



# The IB Diploma Programme

# The Diploma Programme: Preparing students for success in higher education and to be active participants in a global society

## What is an IB education?

The IB continuum of international education for students aged 3 to 19 years old is unique because of its academic and personal rigour. We challenge students to excel in their studies and in their personal development. We aim to inspire a love of learning throughout life that is marked by enthusiasm and empathy. The IB aspires to help schools develop well-rounded students who respond to challenges with optimism and an open mind, are confident in their own identities, make ethical decisions, join with others in celebrating our common humanity and are prepared to apply what they learn in real-world, complex and unpredictable situations.

## Approaches to teaching and learning

IB programmes are taught by teachers who explicitly help students learn how to develop the attitudes and skills they need for both academic and personal success.

### Approaches to teaching

There are six key pedagogical principles that underpin all IB programmes. Teaching in IB programmes is:

- based on **inquiry**
- focused on **conceptual understanding**
- developed in **local and global contexts**
- focused on effective teamwork and **collaboration**
- **differentiated** to meet the needs of all learners
- informed by **assessment** (formative and summative).

### Approaches to learning

This area develops essential skills that include skills of behaviour and emotional management, skills that allow the student to monitor their own effectiveness in their learning and skills that allow them to process information effectively (often called “study skills” in a school environment). Although these skills may be in use when developing a certain natural ability or talent, they are different from both ability and talent themselves because proficiency in any skill can be increased through the deliberate use of techniques and strategies, feedback and challenge. Skills are therefore highly teachable.

**Teaching and learning in the Diploma Programme (DP)** therefore incorporates the development of:

- **thinking** skills
- **communication** skills
- **social** skills
- **self-management** skills
- **research** skills.

Although these are presented as distinct categories, there is some overlap and close connections between them. These categories should be seen as interrelated, as well as linking closely with the attributes highlighted in the IB learner profile. IB students work to become inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced and reflective.

## What is the IB Diploma Programme?

The IB Diploma Programme is an academically challenging and balanced programme of education, with final examinations, that prepares students aged 16 to 19 for success at university and in life beyond. It has been designed to address the intellectual, social, emotional and physical well-being of students. The programme has gained recognition and respect from the world's leading universities.

## The curriculum

DP students must choose one course from each of five subject groups delivering a breadth of knowledge and understanding in language and literature, individuals and societies, the sciences and mathematics. Furthermore, students must also choose either an arts course from the arts group or a second course from one of the other subject groups. DP courses can be taken at higher level (HL) or standard level (SL). At least three, and not more than four, are taken at HL (240 teaching hours), while the remaining

courses are taken at SL (150 teaching hours). SL courses ensure students are exposed to a range of disciplines that they might otherwise opt out of, and HL courses allow students to spend more time with subjects they are more interested in by exploring options in addition to the SL core curriculum. In this sense, all DP courses, regardless of whether they are SL or HL, are integral to the programme. Students can study and take examinations in English, French or Spanish. Two courses are classified as interdisciplinary, meaning that they satisfy the requirements of more than one subject group.

- Literature and performance (studies in language and literature subject group and the arts subject group)
- Environmental systems and societies (individuals and societies subject group and sciences subject group)

In addition to disciplinary and interdisciplinary study, the DP features three core elements that broaden students' educational experience and challenge them to apply their knowledge and skills.

## The Diploma Programme core

**The extended essay (EE) requires students to engage in independent research** through an in-depth study of a question relating to one of the DP subjects they are studying. The world studies EE option allows students to focus on a topic of global significance, which they examine through the lens of at least two DP subjects.

**Theory of knowledge (TOK) develops a coherent approach to learning** that unifies the academic disciplines. In this course on critical thinking, students inquire into the nature of knowing and deepen their understanding of knowledge as a human construction.

**Creativity, activity, service (CAS) emphasizes helping students to develop their own identities** in accordance with the ethical principles embodied in the IB mission statement and the IB learner profile. CAS complements a challenging academic programme in a holistic way, providing opportunities for self-determination, collaboration, accomplishment and enjoyment. It involves students in a range of activities alongside their academic studies throughout the DP. The three strands of CAS are creativity (exploring and extending ideas leading to an original or interpretive product or performance), activity (physical exertion contributing to a healthy lifestyle) and service (collaborative and reciprocal engagement with the community in response to an authentic need).

## Assessment

Students take written examinations at the end of the programme, which are marked by external IB examiners. Students also complete assessment tasks in the school, which are either initially marked by teachers and then moderated by external moderators or sent directly to external examiners. The grades awarded for each course range from 1 (lowest) to 7 (highest). Students can also be awarded up to three additional points for their combined results on TOK and the EE. The diploma is awarded to students who gain at least 24 points, subject to certain minimum levels of performance across the whole programme and to satisfactory participation in the CAS requirement. The highest total that a DP student can be awarded is 45 points. Assessment is criterion-related, which means student performance is measured against specified assessment criteria based on the aims and objectives of each subject's curriculum, rather than the performance of other students taking the same examinations.

## Research

Whether conducted in collaboration with the IB or independently, research generally suggests that an IB education has a positive impact on schools, students and teachers. Research plays a central role in the development, quality assurance and assessment of impact of the IB programmes and services. The IB conducts research in two key areas: programme impact research, which investigates the implementation and impact of IB programmes, and programme development research, which supports the development review of all programme curriculum and pedagogy. Research conducted both by the IB and external bodies show the DP curriculum and assessment compares favourably to other qualifications. To review latest research on the DP visit [www.ibo.org/research](http://www.ibo.org/research).



## Diploma Programme subject groups

### Studies in language and literature

- Language A: literature—55 languages offered
- Language A: language and literature—17 languages offered
- Literature and performance (SL only) (also the arts subject group)—3 languages offered

### Language acquisition

- Language B—23 languages offered
- Language ab initio (SL only)—12 languages offered
- Classical languages—2 languages offered

### Individuals and societies

- Business management
- Economics
- Environmental systems and societies (SL only) (also sciences subject group)
- Geography
- Global politics
- History
- Information technology in a global society
- Philosophy
- Psychology
- Social and cultural anthropology
- World religions (SL only)

### Sciences

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Computer science
- Design technology
- Environmental systems and societies (SL only) (also individuals and societies subject group)
- Physics
- Sports, exercise and health science (SL only)

### Mathematics

- Mathematics: analysis and approaches SL
- Mathematics: analysis and approaches HL
- Mathematics: applications and interpretation SL
- Mathematics: applications and interpretation HL

### The arts

- Dance
- Film
- Literature and performance (also studies in language and literature subject group)
- Music
- Theatre
- Visual arts

## Diploma Programme courses online

Students can enroll in a range of authorized DP courses online offered via their IB World School.

## Perceptions of university officials

What do university admission officials and IB graduates say about the DP?

.....  
*"It's the most secure foundation available for successful college graduation."*

*Jonathan Burdick, Dean of College Admission, University of Rochester, USA*

.....  
*"This is an invaluable experience for a liberal arts education that emphasizes critical thinking."*

*Madhavi Menon, Director, Center for Studies in Gender and Sexuality and Professor of English, Ashoka University, Hararyana, India*

.....  
*"When I entered my new college environment, my experience in IB gave me the foresight to understand the power of hard work and pushing through difficulty."*

*Alumnus Rachon Sweiss received his IB diploma from Granada Hills Charter High School in 2015.*

.....  
*"Learning in an IB environment involves critical thinking and depth of understanding, skills that are invaluable to making informed decisions in higher education and the workplace."*

*-Alumnus Byron Dolon received his IB diploma from the Shanghai American School, China.*



### The IB mission statement

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.

Learn more about the process of becoming an IB World School at [www.ibo.org/become](http://www.ibo.org/become) or email [ibid@ibo.org](mailto:ibid@ibo.org).

- Become an IB student
- Teach at an IB World School
- Become an IB World School
- Volunteer or work for the IB

Support our mission and join the IB community at [www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org)