The
POST OAK
SCHOOL

Guide to the Upper Level High School Program

Welcome to the *Guide to the Upper Level High School Program at The Post Oak School*. In the High School division of The Post Oak School, "Upper Level" refers to the 11th and 12th grades. This guide is intended to inform students and their parents/guardians about the following aspects of the Upper Level Program:

1. its design and goals,
2. the opportunities and requirements students encounter,
3. and the specific courses students can take.

In the back of this guide is a *Course Selection Form* to be filled out by the student and his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) prior to the beginning of the junior year.

Post Oak is one of the very few high schools in the country that provides a high quality, intentionally designed Montessori education all the way from infancy through the 12th grade, so if you are a Post Oak student, congratulations!

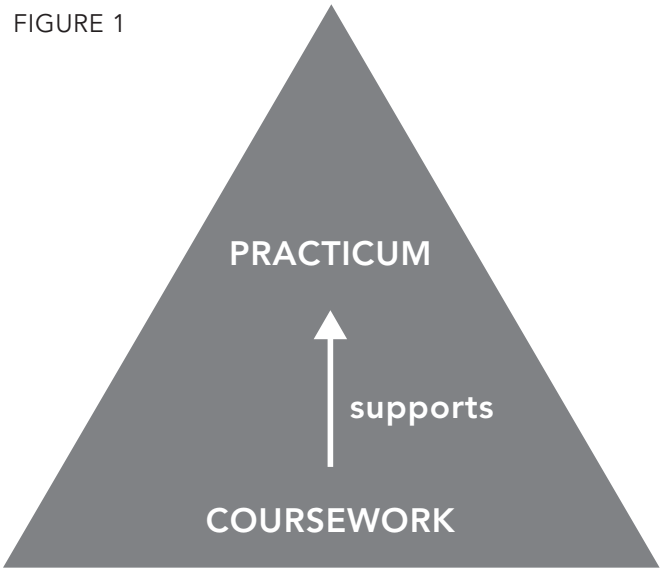
Part I—Montessori Education at Post Oak

The Upper Level curriculum represents the final phase of a complete and cohesive program of education that starts at infancy. It is therefore helpful to consider the program of the last two years of high school within the design of the whole school program and then within the four-year high school program. Here is the mission statement of The Post Oak School:

> The Post Oak School is a diverse and welcoming Montessori community that honors and guides lifelong learners as they create their own bold pathways in leading purposeful lives.

Maria Montessori believed that an educational program should be designed to meet the developmentally characteristic needs of students. In other words, school should provide students with just the right learning environment they need to grow. Students construct their own personalities through the experiences and work they do within the learning environment. What is "just the right learning environment" changes over time as infants grow to be children and children grow to be adolescents.

FIGURE 1



The High School division of The Post Oak School was built around the understanding that the needs of older adolescents include the following:

- a safe, nurturing, and diverse community of peers,
- an abundant supply of opportunities for meaningful engagement with the real world,
- and ready access to experts with the knowledge and skills students need to support that engagement.

The goal is to enable students to achieve the skills necessary for life as independent adults and the sense of purpose necessary to make a meaningful contribution to a sustainable world. To achieve this, students need to be given the opportunity to test out their own ability to be independent, and they need to be given a wide range of experiences in the real world so that they can discover the things they love to do and start to develop those passions as talents.

"Meaningful engagement with the real world" begins with the experiences students have. Academic coursework serves both to introduce students to the real world through a series of key experiences that open the doors to new and more profound areas of knowledge and to provide them with the general knowledge and skills they need to explore further and get involved. All students in the High School division pursue a general course of study appropriate to an age in which the brain continues to mature and undergo transformative developments. While every student has an individual path to learning and a unique neurodevelopmental profile, continual exposure to key experiences in the fundamental areas of human knowledge remains critical to ensuring that each student has the opportunity to establish a fully-rounded personality. Thus all students in the High School division take courses in English language arts, a second language, history and social sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, and the arts, as well as critical thinking (metacognition). Throughout their high school years, students' coursework supports and enhances their ability to go out and get involved with our partner

institutions doing meaningful work in the Houston Museum District and beyond (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 graphically illustrates how coursework forms the foundation for the work students do in the community. While the coursework that forms the base of the pyramid is typically required, the tip of the pyramid represents the great variety of opportunities that Post Oak can provide for students to pursue their own interests outside the school. Real-world **practicum** could include student endeavors as diverse as working as a lab or office intern, museum docent, or research, teaching, or coaching assistant. Practicum could also include more personal projects, such as writing for publication, giving musical or poetry performances, or campaigning to raise awareness on a social issue. What all practicum will have in common is potential (1) for growth in the student and (2) to have a positive impact on the world outside the school. Coursework represents the requirements of the school in that students must demonstrate mastery over a number of academic standards in order to earn credit towards graduation. Practicum represents the opportunity for students to develop their own talents and make their own impact on the world, and the only requirement associated with this work is to adequately document and reflect on it. J-Term and M-Term elective courses[1] serve as both coursework and practicum, often including both foundational skill-building and the opportunity to apply it in the field. Like other coursework, J- and M-Term courses must be passed for credit. **Documentation** and **reflection** on individual work is a requirement of every J- or M-Term course.

Part II—Design of the Upper Level Program

The preceding comments regarding the High School division as a whole also apply when students transition to the Upper Level of the High School. The self-constructing work students do continues to include both coursework requirements and practicum opportunities, and they continue to enroll in J- and M-Term electives. However, as students' general knowledge-base becomes deeper, specialization becomes more desirable and necessary, so

FIGURE 2: THE TRANSITION FROM LOWER TO UPPER LEVEL COURSES

LOWER LEVEL COURSES	UPPER LEVEL COURSES
English Language Arts	Language and Literature SL or HL
Spanish or Mandarin Chinese	Spanish or Mandarin Chinese SL or HL
Integrated History and Social Sciences	Economics in Historical Context HL Global Politics in Historical Context HL
Natural Sciences	Biology SL or HL Chemistry SL or HL Computer Science SL and HL Physics SL
Math	Math Applications SL Math Analysis SL or HL
Arts (Design Tech, Music, Theater, and Visual Arts)	Film SL or HL Music SL or HL Theater SL or HL Visual Arts SL or HL

1 The J- and M-Terms are mini-semesters in which every student studies intensively in a single course of his or her choosing. J-Term spans the first three weeks of school following the winter break, typically the first through third weeks of January. M-Term spans the first two weeks of school following spring break, typically the last week of March and the first week of April. Each September, students make their J- and M-Term course selections for that academic year.

there are more choices to be made regarding coursework, namely in the social sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, and the arts. Figure 2 shows how the courses change as one transitions from the Lower to the Upper Level.

The Upper Level often has course options where the Lower Level had none. Students in the Upper Level take a course in each of the six main disciplinary areas.

For students who wish to take a third language, a second social science, or second natural science, it is permitted to drop the arts requirement to allow them to take a second class in one of those areas.

Additionally, students now have the choice to take certain courses at **SL (standard level)** or **HL (higher level)**, which represents a more advanced and more rigorous course of study. Other courses are offered only at SL or HL. Students must take at least three courses at HL.

In addition to continuing to engage in practicum opportunities and enrolling in J- and M-Term elective courses, students take a half-credit course on metacognition entitled, Theory of Knowledge (TOK), and write an Extended Essay (EE). The EE is a required project in which students hone their research skills and develop their knowledge base in a disciplinary area of special personal interest.

In the four-year High School division, student progress is assessed by Post Oak faculty to determine whether credits have been earned towards The Post Oak School diploma, which is awarded at the end of the senior year. The following are the **requirements for The Post Oak School diploma**:

- English Language Arts & Language and Literature: 4 Credits
- Second Languages: 4 Credits
- Humanities and Social Sciences: 4 Credits
- Natural Sciences: 4 Credits
- Mathematics: 4 Credits
- Arts: 4 Credits
- Theory of Knowledge: 2 Credits
- J-Term and M-Term Courses: 4 Credits
- Physical Fitness: 2 Credits
- Extended Essay: Satisfactory Completion
- Creativity, Activity, and Service: Satisfactory Completion

Since 2014, Post Oak has been authorized to implement the **International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP)** at the Upper Level. A look at the **IB mission statement** should make it clear why the partnership with IB is a natural one:

> 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.

The mission of promoting caring, curious, and engaged learners who can help to create a more peaceful world is a striking similarity between the two organizations.

Upper Level courses are designed for students to meet the requirements both for the Post Oak diploma and for the IB diploma. As mentioned above, student progress is assessed by Post Oak faculty to determine whether credits have been earned towards The Post Oak School diploma. Certain coursework components are also moderated or assessed by IB readers external to The Post Oak School. Furthermore, a set of exams are taken in May of the senior year that are assessed only by external IB readers. These final exams are a required part of the Upper Level courses.[2] Students who have elected to take more than three courses at HL will choose which three exams they wish to take at HL and take the rest of their exams at SL. A student's performance on the course components and exams moderated or assessed by IB readers will determine whether the student meets the requirements of the IB diploma.

The Post Oak School diploma and the IB diploma are mutually independent degrees. Successful attainment of the IB diploma is not necessary to earn The Post Oak School diploma, nor does attainment of the IB diploma imply that the requirements of the Post Oak diploma have been met.

2 The exam period may be modified for students who choose to take the Capstone Project Option (see Appendix A).

The following are the **requirements for award of the IB two-year diploma**:

- The student must complete all IB-moderated or -assessed course components for the six subjects, Theory of Knowledge, and the Extended Essay.
- The six subjects are scored by IB readers on a scale of 1 through 7. The student must score at least 12 points total on the three HL subjects and at least 9 points total on the three SL subjects.
- The student must not score a 1 on any subject, she must not score a 2 in more than two subjects, and she must not score a 3 in more than three subjects.
- Theory of Knowledge and the Extended Essay are scored on a scale of A through E. The student must not score an E on either of the two. The scores are combined according to the table given in Appendix A to generate a point score from 0–3.
- The student's total points must add to 24 or more.
- During the 11th and 12th grade years, the student's practicum documentation and reflection must demonstrate achievement of the "Seven Learning Outcomes for Practicum at the Upper Level." These outcomes can be found in Appendix B. This satisfies the IB requirement for Creativity, Activity, and Service (CAS).

If you have further questions about the Upper Level program, please contact:

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Part III—Course Descriptions

Students take courses in six different disciplinary areas:

1. English Language Arts
2. Second Language
3. History and Social Sciences
4. Natural Sciences
5. Mathematics
6. The Arts

All courses are two years in length. Senior exams are administered in May of the senior year.

Additionally, all students take the Theory of Knowledge course and write the Extended Essay.

1. ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Language and Literature SL introduces students to the study of a wide range of literary and non-literary texts in a variety of media. By examining communicative acts across literary form and textual type alongside appropriate secondary readings, students will investigate the nature of language itself and the ways in which it shapes and is influenced by identity and culture. Approaches to study in the course are meant to be wide ranging and can include literary theory, sociolinguistics, media studies, and critical discourse analysis among others.

Language and Literature HL students study an additional two literary texts over the two-year course and write an additional 1,200–1,500 word literary analysis.

2. SECOND LANGUAGE

At the Upper Level, there are two levels of Chinese: Ab Initio and Standard Level.

Ab initio Mandarin Chinese is for students with little or no experience of the language. Through the development of receptive, productive and interactive skills, students develop the ability to respond and interact appropriately in a defined range of everyday situations. The course is organized into three themes: individual and society, leisure and work, and urban and rural environment.

Assessments include a presentation and follow-up questions based on a visual stimulus, a written assignment integrating receptive and productive skills, and a general conversation with the teacher based in part on the written assignment. The senior exams require students to demonstrate understanding of authentic print texts and produce two short writing exercises.

Mandarin Chinese SL is for students with two or more years of experience in the language. Interactive, productive, and receptive skills are developed through contextualized study of language, texts, and themes. The core themes of the course are communication and media, global issues, and social relationships, and there are also two further themes covered.

Assessments include a written assignment integrating assessment of receptive and productive skills, an individual oral based on the further themes, and an interactive oral based on the three core themes. The senior exams require students to demonstrate understanding of authentic print texts based on the core themes and productive skills in a writing based on the further themes.

At the Upper Level, there are three different levels of Spanish: Ab Initio SL, SL, and HL.

Ab Initio Spanish

This course is for students with up to one year of experience in Spanish. It is organized into three themes: individual and society, leisure and work, and urban and rural environment. The main focus is on language acquisition and development of language skills, achieved through the study and use of a range of written and spoken material. The material used is appropriate for each student to develop mastery of language skills and a strong intercultural understanding.

Assessments include an individual 10-minute oral presentation based on a visual stimulus and the Written Assignment, demonstrating intercultural understanding. The senior exams assess reading comprehension and writing skills.

Spanish SL is for students with two or more years of experience. The core themes of the course are social relationships including social and religious celebrations, taboos, friendships, and family; communication and media including advertising, radio, television, and the internet; and global issues including migration, poverty, politics, and ecology. Further themes of the course are customs and traditions including visual arts, music, dance, etiquette, protocol, and food; cultural diversity including beliefs, values, and norms; and language diversity and preservation.

Assessments include an individual oral presentation based on one of the further themes, an interactive oral activity based on the core themes, and a written exercise and rationale based on intertextual reading. The senior exams assess reading comprehension and writing skills.

Spanish HL is for students with two or more years of experience who would like to go deeper in the study of the language. In addition to the topics and assessments described for the Spanish SL course, HL students complete an additional assessment consisting of a 150 to 250 word paper that is a reasoned response to a prompting text dealing with a topic linked to the core themes and a creative writing task of 500 to 600 words linked to one of the two works of literature read in class and a 150-word rationale. The two works of literature studied are *Como agua para chocolate by Laura Esquivel* and *El coronel no tiene quién le ascribe* by Gabriel García Marquez.

3. HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

At the Upper Level, there are two different tracks students can choose to take: Economics in Historical Context (EHC) and Global Politics in Historical Context (GPHC). Studying the social sciences in historical context demonstrates for students how politics and economics are inextricably intertwined in human affairs, and students in both EHC and GPHC will gain an enhanced understanding of the significance of events by sharing their perspectives. Ultimately, both EHC and GPHC are designed to provide students with the experiences and tools they need to become active, ethical, and efficacious citizens of the world.

Economics in Historical Context HL introduces students to the study of the ways society deals with human needs and wants in the context of the material environment. Economics encompasses two broad theoretical perspectives.

Microeconomics models variables affecting individuals, firms and markets. Macroeconomics models variables affecting countries, governments and societies. Combining these two perspectives are the separate sub-disciplines of International Economics and Development Economics. Together these four subjects comprise the main units covered over two years in EHC. As a social science, much of the evidence underpinning Economic theories comes from the study of the human past, or history. Thus, in EHC, economic concepts and theories are presented in the context of key historical events.

Assessments include creation of a portfolio of three commentaries based on different sections of the syllabus and on published media reports. The senior exams are comprised of an extended response paper divided into sections on microeconomics and macroeconomics, a data response paper with sections on international and development economics, and questions involving quantitative skills.

Global Politics in Historical Context HL gives students the historical and conceptual knowledge they need to comprehend the complex challenges of our ever-more interconnected and fast-changing world and the skills they need to make a difference in it as active global citizens. Through studies of historical and current events, students learn how political controversies derive from the diverse interests, preferences, and identities of individuals and groups. A grounding in history, political philosophy, and political science gives students the tools necessary to analyze problems and envision positive action steps. The skills of engaged citizenship are fostered through action-oriented case studies of global political challenges at the international, national, local, and communal levels.

Assessments included student exploration of a self-chosen political issue through engagement and research to produce a written report. Students also conduct two case studies on different global political challenges and deliver 10-minute oral presentations on each. The senior exams are comprised of a stimulus-based set of four structured questions on core subject matter and three essays, each from a different core unit.

4. NATURAL SCIENCES

Biology SL covers many major concepts in biology, including cells, basic biochemistry, genetics, ecology, evolution, human health, and physiology. We will also cover two topics in more depth: behavioral neurobiology and conservation ecology. Field studies, laboratory exercises, and the students' own self-directed work aim to enable students to apply their knowledge and skills in the lab and the field. They will come to understand biological issues from the local to the global.

Assessments include an interdisciplinary activity in which students analyze a common topic or problem collaboratively with an emphasis on the process rather than the product of scientific investigation. The senior exams are comprised of 30 multiple-choice questions on the core topics, a data-based question, several short-answer questions on core topics, an essay on the core topics, and several short-answer questions on each of the two further topics.

Biology HL covers all of the same topics as SL as well as nucleic acids and proteins, cell respiration and photosynthesis, genetics, human physiology, and health.

The senior exams differ from SL only in that there are 40 multiple-choice questions, with 20 on the HL-only topics.

Chemistry SL is designed to inspire scientific curiosity and drive home the idea that chemistry is everywhere in our surroundings. Students will make observations, ask questions, and make connections between macroscopic phenomena and atomic interactions. We will reinforce math and science concepts learned in previous study and build upon them. In this course, we will cover the basics of atomic and molecular structure, bonding, chemical reactions, and the periodic table. Topics will be introduced in a historical and contemporary context, promoting an understanding of how chemistry plays a role in global issues. Once students establish foundational knowledge in chemistry, we will tackle advanced concepts including organic chemistry, redox chemistry, and materials chemistry.

The course will be comprised of lectures, independent research, and laboratory activities, with an emphasis on learning safe laboratory practices and use of material safety data sheets (MSDS). Students will be assessed on both

mathematical and conceptual understanding, and each student will have the opportunity to explore a topic of their own interest. Students will also gain exposure to the greater scientific community by developing their science reading and writing skills.

Chemistry HL challenges students to expand upon each topic covered in SL. HL students will learn about advanced analytical techniques and complex reaction mechanisms. Advanced topics will be introduced in the context of current research and will serve as a deep dive into reading and comprehending scientific journal articles.

Computer Science SL or HL students gain an understanding of the fundamental concepts of computational thinking, as well as knowledge of how computers and other digital devices operate. Students study how computer science interacts with and influences culture, individual and social behavior, and relevant ethical issues. The course aims to introduce students to a wide spectrum of knowledge underpinned by conceptual thinking, and enables and empowers innovation, exploration, and the acquisition of further knowledge.

Assessments require students to demonstrate the personal skills of cooperation and perseverance, as well as appropriate technical skills for effective problem-solving in developing computational solutions.

Physics SL introduces students to the core elements of physics, including measurements, mechanics, thermal physics, waves, electricity and magnetism, gravitation, particle physics, and energy production. Students demonstrate knowledge of and apply the concepts, terminology, methodologies, and techniques of physics and experience how physicists work and communicate with each other. They analyze and evaluate hypotheses and primary and secondary data, and they formulate scientific explanations of their observations.

Assessments include computer simulations and data-gathering exercises, such as data analysis exercises and general lab work. Students enrolling in Physics SL must also be concurrently enrolled in either Math Analysis SL or HL.

5. MATHEMATICS

Math Applications SL recognizes the increasing role that mathematics and technology play in a diverse range of fields in a data-rich world. As such, it emphasizes the meaning of mathematics in context by focusing on topics that are often used as applications or in mathematical modelling. To give this understanding a firm base, this course also includes topics that are traditionally part of a pre-university mathematics course such as calculus and statistics. The course makes extensive use of technology to allow students to explore and construct mathematical models. Students will develop mathematical thinking, often in the context of a practical problem and using technology to justify conjectures.

Math Analysis SL offers students a liberal variety of math topics providing a solid foundation of knowledge to support study in higher mathematics. The coursework covers topics in precalculus, calculus, trigonometry, and statistics. The focus is mostly on pure mathematics, although applications are explored through various in-class investigations. Each student will choose a topic commensurate with the work of the course on which to write a research paper during their senior year. Students enrolling in Math Analysis SL must have completed and passed Integrated Math 3 before the beginning of their junior year.

Math Analysis HL caters to students with a solid background in mathematics who are competent in a variety of analytical and technical skills. The majority of students in this course will be expecting to go on to study higher math topics as a major component of their university studies, although students with simply a strong interest in mathematics who enjoy the mental challenges it offers may take this subject. The coursework includes all of the topics covered in Math Analysis SL, along with deeper investigations into the major topics. Students enrolling in Math Analysis HL must have completed and passed Integrated Math 4 before the beginning of their junior year.

6. THE ARTS

Film SL aims to develop students as proficient interpreters and makers of film texts. Through the study and analysis of film texts, and through practical exercises in film production,

the film course develops students' critical abilities and their appreciation of artistic, cultural, historical and global perspectives in film. Students examine film concepts, theories, practices and ideas from multiple perspectives, challenging their own viewpoints and biases in order to understand and value those of others.

Film students experiment with film and multimedia technology, acquiring the skills and creative competencies required to successfully communicate through the language of the medium. They develop an artistic voice and learn how to express personal perspectives through film.

The film course emphasizes the importance of working collaboratively. It focuses on the international and intercultural dynamic that triggers and sustains contemporary film, while fostering in students an appreciation of the development of film across time, space and culture. Film students are challenged to understand alternative views, to respect and appreciate the diverse cultures that exist within film, and to have open and critical minds.

At the core of the Film course lies the need for creative exploration and innovation. Students are challenged to acquire and develop critical thinking, reflective analysis and the imaginative synthesis that is achieved through practical engagement in the art, craft and study of film.

Film HL students complete all of the same work as SL students, but with one added element. HL students work collaboratively to create an original, completed film.

Music SL provides experiences in all aspects of music performance and creation. The course covers music history, music theory, and various exploration activities which will enhance each student's knowledge of music. Particular emphasis is placed on studying the interactions of different styles of music across different cultures and historical eras, gaining perspective on how music serves as both a support and reflection of the human spirit/condition.

Assessments include formal analyses of musical works and the submission of performance recordings, compositions, and essays for final assessment. In May of the senior year, students sit for a listening exam comprised of four musical perception questions.

Music HL covers all of the same topics and requires all of the same assessments as SL. The listening exam is longer and there are more required recordings and compositions.

Theater SL provides an environment to explore theater with an open mind, expressive body, and caring heart. Students in the first year explore the origins and development of theatre in the world through research and observing plays. Students participate in vocal and physical work to become more effective communicators. Second year work leads to thoughtful risk in a final live performance piece involving exploration of dramaturgy, technical theatre, and playwriting.

Assessments include a director's notebook, developing ideas regarding how a play text could be staged for an audience, a research presentation, outlining and physically demonstrating research into a convention of a theater tradition, and a collaborative project, creating and presenting an original piece of theater for and to a specified target audience.

Theater HL covers all of the same topics and requires all of the same assessments as SL. In addition, each student creates and presents a solo theater piece based on an aspect of theater theory.

Visual Art SL is an exploration and production of visual art within the student's own and other cultural context. The content of the course is assessed on three components: visual inquiry including exploration, investigation, research and experimenting within the context of the process portfolio; comparative study including comparison of two or more artists' work in a written document supported with illustrations and photos; and visual art exhibit—video documentation including studio art work, a diagram for the exhibit, and text in a written curatorial format.

Visual Art HL covers all of the same topics and requires all of the same assessments as SL as well as a larger exhibit and process portfolio.

THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXTENDED ESSAY

Theory of Knowledge (TOK) gives students the opportunity to step back from the continuous acquisition of knowledge that characterizes the greater part of their coursework in order to engage in a critical inquiry into the nature of knowledge itself. This unique course is organized around a series of probing questions, including "What counts as knowledge?", "How does knowledge grow?", and "What are the limits of knowledge?" Students investigate a variety of ways of knowing, such as reason, sense perception, language, and faith, and investigate how each contributes to areas of systematically shared knowledge, such as the arts, history, natural sciences, religious knowledge systems, and ethics.

In spring of the junior year, students create a presentation (approximately 10 minutes per student) on a particular knowledge issue. In spring of the senior year, students compose an essay of 1,200 to 1,600 words on a prescribed topic.

The **Extended Essay (EE)** is an in-depth study of a focused topic chosen from the list of approved DP subjects—normally one of the student's six chosen subjects for the IB diploma. It is intended to promote high-level research and writing skills, intellectual discovery, and creativity. The EE provides students with an opportunity to engage in personal research in a topic of their own choice, under the guidance of a supervisor (a teacher in the school). This leads to a major piece of formally presented, structured writing, in which ideas and findings are communicated in a reasoned and coherent manner, appropriate to the subject chosen. It is recommended that completion of the written essay is followed by a short, concluding interview with the supervisor. The extended essay is a formal piece of scholarship containing no more than 4,000 words and is the result of approximately 40 hours of work by the student.

CREATIVITY, ACTIVITY, AND SERVICE (CAS)

Creativity, Activity, and Service (CAS) is not a class but rather an opportunity for students to reflect on all of the things they do outside of school. Completion of CAS is based on student achievement of the seven CAS learning outcomes (see Appendix C). Through their CAS portfolio, students provide the school with evidence demonstrating achievement of each learning outcome.

Students engage in CAS experiences involving one or more of the three CAS strands. Further, students undertake a CAS project of at least one month's duration that challenges them to show initiative, demonstrate perseverance, and develop skills such as collaboration, problem-solving, and decision-making. Students use the CAS stages (investigation, preparation, action, reflection, and demonstration) as a framework for CAS experiences and the CAS project.

CAS emphasizes reflection, which is central to building a deep and rich experience in CAS. Reflection informs students' learning and growth by allowing them to explore ideas, skills, strengths, limitations, and areas for further development and consider how they may use prior learning in new contexts.

Appendix A—Capstone Project Option

At Post Oak we conceive of education as a process by which students build their personalities by pursuing their own intrinsic motivations to learn and grow. Mature adolescents find motivation in tasks that allow them to express themselves, make an impact in the real world, and make connections to their life goals beyond high school.

For many seniors, completing the requirements for the IB Diploma Program, including sitting for the Senior Exams in May **("The DP Path"),** match with their goals and provide a worthy source of motivation as they finish out their high school careers. The IB Diploma, if it is achieved, serves as a globally recognized honor that will have a permanent place on their résumé, and students may earn college credits while still in high school.

For other seniors, the prospect of spending April and May prepping for and sitting for exams, does not feel like the most engaging use of their time. Such students may identify a more transformative (and no less challenging) project to conclude their senior year. For these seniors, the alternative path is **The Capstone Project (CP) Path.**

Students in good academic standing on Nov. 15, meaning they are passing all classes and have completed their Extended Essay, are qualified to take the CP Path. No one is required to take the CP Path—this is a voluntary option for students who prefer completing a passion project over pursuing the IB Diploma.

CP Path students' graduation requirements differ from those following the DP Path *only* in that:

1. They are not required to attend April review sessions or sit for the May exams (This does not mean they are excused from school during this period.)
2. They must complete the Capstone Project Plan of Work with a passing mark (pass/fail)

Taking the CP Path does not change any other graduation requirements. Students choosing to take the CP Path continue to take the same academic courses as DP Path students. Academic courses are still taught at the indicated level of rigor, include all IB-specified components, and appear as IB courses on the student's Post Oak transcript. (However, the student will not receive an IB Diploma.)

Requirements of a Capstone Project

- Requires synthesis of key skills and knowledge acquired during high school
- Focuses on an established personal interest
- Has a real-world impact
- Involves direction by a Post Oak faculty supervisor
- Includes consultation and/or collaboration with outside expert(s) beyond the Post Oak supervisor
- Represents a completed project of about 60 hours of work.

Examples of Possible Capstone Projects

- Design a product, system, or service to benefit a local business or organization
- Plan and carry out a set of experiments or simulations organized around a central research question
- Create a major artistic work, or a series of minor works, in a medium the student has already studied and has facility with
- Plan and organize a series of community service projects or cultural events around a central issue
- Plan and undertake a course of study to facilitate deeper learning and apply knowledge acquired previously in an academic course or extracurricular study
- Plan and undertake an interdisciplinary course of study to synthesize learning and apply knowledge from two or more disciplines studied previously

Appendix B—The Theory of Knowledge/Extended Essay Points Matrix

		THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE					
		Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D	Grade E	No grade N
EXTENDED ESSAY	Grade A	3	3	2	2	Failing condition	Failing condition
	Grade B	3	2	2	1	Failing condition	Failing condition
	Grade C	2	2	1	0	Failing condition	Failing condition
	Grade D	2	1	0	0	Failing condition	Failing condition
	Grade E	Failing condition	Failing condition	Failing condition	Failing condition	Failing condition	Failing condition
	No grade N	Failing condition	Failing condition	Failing condition	Failing condition	Failing condition	Failing condition

Appendix C—The Seven Learning Outcomes for Practicum at the Upper Level

In order to satisfy the Creativity, Activity, and Service (CAS) component for the IB diploma, students' documentation and reflection on their practicum must demonstrate achievement of each of these learning outcomes at least once during their Upper Level years at The Post Oak School:

Learning Outcome 1	Identify own strengths and develop areas for growth.
Learning Outcome 2	Demonstrate that challenges have been undertaken, developing new skills in the process.
Learning Outcome 3	Demonstrate how to initiate and plan a practicum experience.
Learning Outcome 4	Show commitment to and perseverance in a practicum experience.
Learning Outcome 5	Demonstrate the skills and recognize the benefits of working collaboratively.
Learning Outcome 6	Demonstrate engagement with issues of global significance.
Learning Outcome 7	Recognize and consider the ethics of choices and actions.

The
POST OAK SCHOOL

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www.postoakschool.org

Updated 2023-12-04

Upper Level Course Selection Form

Student Name (please print): _____

Dear Student,

After reading this guide carefully, please complete this form. Have it signed by a parent/guardian and your advisor before submitting it to the High School director.

If you have any questions about your options, ask your advisor or the High School director.

AREA	CIRCLE YOUR CHOICE	
English Language Arts	Language and Literature SL or HL	
Second Language	Spanish ab initio SL Spanish SL Spanish HL	Mandarin Chinese ab initio SL Mandarin Chinese SL
History and Social Sciences	Global Politics in Historical Context HL	Economics in Historical Context HL
Natural Sciences	Biology SL Biology HL Chemistry SL Chemistry HL	Computer Science SL Computer Science HL Physics SL
Mathematics	Math Applications SL	Math Analysis SL Math Analysis HL
The Arts	Film SL Film HL Music SL Music HL	Theater SL Theater HL Visual Arts SL Visual Arts HL

Student _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian _____ Date _____

Math teacher _____ Date _____

Advisor _____ Date _____

High School Director _____ Date _____