



IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

A Guide to the IBDP

INQUIRERS

We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn to think critically and sustain a commitment to lifelong learning through our lives.

KNOWLEDGEABLE

We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues

OPEN-MINDED

We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.

CARING

We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in our communities.

THINKERS

We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible decisions. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.

COMMUNICATORS

We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.

PRINCIPLED

We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness

RISK-TAKERS

We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we act with independence and courage to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of setbacks and obstacles.

BALANCED

We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives—intellectual, physical, and emotional—to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.

REFLECTIVE

ALL THE ESSENTIAL INFORMATION YOU NEED TO EXCEL IN THE IB PROGRAMME

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OVERVIEW

What is the IB Diploma?

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) is a pre-tertiary educational programme for students aged 16-19.

It is the equivalent qualification to the A-Levels and the AP exams, and is internationally recognised for entrance into universities worldwide.

IB students typically go through the Middle Years Programme (MYP) or equivalent form of Integrated Programme (IP) in their school, or the GCSE, IGCSE, or an internal examination before gaining entrance to IB.



How is the programme structured?

Every student takes 6 academic subjects, 3 at Higher and 3 at Standard level, alongside a research paper known as the Extended Essay (EE). Additionally, a presentation and final essay for Theory of Knowledge (TOK) are required, alongside multiple projects to fulfil the Creativity, Activity and Service (CAS) requirements. The maximum score attainable is 45 - '7' for each subject and the 3 bonus points from the EE and TOK.

Subject requirements

All IBDP students are required to take 6 academic subjects, fulfilling the IBO's specific criteria that students pursue a broad and balanced selection of subjects. Completion of all components of the IBDP is necessary for a student to be awarded the Diploma.



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Groups

Students must take a subject which falls into each of Groups 1-5, listed and explained below. Students can choose not to take a Group 6 subject ('The Art') and can instead take another Group 1-4 subject to bring their total subjects to the compulsory six.

Group 1: Studies in Language and Literature

Students take at least 1 subject from studies in language and literature. Taking two studies in language and literature is one way of obtaining a bilingual diploma. The courses offer a broad range of texts.

Group 2: Language Acquisition

Students can choose to take a language without prior study (ab initio), or can build on pre-existing knowledge of a language. This must not be the student's first language. Options include Classical Greek, Latin, Spanish and French.

Group 3: Individuals & Societies

Students choose from a range of Humanities subjects, including, while not limited to: History, Geography, Economics and Business & Management. Learning in this group provides students with the opportunity to explore human, societal and physical structures and their impact on the world and global environment.

Group 4: Sciences

Any of the traditional Science subjects can be chosen here, as well as Environmental Systems & Societies (ESS), which can be taken as either a Group 3 or 4 subject, and Computer Science, Design Technology, and Sports Science. This group helps students to understand the global application of scientific solutions, as well as the theory and context of their chosen Science, which is further challenged by a compulsory group project, named the Group 4 project.

Group 5: Maths

Students must take a level of Mathematics, but can choose from a wider range than usual; Mathematics SL and HL are offered, as for most subjects, but students can also choose Mathematical Studies, only offered as a Standard Level (SL) subject, or Further Mathematics, which is only offered as a Higher Level (HL) subject. Most students who opt to take Further Maths will also take Maths HL, as this is a requirement of most schools who offer this subject.

Group 6: The Arts

The Arts subjects include Visual Arts, Drama, Film, and Music. A student may opt not to take a Group 6 subject, and instead take a further subject in language (Groups 1 & 2), a social science (Group 3) or science (Group 4).



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Points, Gradings & Assessment

Diploma subjects are graded 1-7, with 7 being A* equivalent. On average, about 5% of IB students globally achieve a grade 7, and the mean grade for any subject across the Diploma is 4.8. This gives a possible score of 42 from six academic subjects, and an additional 3 bonus points are available for TOK and EE; the maximum possible IB score is therefore 45.

The DP runs for two academic years, with final exams taking place at the end of the second year. The DP is assessed in a linear, not modular, manner, and all external (exams-based) assessment therefore takes place at the end of the student's second year ("IBDP2").

Candidates who successfully complete all the requirements of the IBDP and one or more of the following combinations are eligible to receive a bilingual diploma: two Group 1 subjects (of different languages), a Group 3 or 4 subject taken in a language other than candidate's Group 1 language, or an Extended Essay in Group 3 or 4 subject written in a language other than the candidate's Group 1 language. IB certificates are issued to indicate completion of diploma courses and exams for non-diploma candidate students.

Each Group has its own way of assessing students, and Higher/Standard level discrepancies; we recommend viewing the specific 'subject brief' for each of your preferred subjects before making a final decision on which to take.

Group 1

Students in both HL and SL take a final examination which assesses their ability to analyse an unseen text, as well as texts they have studied. All students also submit a number of written tasks – these are akin to the coursework element of other academic programmes. The number of written tasks varies across specific subjects and levels. Students also undertake several oral assessments prior to the final exam session.

Group 2

Students at HL, SL and ab initio level, of both modern and classic languages, undertake two examination papers: the first of which is focused on text handling/translation, and the second on producing writing in the acquired language. As in Group 1, there are also several written tasks and oral components, one of each which is assessed as part of the final grade.

Group 3

Students at SL follow the format of two final exam papers, and internally assessed written work. For HL students, Group 3 brings a third examination paper, pushing the student to engage further with the subject. For instance, a calculation based paper in Economics. Additionally, for many Group 3 subjects, the internally assessed work takes the form of several pieces of work, forming a portfolio, or project.



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Group 4

There is a larger variance across subjects regarding the exact nature of assessment. Biology, Chemistry and Physics students sit for three exam papers and the internally assessed 'practicals' and investigations, at both SL and HL. For all other Group 4 subjects, SL students undertake two exams, and many HL students undertake three, carrying out a personal project or investigation too. In addition, there is the Group 4 project, which contributes to the personal engagement marks of each student's overall IA marks. The Group 4 project requires students to work collaboratively.

Group 5

Students are required to take two to three exam papers in order to finish a Maths 'exploration' report. Students taking Math Studies have to complete a 'project' made up of the internal components of the course. Those taking Further Mathematics are required to take two external papers and are not required to finish any internally assessed work.

Group 6

Students who decide to take a Group 6 subject will face notable difference in the percentage of exam-based work, where Group 6 subjects have a disparate timetable of assessment as compared to most of the other IB subjects, with music being an exception as it will have an exam in the same session as the other subjects. The 'continual assessment' method is key in these areas, making sure the student is achieving his/her goal at each key stage of IB since Group 6 students often invest a significant amount of time in their study practice.

For most IB subjects, the most significant percentage of student's grade are derived from the final exams. However, internally assessed work or Internal Assessment (IA) still make up 15-30% of each subject's final grade. This allows students to consistently work to improve on their coursework over the academic year. There are also various additional mandatory aspects to the Diploma Programme, one of which is known as the Theory of Knowledge (TOK). This along with the Extended Essay (EE), makes up the extra 3 bonus points that students may accumulate. Students must score a minimum grade of D in this component; failing which they will not be awarded the IB diploma, regardless of the student's academic grades. The TOK is an integrative study in critical thinking and allows discussion regarding the limitations of knowledge in a philosophical fashion.



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OVERVIEW

Theory of Knowledge (TOK)

TOK is assessed through two forms of work submissions from every student: an essay and an exhibition.

The essay (2/3 of TOK grade) is made up of 1200 to 1600 words. There are six set of questions, interchangeable annually, which test students on their understanding of knowledge questions, philosophical construct, standard of analysis and utilisation of real-life examples applied.

For the exhibition (last 1/3 of TOK grade), It is assessed internally, but moderated externally. The exhibition is done individually and students have to ensure no one in their TOK class/school uses the same objects/images in their exhibition. Students need to choose from one of 35 prompt topics and explore it, using 3 real objects as evidence.

Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS)

The last mandatory component of the IBDP does not award final IB points to Diploma students, but must be done so as to receive the full Diploma. Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) involves students taking up various projects signifying Creativity, Activity and Service across both years of the IBDP to support versatile, active and charitable students. Students are expected to have fulfilled the eight learning objectives throughout the programme and numerous schools support students to start and record one project in each area per month while taking the Diploma, as well as finish a CAS project (involves teamwork with other students to show persistence, dedication, forethought and lastly excellent team chemistry).

Regular examples for Creativity consists of musical performances such as acting, dancing, singing or even cooking new delicacies! With regards to activity, all solo and group physical sports, training and events are counted, so long as they promote beneficial health effects. Lastly, there is service by volunteering (e.g. working in a charity shop, mentoring younger students).

Extended Essay (EE)

The EE is the second mandatory component of the Diploma. It is a 4000 word study in a subject and particular area decided by the student. Even though students are generally advised to base their EE in a subject that they already take, the World Studies EE option provides an integrative choice as it is not an independent Diploma subject.

Though the EE is marked by external invigilators, every student is under attentive observation by a subject teacher (who will also conduct an ending interview upon completion of the EE). For the significant percentage of IB students who continue to pursue and advance their studies, the Extended Essay will comprise their first 'university-level' academic submission, and students often re-explore various themes in their EE during future studies.

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How is the IB regarded?

The IBDP is widely seen as a highly challenging certification and welcomed by all international top universities for undergraduate studies. Therefore, applying through local university channels for an IBDP student is relatively simple, since many universities have conversions from A-level entry requirements to IBDP points. Stated below is a selection of university entry requirements for 2023 entry BSc Mathematics at a range of UK universities in IB points and their A-level equivalents:

Cambridge: A*A*A + STEP; 41-42 points (HLs of 776) + STEP

Durham: A*A*A; 38 (HL subject requirements apply)

York: AAA; 36 including 6 in HL Mathematics

King's College London: A*AA (subject requirements); 35 including Core (HLs of 766)

It is evident that universities across the UK differ in conversions between their IBDP points and UK equivalent, but are all available to IBDP graduates.

The IBDP is also viewed upon favourably in the US, with universities widely regarding it to be identical to the AP programme of study. The IB is also of extremely high standing in universities worldwide, consisting of (but not limited to) Canada, mainland Europe and Australia. On some occasions, IB studies can be utilised during the premature phases of a university degree.

Subject Selection

Numerous students are often mind-wracked when deciding which subjects to take for the Diploma Programme, as well as whether to take it at a Higher or Standard Level. The answer is, there is no right or wrong to this question itself since each and every student varies.

Begin by asking yourself a few questions: Firstly, what are your end goals? It is important to mindfully contemplate what you wish to attain upon completion of your Diploma.

Secondly, what are your strengths and weaknesses? Put some thought into your current studies: which subjects are you doing well in, and which are you not?

Thirdly, you should integrate the two above questions and do some exploring of your own. For example, you wish to attend Cambridge and have a passion for the sciences. What grades do you need to achieve in order to pursue Natural Sciences there? You will need to score 40-41 points, with 776 at HL. Your subject choice will also play a major role. At HL you will need to study two of the sciences, being a mix of Biology, Chemistry, Maths and Physics. Furthermore, you will also need to take another of the above at SL.



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Study Tips

Expose – IB Exam questions are based on a repetitive iteration and require less application than other exams, such as the A-levels. It is crucial to get sufficient question exposure and practice. Unlike conventional classes that start with content, students should start with past question analysis to systematically address exam priorities, making their learning highly productive and dispelling mindless memorisation. Finally, using QE's resource bank, students will undergo intensive practise drills to improve their studies.

Elaborate – After pinpointing various iterations of IB exam questions, students have a clear idea of what to look out for in the syllabus and detract from rote learning. Our pedagogical experience has shown that learning theories while solving questions simultaneously is extremely effective for long term learning and exam skills.

Exercise – Practice, practice and practice. Simplify learning experience with exam practices, timed trials, and proven drills to deconstruct all question types. Such reinforcement will now help them to better tackle exam questions, making a very targeted and exam orientation learning experience.

Plan your internal deadlines – Achieving success in the IB is greatly dependent on one's study timetable. At the start of each term, it is important to mark key dates for various internal assessments and extended essays so that study targets can be consistently achieved. This ensures that there is enough time to complete the work by planning beforehand.

Internal Assessments (IAs)

Always schedule and do not procrastinate. The key to attaining consistently excellent grades in IAs for every subject is to schedule and arrange your time effectively. When finishing a project, you spend an estimated half of your time doing 90% of the work, and another half on the final 10%. Do not worry over every tiny aspect or feel overwhelmed by the project as a whole, but ensure that you start with a concrete plan and work your way up.

Start to plan your responses in full sentences by jotting down multiple ideas as you continue to explore. Don't worry about phrasing or editing during this stage since you can still finish your introduction and conclusion during the last lap, assuming your ideas are consistent with a detailed and meticulous outline as shown above.

Consistently make sure that the final draft is of quality. If necessary, lower the word count since it is much more preferable to have to lower words rather than scramble to reach a word count! But keep in mind, being clear is the most important. When decreasing word count, ensure that your reasoning is still evident; you will be awarded better grades for an essay directly answering the question and is easy to follow.

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Extended Essay (EE)

The pivotal demand for your EE is that it must adhere to the guidelines of a subject provided in the IBDP programme.

Upon determining your topic and confirming the supervisor, you will be able to scale down your ideas and pursue your passions to decide on a topic. After all, you will achieve the most favourable outcome choosing a topic that personally interests and motivates you.

Be familiar with research guidelines – it is vital to be familiar with the guidelines before starting research. One example is in Economics: one may have keen interest in the topic of public goods, but such a research topic is not the best for EE as it is not possible to obtain quantifiable data for analysis. For all subjects, a generalised or 'story-telling' question is unsuitable for the EE. Make sure you understand the actual requirements of your preferred subject, and are not just being drawn by a 'big idea' – narrow it down to your precise area of interest, and not only will you produce a better EE, but also enjoy the investigation process too!

Make sure your essay flows – This can be achieved by breaking it into smaller 'chapters' when you are writing, and focusing on making each chapter link to one another. This ensures that your essay is successful as a whole, and does not fall into the doldrums in the middle – which is surprisingly common. Try reaching your first full draft using only the first and last sentences of each paragraph. Do you still have a logical argument? If not, your essay may not be flowing intuitively.

Formatting matters a lot – Many IB students have great ideas and research for their EE, but fail to achieve the top marks because of their formatting or layout. Please remember that your essay is 4000 words, and examiners mark multiple scripts, which may not be the most exciting thing to do. Make it pleasant for them to read – include lots of data representation, abstract, rationale, footnotes, and all other small 'non-academic' aspects of the work.

Theory of Knowledge (TOK)

For each piece of work, it is vital to contextualise what needs doing and begin with a plan. In order to make best use of your time, write a plan – roughly structured into introduction, body/research and conclusion – for each project as you receive the assignment, in order to have an overview of the work required.

Begin to flesh this out into full sentences by jotting down your ideas as you research. Do not worry about wording or proof-reading at this stage. You can leave the full writing of your introduction and conclusion until the end, so long as your ideas are all in one place and you have a clear structure as above.

From here, you have your first draft. Read over your research to decide on your argument. You can now write out your essay by turning your notes into full sentences with analysis and an argument to follow.

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Proof-read the final draft and pare down the word count if necessary. It is always better to have to cut words than to be struggling to hit a word count! Remember, though, clarity is key. When cutting down your essay, make sure that the argument remains clear; you will get more marks for an essay that answers the question and is easy to follow than for a convoluted argument. If you struggle with this, try to reduce each paragraph to the key points, and ask yourself 'what is each sentence adding to my analysis?'

Passing/Failing

The fundamental condition to be awarded the Diploma is to achieve 24 points for all six academic subjects and the two core components which play a part in points - TOK and EE, and not being chargeable of academic misconduct.

All students who achieve less than 24 points will fail to be awarded the full Diploma. Furthermore, any student who is given an 'N' (not graded/submitted) for any subject or core component, or who is given an 'E' in either their EE or TOK, will fail the Diploma no matter the other scores attained. This also applies to any student who is given a 1 in any subject, more than two grades 2s, or who attains a 3 or below four or more times. If a student's Higher Level subject points total fewer than 12, or their Standard Level points are 8 or below, they will not qualify for the full Diploma unless they have taken only 2 SLs, in which case their SL total must be graded 5 or higher.

Time management

We have now interviewed over 1,000 IB graduates when recruiting tutors in the UK, Switzerland and Singapore, and the piece of advice we hear over and over again is to manage your time smartly. This means starting your revision early, keeping up with all internal and IB deadlines, and looking over your notes at the end of every topic or module to minimise the time you spend re-teaching yourself when it comes to final exams.

According to the IBO, candidates are suggested to undergo *240 hours of taught lesson time per HL subject they undertake, and 150 hours per SL subject*. This should serve as a general indication of the disparity in workload throughout an average SL and HL, though this will definitely differ widely across various subject groups.

Students will therefore be aware of what their passions and academic strengths are, and thus though it can be appealing to spend a significant period of time in attempts to garner a high 7 in their best HL subject, an SL declining on a 2 may demand more short-term attention, especially if it is in a subject where the student has been known not to be engaged in. We advise, however, keeping in mind that various UK universities will specify certain HL grades and an overall total, hence it is wise to portion more studying time and resources to your HL subjects across the course of the Diploma.

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Resources

1. Textbooks

It is not advised to depend solely on one textbook, or resource. After all, IB textbooks will differ in terms of examples and structure of every topic. To save costs, you may wish to contemplate buying IB books with a team of friends and dividing them amongst everyone. Worked example books are also great aid regarding Maths & Science subjects.

Often, students achieve constantly stellar marks in class but end up being disappointed by results in their mock papers and final exams. In order to tackle this, they should use a number of resources for constant brain stimulation. It cannot be stressed enough how important it is to go through past papers and try to duplicate exam conditions (time yourself, do not refer to notes). How you perform on these papers is the most accurate way of tracking your progress and predicting the final marks.

Upon completion, it is also vital to be aware of the marks structure for IB exams. Get access to Mark Schemes and learn the difference between an 'A' mark and an 'M' mark. It is incredible how much the marking scheme can differ between Paper 1 and 2!

2. Revision courses

Perhaps the most evident reason for choosing revision courses is due to its efficiency and usefulness by spending a focused time period reiterating the key facts, themes, formulas and studies to confirm that you have accumulated and acquired the knowledge required across these months of learning. Most importantly, you are introduced to a whole new style of teaching as no two teachers will use identical teaching approaches. QE has junior and senior tutors who can offer different things. The 'epiphany moments' experienced by students typically occur when they do not know they have not actually understood a topic - or worse, have misinterpreted it. This is because the obvious problem areas are commonly recognised and dealt with, either through tuition or independent research and practice. In summary, you may not have discover new problem areas you did not know you had, plus you'll have the time and guidance to make these your strong points!

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WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

Be prepared to make a lot of sacrifices!

Presumably you and your friends will be applying to a wide range of universities, either within the UK or around the globe, for a wide range of courses. Naturally, you will all have different aspirations. The personal goals that you have to reach in order to build up to your aspiration - small or large - will therefore not be the same as your classmates. It is important that you remain focused on your own goal.

Peer checks

Don't be afraid to discuss work with your peers. This is often most helpful when you take different subjects or are learning different topics. Have a friend who does not take your subject read your essay - does it make sense? Are there typos? Can they suggest improvements that can be made? Equally, if you and your friend(s) do take the same subject, each choose a topic you feel most or least confident in and take turns to explain it to each other. Formulating potential exam questions for your friends to answer also proves to be a useful way of both broadening and consolidating your knowledge.

Remain focused on the ultimate goal

Where do you want to apply for university? What marks will you need to secure a place? What type of career do you wish to have one day? Write down all your goals on a piece of paper and hang it above your desk. Whenever you are feeling discouraged or overwhelmed, look at it and remind yourself of where you want to be. Sometimes it is necessary to look at the bigger picture and put things in perspective.

Don't panic

Everyone gets something wrong at some point. With many subjects, each with their own deadlines to meet, all IB students will miss a deadline or forget a piece of homework at some stage. The key thing is to take charge of your mistake, prioritise fixing it, and take stock of all upcoming deadline to ensure no 'knock-on' damage. Speak with your teacher or IB coordinator if it is a significant deadline, and complete the work at the earliest opportunity.

Do not only rely on your teachers

We must remember that our teachers are there to teach, mentor and guide, but they are not there to write the exam for you. Teachers are only human, and some may teach in a way that doesn't quite work for you, and so it is important to be able to teach yourself to pass the exams, and to gain different perspectives on what you are learning in class. After all, your IB results are your own, and you'll want to feel like you took ownership and carried on learning outside of the classroom.

Enjoy it!

As a team, we all thoroughly enjoyed our IB studies, and have used the skills fostered by the IB to follow a range of academic and non-academic interests and projects. We believe the Diploma Programme is the best post-secondary educational programme available today, and encourage all those who feel they might be interested in it to research it, and if you decide it is for you, to enjoy every moment!



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