

International School of Bremen



INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOOL  
OF BREMEN

**ISB**

IGCSE

# Student Handbook

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## Introduction

The International School of Bremen (ISB) offers a selection of subjects at International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) level. Since the early days of the School's existence, subjects have been examined by the internationally renowned Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) Board. The table below shows the subjects which are offered at the International School of Bremen by CIE.

### Cambridge International Examinations (CIE)

Art and Design (0400)  
Biology (0610)  
Business Studies (0450)  
Chemistry (0620)  
English First Language (0500)  
English as a Second Language (0511)  
English Literature (0486)  
French (Foreign Language) (0520)  
Geography (0460)  
German (First Language) (0505)  
German (Foreign Language) (0525)  
History (0470)  
Mathematics (0580)  
Physical Education (0413)  
Physics (0625)  
Spanish (Foreign Language) (0530)

The purpose of this Handbook is to provide the information you need to be fully informed of the nature of the programmes of study that are offered and taught at ISB throughout Grades 8, 9 and 10. The *General Information* section contains an overview of the curriculum, and of the (IGCSE) programmes. IGCSE subject teachers will be able to answer specific questions about the programmes, but the following information will provide a good working knowledge of the IGCSE.

### General Information

At the International School of Bremen, the IGCSE is a three-year educational programme which is set and externally examined in the United Kingdom by the University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). Its standards are derived from the UK standards set in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), but the programme is driven by curriculum content specifically tailored to the needs of students studying in international schools around the world. The programme is designed to stand alone and so no previous knowledge is required to be a part of the programme. However, students need to be at a functional level of English to have reasonable expectations of success from enrolment in the IGCSE programme. Students who have followed courses designed to give them the skills and attitudes that are an integral part of the IGCSE

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programme, such as the ISB International Middle Years Curriculum, have a considerable advantage. At the end of Grade 10, most students will sit individual IGCSE examinations in at least eight of the subjects outlined above. Additionally, the School offers the opportunity and strongly encourages native speakers of other languages such as Arabic, Chinese and Russian, to sit for an additional IGCSE language qualification.

The Cambridge (IGCSE) is a rigorous and specialised English language curriculum that fosters high academic standards, together with an ability to put knowledge into practice. Subjects offered by CIE provide a sound basis for entry to higher-level study in the School's International Baccalaureate (IB) programme.

The pages which follow contain specific course outlines for each of the courses offered within the programmes, including those which are compulsory. In addition to the examination subjects, students are required to take part in Drama and (non-examined) Physical Education. Although Drama is not offered for examination at IGCSE, it is internally assessed and is an essential part of a balanced curriculum. Drama allows students to develop fundamental skills and qualities such as teamwork, creativity and leadership and offers opportunities for risk-taking which can lead to personal growth and increased self-esteem. These are both assets to the whole process of learning, as well as useful life skills.

Students are also encouraged to take an active part in the many extra-curricular opportunities which are on offer at ISB. Such opportunities provide important preparation for Community, Activity and Service (CAS), which is a mandatory requirement of the IB Diploma.

## Subject Choices

During Grade 7, students will choose some of the subjects to study to IGCSE level and these will be added to the French/Spanish subject choice that is made in Grade 5 and to the other subjects they will take for IGCSE examinations at the end of Grade 10.

The School will give students information about their IGCSE choices, but it would be helpful if parents were also to discuss their choices with their children. It is important to choose subjects students find enjoyable, but it is also important to keep a good balance.

## Compulsory Subjects

Some subjects are **compulsory** at IGCSE level. These are:

- English
- German
- Maths
- Science (Biology, Chemistry and Physics)

## Optional Subjects

There are five optional subjects of which, in the first instance, students choose any two. These are:

Art	History
Business Studies	Physical Education
Geography	

## General Assessment

Each subject within the Cambridge IGCSE programme is currently assessed on an eight-point scale of grades from A\* to G. A student failing to reach a grade G is awarded a grade U (unclassified). An A\* is an exceptional grade, given to approximately the top 7 % of students within each subject.

In some subjects (notably English, Mathematics and the Sciences) there is a choice between Core (Foundation) and Extended (Higher) examination papers, allowing teachers to use their professional judgement in deciding on the most appropriate level of testing for each candidate. The Core or Foundation paper in each subject is within the ability range of all students. It provides a full overview of the subject and targets students expected to achieve between grades C and G. The Extended or Higher curriculum comprises the Core/Foundation curriculum, together with additional and more challenging material. This has been designed for the more academically able student who is expected to achieve a grade between A\* and E. The majority of students at ISB are expected to sit their examinations at the Extended/Higher levels. In subjects where there is no entry level option, the full range of grades – A\*-G – is available.

## Methods of Assessment

The precise methods of assessment vary from subject to subject. In all subjects, however, a significant percentage of the final grade will be based on the examination results taken at the end of Grade 10 (16 years old). In some subjects there is a coursework or practical component.

## Art & Design (0400)

Cambridge Assessment International Education encourages students to explore and to develop a wide range of skills and knowledge of art. This programme guides students to be more independent and to find their own artistic expression.

The Art and Design Specification includes the following key features:

1. It combines traditional media with the new media and technology.
2. It balances knowledge and understanding of a subject and helps to develop the skills which students need for their education or future employment. A very broad range of studies, including painting, printmaking, three-dimensional design, photography, digital and lens-based media, graphic communication textiles and fashion is included and available.
3. The students work towards two compulsory components, the coursework and the externally-set assignment. The aim in each component is to engage further experiment and develop a coherent body of work that will lead to a final artwork.
4. A 3-year programme is designed for students to develop and enhance their skills and to accomplish successfully their IGCSE. They will be introduced to different techniques and media and evolve their personal interests. Each step of the journey is seen as a chance to encourage students to develop their independence and self-confidence

## Biology (0610)

With an emphasis on human biology, the Cambridge IGCSE Biology syllabus helps students to understand the technological world in which they live, and take an informed interest in science

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and scientific developments. Students gain an understanding of the basic principles of biology through a mix of theoretical and practical studies. They also develop an understanding of the scientific skills essential for further study and which are useful in everyday life.

As they progress, students understand how science is studied and practised, and become aware that the results of scientific research can have both good and bad effects on individuals, communities and the environment.

## Business Studies (0450)

The Cambridge IGCSE Business Studies syllabus develops learners' understanding of business activity in the public and private sectors, and the importance of innovation and change. Learners find out how the major types of business organisation are established, financed and run, and how their activities are regulated. Factors influencing business decision-making are also considered, as are the essential values of cooperation and interdependence.

Learners not only study business concepts and techniques but also enhance related skills such as numeracy and enquiry.

## Chemistry (0620)

The Cambridge IGCSE Chemistry syllabus enables students to understand the technological world in which they live, and take an informed interest in science and scientific developments. Students gain an understanding of the basic principles of Chemistry through a mix of theoretical and practical studies. They also develop an understanding of the scientific skills essential for further study and which are useful in everyday life.

As they progress, students understand how science is studied and practised, and become aware that the results of scientific research can have both good and bad effects on individuals, communities and the environment.

## English First Language (0500)

Cambridge IGCSE First Language English is designed for students whose first language is English. Cambridge IGCSE First Language English students develop the ability to communicate clearly, accurately and effectively in both speech and writing. They learn how to employ a wide-ranging vocabulary, use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation, and develop a personal style and an awareness of the audience being addressed.

Students are also encouraged to read widely, both for their own enjoyment and to further their awareness of the ways in which English can be used. Cambridge IGCSE First Language English also develops more general analysis and communication skills such as synthesis, inference, and the ability to order facts and present opinions effectively.

## English as a Second Language (0511)

Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language is designed for students who already have a working knowledge of the language and who want to consolidate their understanding in order to progress in their education or career. Through their studies, students will improve their ability to understand and use English in a range of situations.

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The aim is to achieve a level of practical communication ideal for everyday use, which can also form the basis for further, more in-depth language study. In Syllabus 0511, the marks for the speaking component contribute to the overall grade.

## English Literature (0486)

The syllabus enables students to read, interpret and evaluate texts through the study of literature in English. Students develop an understanding of literal meaning, relevant contexts and of the deeper themes or attitudes that may be expressed. Through their studies, they learn to recognise and appreciate the ways in which writers use English to achieve a range of effects, and will be able to present an informed, personal response to the material they have studied.

The syllabus also encourages the exploration of wider and universal issues, promoting students' better understanding of themselves and of the world around them.

## French Foreign Language (0520)

This syllabus is designed for students who are learning French as a foreign language. The aim is to develop an ability to use the language effectively for purposes of practical communication. The course is based on the linked language skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing, and these are built on as students progress through their studies.

The syllabus also aims to offer insights into the culture and civilisation of countries where French is spoken, thus encouraging positive attitudes towards language learning and towards speakers of foreign languages.

The syllabus content is organised around five broad Topic areas which provide contexts for the acquisition of vocabulary and the study of grammar and structures. Through the study of these Topic areas, candidates gain insight into target language countries and communities. The Topic areas are:

Everyday activities  
Personal and social life  
The world around us

The world of work  
The international world.

## Geography (0460)

Through the Cambridge IGCSE Geography syllabus, students will develop a 'sense of place' by looking at the world around them on a local, regional and global scale. Students will examine a range of natural and man-made environments, and study some of the processes which affect their development. They will also look at the ways in which people interact with their environment, and the opportunities and challenges an environment can present, thereby gaining a deeper insight into the different communities and cultures that exist around the world.

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## German First Language (0505)

Cambridge IGCSE First Language German is designed for students whose first language is German. This First Language syllabus develops students' ability to communicate clearly, accurately and effectively. They learn how to employ a wide-ranging vocabulary, use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation, and develop a personal style and an awareness of the audience being addressed.

Students are also encouraged to read widely, both for their own enjoyment and in order to develop an appreciation of how writers achieve their effects. The syllabus also complements other areas of study by encouraging skills of more general application.

## German Foreign Language (0525)

This syllabus is designed for students who are learning German as a foreign language. The aim is to develop an ability to use the language effectively for purposes of practical communication. The course is based on the linked language skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing, and these are built on as students progress through their studies.

The syllabus also aims to offer insights into the culture and civilisation of countries where German is spoken, thus encouraging positive attitudes towards language learning and towards speakers of foreign languages.

The syllabus content is organised around five broad Topic areas which provide contexts for the acquisition of vocabulary and the study of grammar and structures. Through the study of these Topic areas, candidates gain insight into target language countries and communities. The Topic areas are:

Everyday activities  
Personal and social life  
The world around us

The world of work  
The international world.

## History (0470)

The Cambridge IGCSE History syllabus looks at some of the major international issues of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as covering the history of particular regions in more depth. The emphasis is on both historical knowledge and on the skills required for historical research.

Learners develop an understanding of the nature of cause and effect, continuity and change, similarity and difference and find out how to use and understand historical evidence as part of their studies. Cambridge IGCSE History will stimulate any learner already interested in the past, providing a basis for further study, and also encouraging a lifelong interest in the subject. Both coursework and non-coursework options are available.

## Mathematics (0580)

The Cambridge IGCSE 580 syllabus offers an excellent three-year preparation for IB mathematics whilst gaining an internationally recognised IGCSE qualification.

The subject content is organised by topic: number, algebra, shape and space, and probability and statistics. Calculators are required throughout the IGCSE programme. All students are required



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to have a scientific calculator and this must be available at all times in class and at home. We recommend the Casio FX-83 GTX or a similar model.

The assessment consists of tiers of entry (Core and Extended) that allow students to be entered for the appropriate level, with questions designed to be accessible to students of all abilities in that tier and papers that are balanced for topics and difficulty.

Students access the syllabus in a spiralling nature from Year 8 to Year 10. This allows them to build on skills as they acquire them in preparation for examinations at the end of Year 10

## Physical Education (0413)

The syllabus provides students with an opportunity to study both the practical and theoretical aspects of physical education. It is designed to encourage enjoyment in physical activity by providing students with an opportunity to take part in a range of physical activities and develop an understanding of effective and safe physical performance. This helps students to develop an appreciation of the necessity for a sound understanding of the principles, practices and training that underpin improved performance, better health and well-being.

## Physics (0625)

The Cambridge IGCSE Physics syllabus helps students to understand the technological world in which they live, and take an informed interest in science and scientific developments. They learn about the basic principles of Physics through a mix of theoretical and practical studies. Students also develop an understanding of the scientific skills essential for further study and which are useful in everyday life.

As they progress, students gain an understanding of how science is studied and practised, and become aware that the results of scientific research can have both good and bad effects on individuals, communities and the environment.

## Spanish Foreign Language (0530)

This syllabus is designed for students who are learning Spanish as a foreign language. The aim is to develop an ability to use the language effectively for practical communication. The course is based on the linked language skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing, and these are built on as students progress through their studies.

The syllabus also aims to offer insights into the culture and civilisation of countries where the language is spoken, thus encouraging positive attitudes towards language learning and towards speakers of foreign languages.

The syllabus content is organised around five broad Topic areas which provide contexts for the acquisition of vocabulary and the study of grammar and structures. Through the study of these Topic areas, candidates gain insight into target language countries and communities. The Topic areas are:

Everyday activities  
Personal and social life  
The world around us

The world of work  
The international world.

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## Recognition of IGCSE exams in (Bremen) Germany

The minimum requirements for equality with the *Realschulabschluss* (Secondary School Certificate) and the *Mittlere Schulabschluss* (Middle School Leaving Certificate) in Bremen is as follows:

Five exam passes at Grade C or above which must include:

- Mathematics
- At least one science subject (for example, Biology, Chemistry or Physics)
- A social science subject (for example, Business Studies, Geography, History)
- Two languages (First Language German and First Language English)

Eligible students must also have successfully completed at least 10 years of schooling.

The implications of these requirements mean that students who do not meet them, and want to transfer into the German system, *may* be required to repeat Grade 10 in their new local German school to allow them the possibility of gaining a place in a Gymnasium.

## Further Education at ISB

Please be aware that all students who wish to continue their studies at ISB do so at the discretion of the Director. Individual IGCSE grades will influence the recommendations made to students about which level and subjects they may pursue in Grades 11 and 12.

Since ISB only offers the IB Diploma and Certificate courses, it may be recommended that some students leave to pursue a less academic programme in another institution. For further information, please contact either the Director or the IB Coordinator.

## IGCSE Survival Guide

### Organisation

All notes should be kept in good order. A well-organised book or file will save a lot of time when it comes to revision. A planner should be used every day to record homework. If it is written down students are less likely to forget it.

Having a file for each subject is a good idea. Teachers will give their students numerous handouts and these will need to be filed, together with revision notes, graphic organisers, plans and other important papers.

### Show Commitment

If a student is absent from school for any reason, it is the student's responsibility to catch up on any work which has been missed. Teachers are always approachable and are there to assist each student to achieve to the best of his/her ability. However, achievement is the student's responsibility.

### Prioritise

Make a list of things you have to do, and the order in which you have to do them. Do not leave things until the last minute. Plan ahead and use your time sensibly.

### Meet Deadlines

Get every piece of work submitted on time. If a habit is developed of doing this with all short pieces of work, it will be easier to do when major pieces of work have to be submitted.

### Seek Help

Assistance should always be sought when a student does not understand a particular topic. Teachers will not always know students are having problems unless they are appropriately informed.

### Find a Balance

Everyone needs some free time to relax and enjoy themselves. A good balance should be established between work and play and time should be allocated for each.

### Work Ethic

A determined and hard-working attitude towards IGCSEs should be adopted right from the beginning of the courses. Hard work from the outset, will pay off when results are issued. It is too late to wish that more had been done in the week before the exams, or when the results are issued.

### Proactive Participation

Students should be active learners. They should listen carefully in class and think about what they are hearing and doing. They should be prepared to offer opinions in class discussions and to value the opinions of others, no matter how different they might be. Students should never be afraid to ask questions if they do not understand something even if the questions seem trivial.

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## Revision

Good revision techniques are the key to examination success. Everyone has her/his own particular style of revising – try to find out as early as possible what works best. Revision notes are essential, and can be made in a variety of ways – graphic organisers are a good example. Good revision notes provide a summary of the key points of any topic, and should be made from personal notes, text books, or other sources provided. Remember: producing personal notes increases the input of information to the brain and helps in remembering things better. Working through past papers is an active way of revising, and taking turns with a study partner to ask questions or to discuss topics is also very useful.

## Revision Schedule

Revision must be well-planned before any exam sessions. Plan your time carefully, allowing adequate time for all your subjects, and build in regular breaks.

## Develop Good Study Habits

It is really important to have a quiet place to work at home where equipment can be organised and things remain where they are left. When working in the school library, help create a good working environment. Some people find that quiet music in the background helps them to concentrate, but avoid loud music with a heavy beat, and do not have the television on while working.

## How Parents Can Help

It is very important that students and their parents or guardians work together to help make the most of the education during these crucial examination years. Ways in which they could help may include:

- providing a good working environment at home;
- acting as a sounding board for ideas about work;
- encouraging their students to complete your work on time;
- being informed about the work being done, the structure of courses, and the deadlines for the submission of important pieces of work;
- facilitating visits to places of educational value during the holidays.