top markband:

That means the work clearly meets that descriptor level.

If one mark is drastically different, it gets reviewed.

But the final mark is based on:

- Criteria descriptors
- Evidence in the work
- Examiner standardization

- Principal examiner oversight
- Global moderation

Not on averaging random opinions.

Your grade is not:

- A popularity contest
- A guessing game
- A secret formula
- Or one person's mood

It is:

- Criteria-based
- Standardized
- Moderated
- Statistically analyzed
- Globally aligned

And that is why predicting a 7 before all components are finished is unrealistic.

Because the system evaluates completed, moderated, standardized evidence, not potential.

**Reference: IBDP Visual Arts Guide - First Assessment 2027, International Baccalaureate, 2025*

<https://resources.ibo.org/dp/subject/Visual-arts-2027/?lang=en> Accessed on 03/02/2026.