

An Overview of the International Baccalaureate Programmes: Primary Years, Middle Years and Diploma

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world

Three Academic Programmes

The International Baccalaureate's three programmes provide a framework for curriculum from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. The IB framework serves as a map for growth and development—intellectually, emotionally, and socially—not just through students' preK-12 experience, but through college and life. The three IB programmes are:

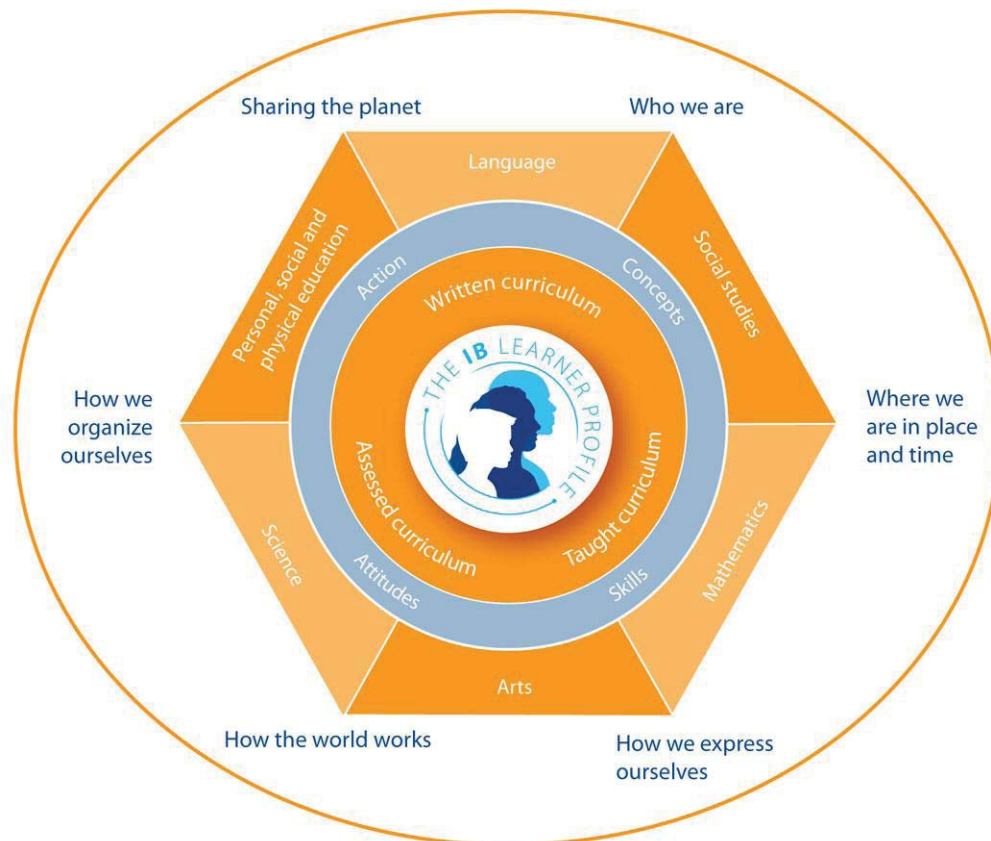
- IB Primary Years Programme
- IB Middle Years Programme
- IB Diploma Programme

The three programmes help schools to:

- Add international perspectives to their academic offerings
- Measure teaching and learning against an international standard
- Satisfy the educational needs of culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse student populations
- Build students' confidence in their learning abilities
- Develop students' capacity to think critically and act compassionately in a complex, ever-shrinking world
- Implement the most effective classroom practices from around the world
- Provide their teaching faculty with the opportunity to develop and expand their professional skills

Primary Years Programme *(students aged 3-12 years)*

The IB Primary Years Programme focuses on the development of the whole child as an inquirer, both in the classroom and in the world outside. It is a framework for curriculum and assessment that is guided by six transdisciplinary themes of global significance, explored using knowledge and skills derived from six subject areas, with a powerful emphasis on inquiry-based learning.



The programme:

- Encourages **international-mindedness**;
- Encourages a **positive attitude to learning** by engaging students in inquiry and developing their awareness of the process of learning so that they become lifelong learners;
- Reflects **real life** by encouraging learning beyond traditional subjects with meaningful, in-depth inquiries into real issues; and
- Emphasizes, through the **learner profile**, the development of the whole student—physically, intellectually, emotionally and ethically.

The most significant and distinctive feature of the Primary Years Programme is the six transdisciplinary themes. The six themes create a framework that allows students to “step up” beyond the confines of learning within subject areas:

Who we are:

An inquiry into the nature of the self; beliefs and values; personal, physical, mental, social and spiritual health; human relationships including families, friends, communities, and cultures; rights and responsibilities; what it means to be human.

Where we are in place and time:

An inquiry into orientation in place and time; personal histories; homes and journeys; the discoveries, explorations and migrations of humankind; the relationships between and the interconnectedness of individuals and civilizations, from local and global perspectives.

How we express ourselves:

An inquiry into the ways in which we discover and express ideas, feelings, nature, culture, beliefs and values; the ways in which we reflect on, extend and enjoy our creativity; our appreciation of the aesthetic.

How the world works:

An inquiry into the natural world and its laws; the interaction between the natural world (physical and biological) and human societies; how humans use their understanding of scientific principles; the impact of scientific and technological advances on society and on the environment.

How we organize ourselves:

An inquiry into the interconnectedness of human-made systems and communities; the structure and function of organizations; societal decision-making; economic activities and their impact on humankind and the environment.

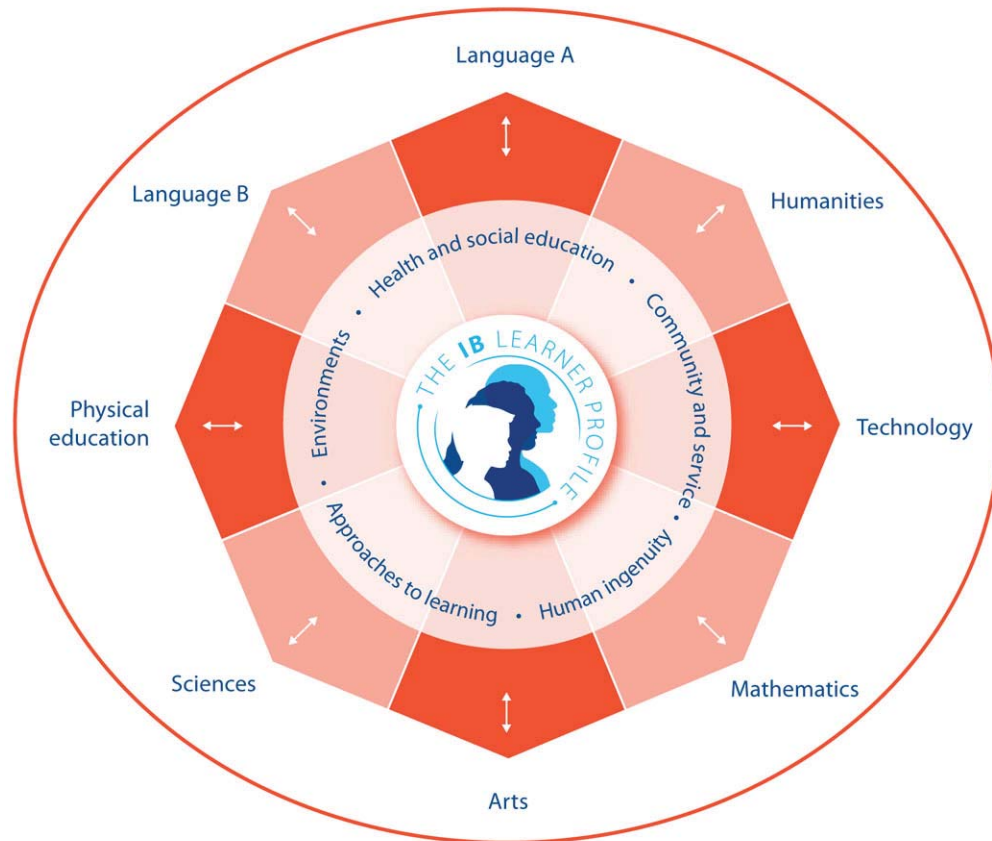
Sharing the planet:

An inquiry into rights and responsibilities in the struggle to share finite resources with other people and with other living things; communities and the relationships within and between them; access to equal opportunities; peace and conflict resolution.

Assessment is an important part of each unit of inquiry as it both enhances learning and provides opportunities for students to reflect on what they know, understand and can do. The teacher’s feedback to the student provides the guidance, the tools and the incentive for them to become more competent, more skillful and better at understanding how to learn.

Middle Years Programme *(students aged 11-16 years)*

The IB Middle Years Programme provides a framework of academic challenge that encourages students to embrace and understand the connections between traditional subjects and the real world, and to become critical and reflective thinkers. Students are required to study their mother tongue, a second language, humanities, sciences, mathematics, arts, physical education and technology. In the final year of the programme, students also engage in a personal project, which they will use to demonstrate the understandings and skills they have developed throughout the programme.



Students study subjects from each of the eight subject groups through the five areas of interaction:

Approaches to learning

is concerned with developing the intellectual discipline, attitudes, strategies and skills that will result in critical, coherent and independent thought and the capacity for problem solving and decision making.

Community and service

starts in the classroom and extends beyond it, requiring students to participate in the communities in which they live. The emphasis is on developing community awareness and concern, a sense of responsibility, and the skills and attitudes needed to make an effective contribution to society.

Human ingenuity

allows students to focus on the evolution, processes and products of human creativity. It considers their impact on society and on the mind. Students learn to appreciate the human capacity to influence, transform, enjoy and improve the quality of life. This area of interaction encourages students to explore the relationships between science, aesthetics, technology and ethics.

Environment

aims to make students aware of their independence with the environment so that they become aware of their responsibility, and may take positive, responsible action for maintaining an environment fit for the future.

Health and social education

prepares students for a physically and mentally healthy life, aware of potential hazards and able to make informed choices. It develops in students a sense of responsibility for their own well-being and for the physical and social environment.

Assessment is criterion referenced, so students around the world are measured against pre-specified criteria for each subject group. Teachers may modify these criteria to be age appropriate in the earlier years of the programme.

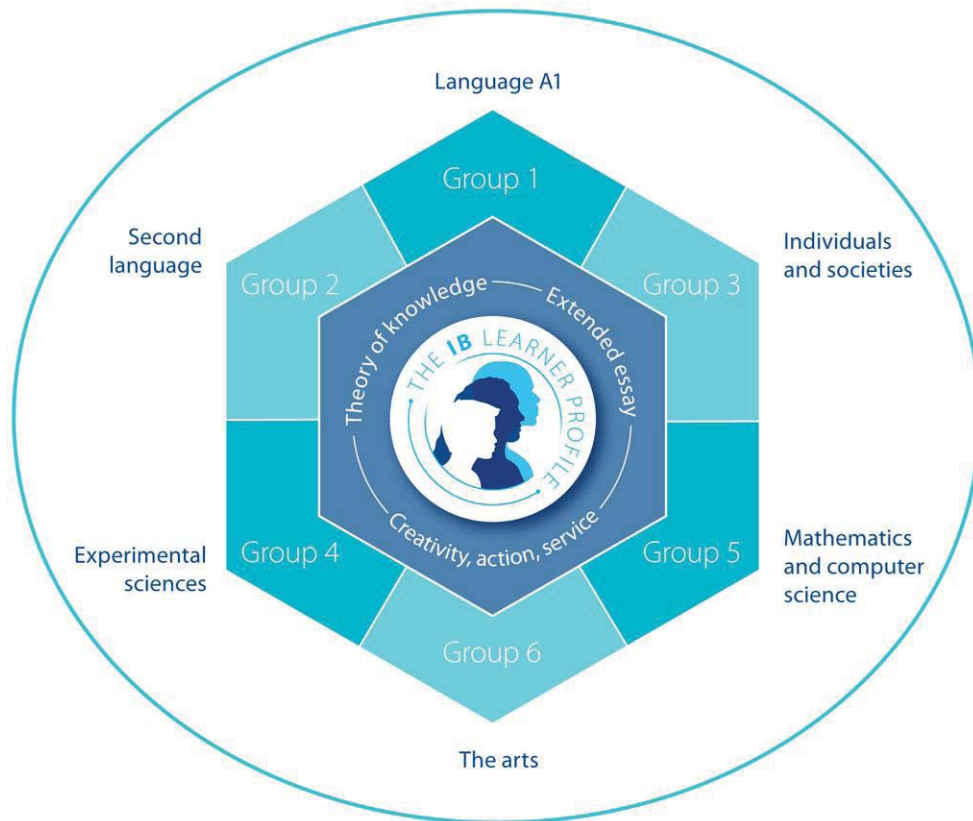
Teachers set assessment tasks that are assessed internally in the school. External checks (either moderation or monitoring of assessment by IB examiners) are carried out in this internal assessment to ensure worldwide consistency of standards. For schools that require official IB certification for their students, moderation is carried out every year.

Diploma Programme *(students aged 16-19 years)*

The IB Diploma Programme is an academically challenging and balanced programme of education with final examinations that prepare students for success at university and life beyond.

A key component of the Diploma Programme is the theory of knowledge (TOK), an interdisciplinary requirement that encourages critical thinking and reflection on knowledge using experience gained both inside and outside of the classroom. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of language and on the development of a student's critical thinking skills. This emphasis helps students to consider how they know what they know (different ways of "knowing") and to develop deliberative habits which they bring to each subject, resulting in a deeper intellectual experience.

In addition to the theory of knowledge, two additional core elements—a 4,000 word research paper called the extended essay and the creativity, action, service (CAS) component of 150 hours—are compulsory and central to the philosophy of the programme.



The Diploma Program provides rigorous curriculum in six academic areas:

Group 1: Language A1

Group 2: Second Language

Group 3: Individuals and Societies
(business and management, economics, geography, history, Islamic history, information technology in a global society, philosophy, psychology, social and cultural anthropology)

Group 4: Experimental Sciences
(biology, chemistry, design technology, environmental systems, physics)

Group 5: Mathematics and Computer Science
(mathematical studies standard level, mathematics standard level, mathematics higher level, further mathematics standard level, computer science)

Group 6: The Arts

Diploma Programme students study six courses at higher level or standard level. Higher level subjects require 240 class hours. Standard level subjects are 150 hours. Students must choose one subject from each of groups 1 to 5, thus ensuring breadth of experience in languages, social studies, the experimental sciences and mathematics. The sixth subject may be an arts subject chosen from group 6, or the student may choose another subject from groups 1 to 5. At least three and not more than four subjects are taken at higher level (recommended 240 teaching hours), the others at standard level (150 teaching hours). Students can study these subjects, and be examined, in English, French or Spanish.

The Diploma Programme assessment takes place over two years. Students complete a series of assessment tasks in the school, which make up the internal assessment component of the student's final grade. Internal assessments are moderated by the IB examiners and may include oral presentations, lab work, and essays. The final assessment is the Diploma exams, which take place over three to five weeks at the end of the student's senior year. The exams emphasize critical thinking, written analysis and argument.

The marks 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 theory of knowledge and the extended essay. 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 creativity, action, service requirement. The highest total that a Diploma Programme student can be awarded is 45 points.

College and University Recognition

“One of the advantages of an IB curriculum is its structure and quality,” said Christoph Guttentag, Director of Undergraduate Admission at Duke University. “It is a coordinated program, well-established, well-known and well-respected. We know the quality of IB courses, and we think the IB curriculum is terrific.”

The academic rigor, inquiry-based instruction, and focus on developing the complete individual prepares high school students to succeed in their postsecondary studies. In fact, the IB diploma is a passport to higher education. Universities around the world laud the unique characteristics of the IB Diploma Programme, and IB students routinely gain admission to some of the best-known universities. Many of these institutions have established recognition [policies](#) for the IB Diploma.

In North America, colleges and universities have created recognition policies for IB students, which vary from institution to institution. Recognition may involve all or some of the following:

- Recruiting diploma students
- Recognizing and valuing the IB diploma in the admissions process
- Acknowledging the rigor of the Diploma Programme through placement
- Granting credit for Diploma exams or the full diploma
- Providing scholarships for Diploma students

For a complete guide to university recognition and the IB Diploma Programme, please visit our *Resources for Universities and Applicants* for North America available [online](#).

“When reviewing an application from an IB Diploma candidate, our admissions officers can be assured of the candidate’s strong and broad-based academic preparation,” said Kim Bartlett, Director of Admissions at McGill University. “We have seen that IB students embrace the rigorous academic challenges of university life and perform well.”

“The IB Diploma Programme gave me a time and a place in which to form habits and develop interests to explore various fields of knowledge which I otherwise wouldn’t have,” said Sonja Anderson, a diploma graduate from Franklin High School in Stockton, California. According to Anderson, who recently graduated from the University of California-Los Angeles and is now pursuing a graduate degree at Notre Dame University, the Diploma Programme allowed her to “pour all my energy into the programme and come out with something great that really changed me. It set my mind working and it has been going ever since.”