

# Good Schools Guide



**FUTURE-READY LEARNING**



Photo: Jocelyn Tam

# RESHAPING THE IB TO MEET TOMORROW'S NEEDS

**Jolene Otremba** looks at how international schools in Hong Kong aim to equip students for an uncertain future shaped by technology and global challenges

In today's rapidly evolving world, the role of education is being redefined. Technological advancements, economic shifts and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) have presented new challenges – and opportunities – for educators worldwide.

International schools in Hong Kong are leading the charge in equipping students with the skills, mindsets and adaptability needed to thrive in an uncertain future. By combining rigorous academics with innovative programmes, these institutions are setting the standard for future-ready learning.

At the heart of this transformation is a shift from conventional academic metrics to a more holistic approach that integrates real-world applications, soft skill development and student agency. Schools are no longer just teaching content: they are teaching students how to think critically, adapt to change and engage meaningfully with the world around them.

Dr Brian Hull, diploma coordinator at Canadian International School of Hong Kong (CDNIS), emphasises how the delivery of the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum is central to achieving these goals. He also stresses the importance of teaching students through “concepts”, “content” and “contexts”.

“Through this lens, students are able to look at the big ideas in various subject areas in the context of real-world examples,” he says. This approach encourages students to connect their learning to global issues such as the rise of AI, environmental challenges and political polarisation.

The IB curriculum at CDNIS balances academic rigour with the development of essential workplace skills, making it a key enabler of critical and creative thinking. “Foundational to achieving the best academic results is creative and critical thinking, as well as problem-solving,” Hull explains. For example, the school's robust arts programme includes IB courses in film, music, visual arts and theatre, which nurture creativity while fostering academic discipline.

Similarly, Kasson Bratton, head of school at Hong Kong Academy (HKA), underscores the importance of focusing on uniquely human skills in the age of AI.

“Future readiness means being a capable, competent, compassionate, creative human who can adapt,” Bratton says. HKA's mission is to foster graduates who embody these qualities, with a clear focus on intellectual curiosity, intrinsic motivation and intercultural mindedness.

Schools are also prioritising the development of critical skills – analytical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, resilience and adaptability – that are essential for navigating the complexities of the modern workforce.

At Stamford American School Hong Kong (SAHS), the Cornerstones Program provides students in grades 9 and 10 with immersive, real-world experiences.

“Our vision states that we continually strive to provide the best learning experiences for all to thrive in a rapidly evolving world,” explains the school's director of teaching and learning, Timothy Swan. Drawing from the World Economic Forum's 2025 report, the programme



Photo: Hong Kong Academy

emphasises the development of skills like analytical thinking and adaptability, which are becoming increasingly relevant in the global workforce.

"Technology and AI are the top changes transforming the workplace," Swan says, highlighting that 86 per cent of employers surveyed in the report see information processing technologies as crucial. The programme goes beyond traditional career exploration, and students get the opportunity to work with local industries – from restaurant groups to architecture firms – gaining practical experience and insights.

"They get a chance to see if this is a career path they might be interested in following," he explains. Key skills emphasised through the programme include analytical thinking, resilience and adaptability.

Meanwhile, CDNIS integrates these essential workplace skills into the IB curriculum, ensuring that students are prepared for the demands of the future. Through inquiry-based learning and encouraging students to view problems from multiple perspectives, the IB programme at CDNIS fosters resilience and adaptability in its graduates.

In a world where technology is advancing at breakneck speed, creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship are also essential. Schools are redefining how students learn to identify problems, think creatively and develop impactful solutions.

Taking part in the Conrad Challenge empowered students at CDNIS to tackle real-world problems with a focus on both innovation and entrepreneurship. Kenneth Tang, a business and economics teacher at the school, describes the annual event as a "global entrepreneurial and innovation competition for students between the ages of 13 and 18".

Students work in teams to create innovative solutions and craft business plans, preparing them for the challenges of entrepreneurship. CDNIS' winning team developed an advanced ankle brace with electromyography (EMG) sensors and a mobile app, revolutionising physiotherapy.

HKA takes a similar approach through its partnership with Own Academy, where students gain experience through working as paraprofessionals in various industries. "They're already acting as professionals in remarkable ways," says Bratton. This real-world exposure helps students build skills like teamwork, communication and adaptability, which are critical in today's workplace, he adds.

As AI continues to transform industries, schools are embracing the challenge of preparing students for a tech-driven future. Bratton warns that traditional education risks becoming obsolete if it doesn't adapt: "I see eventually a crisis where the combination of disruption and generative AI shifts the nature of work to the point where schools risk becoming irrelevant."



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KASSON BRATTON  
HONG KONG ACADEMY



Photos: Hong Kong Academy

At CDNIS, discussions about AI are fully integrated into the IB curriculum. "We don't shy away from AI," says Hull. "We talk to our students about how to use it well and explore the areas where we see opportunities, but also explore alongside students the challenges it is likely to present." This proactive approach ensures students are not only comfortable with technology but also equipped to critically evaluate its implications.

Across these schools, student agency takes centre stage in shaping the educational experience. At CDNIS, participation in programmes like the Conrad Challenge encourages students to explore their passions, take risks and learn from failure.

"This competition empowers students to reflect on everyday problems in their lives, communities and surrounding environments," Tang says. "By identifying pain points, students tackle real-world problems often rooted in personal experiences or situations that happened to their friends or family members."

At HKA, empowering students means listening to their voices and giving them the tools to take ownership of their learning. "The best way to do that is to ask the students what they want to do," Bratton says.

One of the biggest challenges of future-ready education is how to measure success beyond academics. HKA is addressing this challenge head-on through its partnership with the University of Melbourne's Melbourne Metrics project.

"We're trying to measure these soft skills with a high level of fidelity," explains Bratton. This innovative initiative ensures that students' development in areas

such as leadership, creativity and adaptability is assessed holistically, providing a comprehensive picture of their readiness for the future.

One way to measure success is through feedback, and the feedback from students, parents and alumni highlights the transformative impact of these programmes. At CDNIS, students develop practical skills in STEM and entrepreneurship while gaining confidence and clarity about their career aspirations. "The skills developed through the Conrad Challenge – such as research, presentation and perseverance – are applicable across academic disciplines," says Tang.

Similarly, SAIS students report increased confidence and clearer career directions, while parents praise the holistic development their children receive. At HKA, programmes like the Global Citizen Diploma and Melbourne Metrics ensure students graduate as well-rounded individuals ready to tackle the challenges of a dynamic world.

As the global workforce continues to transform, schools like CDNIS, SAIS and HKA are offering their interpretations of a future-ready education. By integrating the IB curriculum with real-world applications, fostering critical and creative thinking, and embracing the challenges of a tech-driven era, these institutions are trying to prepare students not just for tests but for life.

"We want to equip our students with the skills and mindsets that will help them thrive in a rapidly evolving world," says Swan. Hull echoes this sentiment: "The future is uncertain, but with the right education, students can be prepared to shape it." ■



## CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2025!

# 109

**IBDP  
Candidates**

# 96%

**IBDP  
Pass Rate**

# 2

**Students  
Scored 45**

# 43

**Students  
Scored 40+**

# 37.7

**Average  
Score**

# 7

**Bilingual  
Diplomas**

### ENROLLMENTS

#### Australia

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology  
University of Melbourne  
University of Sydney

#### Canada

McGill University  
McMaster University  
Queen's University\*  
Sheridan College  
Toronto Metropolitan University  
University of British Columbia\*  
University of Toronto\*  
University of Victoria\*  
Western University\*

#### Hong Kong

Chinese University of Hong Kong\*  
Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts  
Hong Kong University  
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

#### Netherlands

Utrecht University

#### United Arab Emirates

American University in Dubai

#### United Kingdom

BIMM University  
Cardiff University  
Courtauld Institute of Art  
Durham University\*  
Imperial College London\*  
King's College London\*  
London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art  
London School of Economics and Political Science

#### Newcastle University\*

Royal Veterinary College,  
University of London\*  
University College London\*  
University of Bath\*  
University of Bristol\*  
University of Edinburgh\*  
University of Nottingham  
University of Oxford  
University of the Arts London\*  
University of York

#### United States

Barnard College  
Biola University  
Boston University

#### Cornell University\*

New York University\*  
Northeastern University  
Pomona College  
Tufts University  
University of California San Diego  
University of California, Berkeley\*  
University of Florida  
University of Pennsylvania  
University of Southern California  
Washington University in St. Louis

\*Multiple enrollments



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