



INFORMATION ON CURRICULUM



THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA PROGRAMME

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ABOUT THE IB DIPLOMA

2009



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE IB DIPLOMA

1. What is the best resource for students and parents?

www.ibo.org and craig.davis@tts.edu.sg (Director of IB, Tanglin Trust School)

2. What are the requirements for an IB Diploma?

There are four parts to the IB diploma course:

- a) Six academic subjects, three of which are taken at Higher Level and three at Standard Level.
- b) An Extended Essay in any recognized IB subject, provided that the school can find suitable adult guidance.
- c) A course in the Theory of Knowledge.
- d) Creativity, Action and Service, which adds a holistic element to the student's development as an individual.
- e) GCSE Entry requirements are exactly the same as general entrance into the Sixth Form







3. University entrance requirements and subject choices.

Issues That Often Arise:

After speaking with a wide range of university admissions officers who have visited IB schools these are our recommendations (thanks to Rob Aldridge – Personal Statement Consultant and Admissions Officer at four previous UK universities)

- a) The overall IB Diploma score is the most important consideration – gaining a 38 pursuing subjects you enjoy is far more beneficial than gaining a 34 after selecting subjects you may mistakenly think are 'harder' or more 'rigorous' disciplines.
- b) Many students do not really specialize until year 2 at university or even past this into Masters level study. Many UK universities are far more flexible than they were ten years ago.
- c) Many University systems no longer support the old traditional route of requiring specialization at 16.
- d) Obviously a small number of traditional (Russell Group) UK universities make particular statements about subject choices – please remember these are universities that receive 500 applicants for every one position offered i.e. they are looking for filter systems, many of which are not widely accepted or supported educationally. Do not worry about this at this stage when considering subjects – just focus on your interests and passions.

In Summary:

-  Take IB Higher Level subjects you enjoy the most and want to spend extra time on.
-  Do not take a subject only because in the past it seemed more valued by a small number of traditional universities (because in many cases it does not matter)
-  Find out the details about subject content and assessment to make an informed decision
-  Do not make immature judgments based on rumour and teacher personality.
-  Remember, the Extended Essay allows you to research and specialize in a very narrow field and is extremely helpful if you do need some specific specialization evidence later on Otherwise **breadth is best!**
-  **Do your research now to help you make the best decision**

UCAS Tariff

This allows for wider differentiation at the top level for the IB Diploma –

www.ucas.com/students/ucas_tariff/tariff/tariffables/

4. Maths and other Higher Level Courses.

Remember it is a stated school policy that students can access any Higher level course with a B grade or above at GCSE. However if students speak to all of their subject teachers and diligently consider their options with form tutors then they can make wise decisions – for many of our students the actual level of Maths course pursued is not an issue. However, students are responsible for researching in our careers/higher education room to find *if* universities and courses they are interested in do have particular Maths level requirements. Otherwise students need to be realistic about appropriate course selection and need to do so in consultation with their Maths teacher.

5. IB Language options can seem confusing:

Overview to help:

Language A2 HL	is for a fluent language user who intends to study the language at this level for a future career or degree programme or wants to gain a bilingual diploma <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ is a native or near-native speaker wishing to study a different language as his or her language A1➤ is a bilingual student (in reading or writing or both)➤ lives or lived in a country where the target language OR DIALECT is spoken
Language A2 SL	is for a fluent language user who may not intend continuing study of the language beyond the Diploma Programme, and who: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ is a native or near-native speaker wishing to study a different language as his or her language A1➤ is an almost bilingual student (in reading or writing or both)➤ lives or lived in a country where the target language is spoken
Language B HL	is for a language learner who intends to study the language at this level for a future and who: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ has 4 to 5 years experience of the target language (GCSE)➤ is not taught other subjects in the target language➤ is <i>normally</i> taught outside a country where the language is spoken
Language B SL	is for a language learner who may not intend continuing study of the language beyond the Diploma Programme and who: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ has 3 to 5 years experience of the target language (GCSE)➤ is not taught other subjects in the target language➤ is <i>normally</i> taught outside a country where the language is spoken
Ab Initio SL only	is for a relative academic beginner who: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ has had <i>limited</i> previous experience of the language➤ is taught outside the country or countries where the language is spoken➤ Is not taught other IB subjects in the target language

6. Subject Selection: A Generic Example (not necessarily what Tanglin will offer):

Group 1	Literature A1	Literature HL and SL
Group 2	Language A2, Language B Language ab initio	Chinese A2 HL and SL Chinese B HL and SL French B HL and SL Spanish B HL and SL German B HL and SL Bahasa Malay HL and SL Chinese SL French SL Spanish SL Bahasa MalaySL
Group 3	Individuals & Societies	1. Business and Man. HL and SL 2. Economics HL and SL 3. Geography HL and SL 4. History HL and SL 5. Psychology SL & HL 6. Philosophy SL&HL 7. Environmental Systems SL
Group 4	The Experimental Sciences	1. Biology HL and SL 2. Chemistry HL and SL 3. Physics HL and SL 4. Environmental Systems SL
Group 5	Mathematics	1. Mathematics HL 2. Mathematics SL 3. Mathematical Studies SL
Group 6	Arts & Electives	1. Theatre Arts SL&HL 2. Film Studies SL&HL 3. Art and HL & SL 4. Music HL & SL 5. * or electives

Students should aim to take a named Arts subject in Group 6 to match the IBO philosophy of ensuring curriculum breadth across the 6 subject groups. Therefore parents and students will need to provide the school team with a rationale linked to university entrance requirements as to why they might use group 6 for an elective block for a second subject.

Timetable – electives in Group 6 are not an entirely ‘free choice’. IB provides a framework and the school decides on the subjects available in all of the 6 groups. It may not be possible to ‘double up’ on certain subjects as they share the same block on the timetable

7. Issues from previous IB students considering choices in Year 10 and 11:

- a) Maths choices – you must make sure you speak to your current Maths teacher to gain the best advice about which of the three Maths courses is the best one for you. You need to be realistic about the most appropriate pathway in Group 5.

- b) Languages – if you are a bilingual or biliterate student aim for an A2 Languages option to earn the prestigious IB Bilingual Diploma. Try a new ab initio language if you want something different.
- c) All Higher Level Sciences require in depth study and aptitude. See advice you're your current Science teachers. Please think very carefully. Physics Higher Level requires students to study Maths Standard Level or Higher Level.
- d) Environmental systems might be a good alternative for students not interested in the traditional sciences
- e) Environmental Systems can be used as a transdisciplinary option i.e. taking this course means you have effectively taken both a Group 3 (Individuals and Society) AND a Group 4 (Sciences) requirement in just one single subject. This will allow you to take another Group 2, Group 3 or Group 4 subject PLUS your Group 6 Arts subject.
- f) Follow your interests for Higher Level subject choice NOT because of peer pressure or other factors. It is the overall IB Diploma score that matters and research has shown that students who pursue subjects that interest them at Higher Level gain higher diploma scores.

8. Subject Questions:

Is **Group 1 Literature A1** also a language course?

No – Language A1 is a **Literature** course. You study 15 texts at Higher Level and 11 texts at Standard Level. There are some similarities with GCSE English Literature however you study texts from all over the world, some of which are translated from non English languages. You will find the books you study are different, exciting and great page turners.

Can I take a **Group 3 or 6 Subject** I have NOT studied at GCSE before?

Yes – But you must ask your current Humanities, Business or Creative Arts teacher **FIRST** to find out if they think it is appropriate for you to take a particular subject

Are there some easy Higher Level options?

No – **All Higher Level subjects at IB require extra commitment, extra study, a higher level of assessment and student interest. You should NEVER take a Higher Level subject just because you think it is easy. Your guiding principle should be passion and interest in a subject PLUS advice from the subject teachers teaching the subject. Broadly speaking you have to aim for a minimum of a Level 4 to pass a Higher Level subject for the IB Diploma.**

9. How are IB exams marked? The marking scheme in use for IB examinations is:

- 1 = very poor
- 2 = poor
- 3 = mediocre
- 4 = satisfactory
- 5 = good
- 6 = very good
- 7 = excellent

10. How are the IB exams assessed?

In addition to written examinations, there are oral examinations and listening comprehension, and practical assessment in the sciences. In all subjects part of the exam is internally assessed, but subject to external moderation. Theory of Knowledge (TOK) and extra-curricular activities are internally assessed with external moderation. In addition, the student's school record is taken into consideration. Failure to write an Extended Essay, pass Theory of Knowledge, or produce a satisfactory Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) Report, are failing conditions.

11. How many points do I need to gain a full diploma?

24 points – with a target of reaching 4 points in each Higher Level Subject AND a passing condition met for the combined Extended Essay/Theory of Knowledge core subjects and the satisfactory completion of the CAS programme. Remember 3 points for the core combined – effectively 1.5 for EE and 1.5 for TOK.

A student can gain 24 points or more but still fail the diploma if they do not gain an appropriate score in each of their three Higher Level subjects OR if they fail the Theory of Knowledge/Extended Essay/CAS requirements.

SELECTING THE RIGHT HIGHER LEVEL SUBJECTS IS VERY IMPORTANT.

YOU SHOULD ENJOY STUDYING THESE SUBJECTS ABOVE ALL ELSE

YOU SHOULD BE COMMITTED TO WORKING VERY HARD IN THESE SUBJECTS

YOU SHOULD SEEK ADVICE FROM THE SUBJECT TEACHER

CHECK INDIVIDUAL UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE SPECIFICS BEFORE CHOOSING

12. When are the examinations held?

Examinations are held in May of the student's second year. Examination fees are payable the previous November, six months before the examination period.

13. Can candidates re-sit examinations?

As the external examinations are not modular in the same way as some AS Level subjects it is better to NOT consider re-sitting IB examinations as this would extend your IB study beyond Year 13. However, in certain circumstances it is possible to re-sit IB examinations within the following two examination sessions (November and May)

14. In which languages are the exams written?

Examinations are printed in English, French and Spanish. However, candidates must write exams in the teaching language, of the school, which is English at Tanglin. All languages are examined and written in the language studied.

15. Is it possible to transfer to another IB school?

Yes. However, as very few schools offer the whole range of subjects covered by the International Baccalaureate, a student may find it necessary to change some courses. Even within subjects, different schools select different texts and different options.

16. How do International Baccalaureate exams compare with other courses?

The IB programme is a demanding course. Its major strengths are its ability to offer depth in some areas while offering breadth in other areas. The TOK, Extended Essay and CAS courses are considered especially unique and worthwhile.

17. Does the IB Diploma guarantee entry into university?

There is no better preparation for entry into university level studies than the I.B. Diploma programme and the IB Diploma is matriculated in most universities around the world.

18. Do I have to take an external examination such as the Standardized Achievement Test ("SAT") to apply to the US if I have an IB Diploma?

Many American universities and colleges will require students to take the SATs for admission purposes. The IB student will be well prepared to achieve high scores on these external exams. Applicants to American Universities and Colleges need to check with each university and college of higher education to find out the admissions requirements.

*Craig Davis
Director of IB & Student Learning
Tanplin Trust School
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