

## Frequently asked questions about the Diploma Programme

### What is the Diploma Programme?

The Diploma Programme (DP) is a curriculum framework designed by the International Baccalaureate (IB) for students in the last two years of high school.

IB students graduating with the IB diploma are able to study at universities all around the world, often with advanced credit. Students report that their involvement with the IB has given them the tools needed to succeed at college. In particular, students comment on their sense of preparedness, self-confidence, research skills and their ability to manage their time. Even more important, they have developed a sense of the world around them and their responsibility to it.

Diploma Programme students study six subjects (three at standard level and three at higher level) over two years and complete three additional requirements: the theory of knowledge (TOK), the extended essay and at least 150 hours of CAS—creativity, activity and service tasks outside of the classroom. In addition to these requirements, students must earn a minimum of 24 points out of a possible 45 points on the final assessments which are externally marked and moderated by the IB, in order to receive an IB diploma.

### Theory of knowledge (TOK)

TOK is an interdisciplinary course designed to help students question and understand how they know what they know. Students study how individuals from various disciplines view the world in order to develop their own ways of thinking. By stimulating analysis of knowledge across disciplines, TOK seeks to help students make sense of school and the world.

### Creativity, activity, service (CAS)

CAS is an experiential learning component of the DP. Students complete a wide variety of extracurricular, community service and athletic options to fulfill this requirement.

### Extended essay

The extended essay introduces students to the demands and rewards of independent work. Emphasis is placed on doing personal research and communicating ideas effectively in order to write a 4,000-word essay in an area of personal interest.

### How do colleges and universities view the Diploma Programme?

The DP is internationally recognized as representing one of the highest standards in university preparatory education. More than 1,000 colleges and universities in North America have recognition policies on how they weigh it in admissions, advanced standing, college credit and scholarships.

A list of colleges and universities that grant credit, scholarships and/or advanced standing for DP diplomas and certificates is available at [www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org).



## What kind of student is a good candidate for the DP?

The DP is a rigorous course of study for motivated students. That said, prior academic success is less an indicator of ability to earn the diploma than are a student's determination to do his or her best, willingness to be organized in order to complete the work while leading a full, balanced life, and a strong commitment to learning in and beyond the classroom.

## Do DP students have time for anything beyond academics?

Absolutely. Most successful Diploma Programme students lead very full lives. They are often members of athletic teams and involved in a wide range of activities. Time management and organization are key skills the IB develops in students.

## Are IB programmes considered “gifted” programmes?

The IB does not control how schools designate their Diploma Programme. In some instances, schools choose to designate the programme as selective enrolment via application or as a magnet programme. In other cases, the programme is open to any student.

## Do DP teachers receive special training?

All DP teachers receive professional development in the IB's approaches to teaching and approaches to learning from certified IB workshop leaders. This is a requirement for IB World Schools implementing the DP.

## Does implementing an IB programme mean my child's school will not teach local or national standards such as the Common Core?

The IB is committed to making sure that students in IB programmes meet and exceed local or national standards.

With the implementation of any IB programme, schools are required to examine their curriculum carefully to ensure that there is alignment with local, state or national standards. More information on the IB and the Common Core is available at

[www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org).

## What's the difference between the diploma and certificates?

Not all students choose to take the full course load leading to a diploma. Instead, some take a few DP courses in areas where they have a particular interest or strength, similar to honours and Advanced Placement classes. Certificates are awarded on a course-by-course basis to students who choose not to do the full programme. Students who satisfactorily complete a DP course earn a certificate and may be eligible for university credit.

## How does the IB DP differ from other university-preparatory programs such as Advanced Placement and Cambridge?

The IB DP is a two-year comprehensive curriculum with a culminating set of externally graded final exams. IB, Advanced Placement (AP) and other college-preparatory curriculums like Cambridge are all university preparatory, academically rigorous programmes. There are important differences, however, in the content and exams. The DP is a cohesive and comprehensive programme, not a collection of individual courses as is the case with Advanced Placement. The most important distinguishing factor is the core of the Diploma Programme (CAS, TOK and extended essay).

## Can you give a specific example of how the DP prepared students for college?

A 2012 study by the Consortium for Chicago School Research found that Diploma Programme students who graduated from 12 Chicago public schools were more likely to attend college, attend a selective college and persist in college for 2 years than a matched comparison group. Additional studies on programme impact are available at

[www.ibo.org/research](http://www.ibo.org/research)

## How can I learn more about the IB and DP?

- Visit the IB website at [www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org)
- Attend school meetings and events
- Speak with your school's DP coordinator
- Speak with your child's DP classroom teachers.



# The IB Diploma Programme



International Baccalaureate®  
Baccalauréat International  
Bachillerato Internacional

Education for a better world



# 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

- Further mathematics HL
- Mathematical studies SL
- Mathematics SL
- Mathematics 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)