

# Curriculum Guide

*High School*

*Grades 11 & 12*

*International Baccalaureate*

*Diploma Programme*



BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL  
OF BOSTON

A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

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# An introduction to the IB Diploma Programme Handbook

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB DP) was established in Geneva in 1968 to provide an international, and internationally recognized, university-entrance qualification for students studying outside of their home country. The goal is to provide students with the values and opportunities that will enable them to develop sound judgments, make wise choices, and respect others in the global community.

The IB Programme equips students with the skills and attitudes necessary for success in higher education and employment; it has the strengths of a traditional liberal arts curriculum, but with three important additional features, the Extended Essay, Theory of Knowledge and Creativity, Activity and Service.

Today the IBDP has expanded so that more than half of the students opting for it come from state or national systems, rather than from international schools. As the IBDP has grown, so too has its reputation for excellence; the IBDP is now recognized in almost every country in the world as a one of the pre-eminent pre-university qualifications. The British International School of Boston (BISB) has a significant degree of freedom to deliver the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme in order to meet its own mission and aims, develop the attributes of the learner profile and student approaches to learning, and undertake teaching and learning which allows students to achieve results significantly above the world average and gain access to the world's best universities.

This IB Diploma Programme Handbook is written for students, parents, and teachers. Its purpose is to outline exactly what the IB Diploma Programme is and how it is organized and implemented here at BISB. It can either be read in its entirety or specific sections can be consulted.

This handbook is available in digital form on the Diploma Programme section of the BISB website. In the subject section of this guide, students and parents have access to detailed subject outlines for each subject. They also include details about assessment, links to the Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course, how lessons contribute to global understanding, and how they develop approaches to learning and the attributes of the IB learner profile in the students.

The subject outlines and handbook may change slightly to reflect teaching and learning over the course of the two years of the IB Diploma Programme; however, these changes are usually slight, and a most up-to-date copy is always available on the school website.

# An International Baccalaureate Education

## What is an IB Education?

The IB Diploma Programme is the founding program of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), and is the pre-eminent post-16 university-preparedness curriculum around the world, with over 155,000 students from across the globe sitting for the summative Diploma examinations every year.

The unique characteristics of an IB education can be summarized in the following diagram:



## Multilingualism and intercultural understanding

All IB programmes require students to learn another language. Intercultural understanding involves recognizing and reflecting on one's own perspective, as well as the perspectives of others. To increase intercultural understanding, all IB programmes foster learning how to appreciate critically many beliefs, values, experiences and ways of knowing. The goal of understanding the world's rich cultural heritage invites the IB community to explore human commonality, diversity, and interconnection.

## Global engagement

Global engagement represents a commitment to address humanity's greatest challenges in the classroom and beyond. IB students and teachers are encouraged to explore global and local issues, including developmentally appropriate aspects of the environment, development, conflicts, rights and cooperation and governance. Globally engaged people critically consider power and privilege, and recognize that they hold the earth and its resources in trust for future generations.

## Broad and balanced

An IB education represents a balanced approach, offering students access to a broad range of content that spans academic subjects. Students engage subject-specific knowledge and skills with increasing sophistication as they develop through the curriculum.

## Conceptual

Conceptual learning focuses on broad and powerful organizing ideas that have relevance within and across subject areas. They reach beyond national and cultural boundaries. Concepts help to integrate learning, add coherence to the curriculum, deepen disciplinary understanding, build the capacity to engage with complex ideas and allow transfer of learning to new contexts.

## Connected

IB curriculum frameworks value concurrency of learning. Students encounter many subjects simultaneously throughout their programs of study; they learn to draw connections and pursue rich understandings about the inter-relationship of knowledge and experience across many fields.

## The Learner Profile and the IB's mission and aims

Another common theme across all IB programmes is the learner profile. These are an articulation of the IB's mission and aims and the characteristics of students that have completed an IB education. The IB's mission is:

“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 beright.”

A more detailed description of the learner profile, including a description about each one of the attributes is included on the following page.



# 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.

## As IB learners we strive to be:

### INQUIRERS

We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.

### KNOWLEDGEABLE

We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.

### THINKERS

We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. 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 and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

### 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 the lives of others and in the world around us.

### RISK-TAKERS

We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.

### 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

We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

The IB learner profile represents 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools. We believe these attributes, and others like them, can help individuals and groups become responsible members of local, national and global communities.

# The IB Diploma Programme

A full description of the programme is available [online](#), although it can be summarized as ‘an academically challenging and balanced programme of education with final examinations that prepares students, aged 16 to 19, for success at university and 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 IB Diploma Programme model perhaps best illustrates the nature and requirements of the programme.



**All IB Diploma candidates follow six subjects, one from each of the six subject groups (another subject from Groups 1-4 may be taken in place of an arts subject in Group 6). They must also take at least three subjects at higher level (HL) and three subjects at standard level (SL).**

**In addition to the study of six subjects, all students must complete the IB Diploma Programme core.**

The IB Diploma Programme is not six independent subjects and it is the core of the IB Diploma Programme which makes it a programme. Through these three areas, unique to the IB Diploma Programme, students can make connections and links between subjects and experience a broad based, conceptual and connected education.

## The Core of the IB Diploma Programme

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### Extended Essay

The extended essay asks students to engage in independent research through an in-depth study of a question relating to one of the Diploma Programme subjects they are studying. This 4000-word essay is completed over approximately six months during the two years of the IB Diploma Programme.

(More information about the extended essay can be found on [here](#).)

### Theory of Knowledge (TOK)

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.

(More information about the TOK course is available [here](#).)

### Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS)

CAS involves students in a range of activities alongside their academic studies throughout the Diploma Programme. Creativity encourages students to engage in the arts and creative thinking. Activity seeks to develop a healthy lifestyle through physical activity. Service with the community offers a vehicle for a new learning with academic value. The three strands of CAS enhance students' personal and interpersonal development through experiential learning and enable journeys of self-discovery.

(More information about the CAS course is available [here](#))

# Assessment in the IB Diploma Programme

Each of the six subjects is graded on a 7-point scale. The maximum score for students for their subjects is 42 points. There are three additional points available for the results from the extended essay and TOK courses which are graded on a scale of A to E. CAS is not graded, and students either pass or fail based on whether students have achieved specific learning outcomes.

The combination of grades for the extended essay and TOK courses is as follows:

		Theory of Knowledge				
		Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D	Grade E / No grade(N)
Extended essay	Grade A	3	3	2	2	Failing condition
	Grade B	3	2	2	1	Failing condition
	Grade C	2	2	1	0	Failing condition
	Grade D	2	1	0	0	Failing condition
	Grade E / No grade (N)	Failing condition	Failing condition	Failing condition	Failing condition	Failing condition

## Achieving the IB Diploma

There are a number of criteria that a student must meet to be awarded the IB Diploma. These are reproduced here in full for reference. The following conditions mean a student will not qualify for the award of the IB Diploma:

1. CAS requirements have not been met.
2. Candidate's total points are fewer than 24.
3. An "N" has been given for TOK, extended essay, or for a contributing subject.
4. A grade E has been awarded for one or both of TOK and the extended essay.
5. There is a grade 1 awarded in a subject/ level.
6. Grade 2 has been awarded three or more times (SL or HL).
7. Grade 3 or below has been awarded four or more times (SL or HL).
8. Candidate has gained fewer than 12 points on HL subjects (for candidates who register for four HL subjects, the three highest grades count).

9. Candidate has gained fewer than 9 points on SL subjects (candidates who register for two SL subjects must gain at least 5 points at SL).

## Types of Assessment

A variety of different methods are used to measure student achievement against the objectives for each course.

### External assessment

Examinations form the basis of the assessment for most courses because of their high levels of objectivity and reliability. They include:

- essays
- structured problems
- short-response questions
- data-response questions
- text-response questions
- case-study questions
- multiple-choice questions (limited use of these).

There is also a small number of other externally assessed pieces of work, for example, TOK essays, extended essays and language and literature assignments. These are completed by students over an extended period under teacher supervision instead of examination conditions and are then marked by external IB examiners.

### Internal assessment (IA)

Teacher assessment is also used for most courses. This includes:

- oral work in languages
- fieldwork in Environmental Systems and Societies
- laboratory work in the sciences
- investigations in mathematics
- exhibitions
- portfolios of finished films
- artistic performances

Internal assessments are checked by external IB examiners and normally contribute between 20% and 40% of the total mark.

The Arts courses, with the exception of Music, have no final external examinations.

# IB Diploma Programme Subjects Offered at BISB

**All IB Diploma candidates follow six subjects, one from each of the six subject groups (another subject from Groups 2-4 may be taken in place of an Arts subject in Group 6). They must also take at least three subjects at Higher Level (HL) and three subjects at Standard Level (SL).**

## Group 1 – Studies in Language and Literature

### **English A: Literature (Higher Level and Standard Level)**

This course aims to explore the depth and richness of literature in all its forms. Students study thirteen texts at Higher Level or nine at Standard Level focusing on three key Areas of Exploration: Readers, Writers and Texts, Time and Space, and Intertextuality. The aim of the course is to transcend cultures and time periods to explore issues that have global resonance.

### **English A: Language & Literature (Higher Level and Standard Level)**

The course allows students to explore language in its many forms and uses. Students will study everything from classic literature to pictures and social media across three areas of exploration: Readers, Writers and Texts, Time and Space, and Intertextuality. The aim of the course is to engage with contemporary global issues and the role that language plays within them.

## Group 2 – Language Acquisition

### **French or Spanish B (Higher Level and Standard Level)**

Language B is a foreign language course for students with previous experience of learning the language. It is primarily a language acquisition program, although some literature is studied in the HL course as a means of understanding the diverse use of the language. The emphasis in the language B program is on communicative skills in speech and writing, and on learning about the culture of the countries where the language is spoken.

Aside from the literature component at HL, the main difference between the HL and the SL courses is that HL students are expected to show a much wider range of vocabulary, a firm command of grammar and an effective use of complex sentence structures. As a rule of thumb, we expect about 3-5 years of previous learning for the SL course, and 5+ years of previous learning for the HL course. However, what is appropriate will vary individually and the school is happy to advise students about the choice of level.

### **French or Spanish *Ab Initio* (Standard Level only)**

Offered at SL, this is a foreign language learning program for absolute beginners.

## Group 3 – Individuals and Societies

### **Business Management (Higher Level and Standard Level)**

Individuals, firms and governments must constantly make choices, which will affect their own economic wellbeing and that of society as a whole. How these choices are made and the analysis of their consequences is central to the field Business Management. Both HL and SL students cover the same topics, but in the HL course these topics are studied in more depth.

### **History (Higher Level and Standard Level)**

Both History HL and SL classes study a selection of twentieth century world history topics. At HL students also study one regional option in depth, currently the Americas. Students develop the ability to interpret a wide variety of source material and to discuss and debate the divergent views of historians.

### **Psychology (Standard Level)**

Students study a broad range of psychological approaches throughout the course: the biological, cognitive and sociocultural. By exploring a range of research methods, students are encouraged to be critical of their research methodology when conducting their own experiments.

## Group 4 – Experimental Sciences

### **Biology (Higher Level and Standard Level)**

Biology is the scientific study of living things and how they function. It is an experimental science that combines academic study with practical and investigational skills. The core themes are: cell biology, molecular biology, genetics, ecology, evolution and biodiversity, and human physiology. HL students study some topics in greater depth and some additional topics, such as plant biology and animal physiology.

### **Chemistry (Higher Level and Standard Level)**

Chemical principles underpin both the physical environment in which we live and all biological systems, and chemistry is a pre-requisite for many science higher education courses. It is an experimental science that combines academic study with practical and investigational skills. The core themes are: stoichiometric relationships, atomic structure, periodicity, chemical bonding and structure, energetics, chemical kinetics, equilibrium, acids and bases, redox processes, organic chemistry, and measurement and data processing. The HL course goes into greater depth.

### **Physics (Higher Level and Standard Level)**

Physics is the study of the properties and interactions of matter and energy. It is an experimental science that combines academic study with practical and investigational skills. The core themes are: measurement and uncertainties, mechanics, thermal physics, waves, electricity and magnetism, circular motion and gravitation, atomic, nuclear and particle physics, and energy production. The HL course goes into the topics in greater depth. No specific level of achievement in Mathematics is required for any IB science course, but HL physics students are often advised to combine it with HL mathematics, and SL physics students are advised to take SL mathematics.

### **Computer Science (Higher Level)**

Computational thinking lies at the heart of the course and is integrated with other topics. This will be supported by practical activities including programming, a case study and a project to develop a product and associated documentation. Themes covered include computer systems, computer organization and networks. HL students additionally study abstract data structures, resource management and control.

### **Environmental Systems and Societies (Standard Level only)**

Environmental systems and societies (ESS) is an interdisciplinary course offered only at standard level (SL). This course can fulfill either the Individuals and Societies or the Sciences requirement. Alternatively, this course enables students to satisfy the requirements of both subject groups simultaneously while studying one course. ESS is firmly grounded in both a scientific exploration of environmental systems in their structure and function, and in the exploration of cultural, economic, ethical, political and social interactions of societies with the environment. As a result of studying this course, students will become equipped with the ability to recognize and evaluate the impact of our complex system of societies on the natural world.

## Group 5 – Mathematics

### **Mathematics: Analysis and Approaches (Higher Level and Standard Level)**

The emphasis of the Analysis and Approaches course is a deeper understanding of the core mathematical concepts with a particular emphasis on algebraic methods, developing strong skills in mathematical thinking and the ability to apply this understanding to real and abstract mathematical problem solving. This is a suitable course for students interested in mathematics, engineering, physical sciences, and some economics. At Higher Level, this course is a very challenging mathematics program, designed for students with a strong background and good ability in mathematics.

### **Mathematics: Applications and Interpretations (Higher and Standard Level)**

The Applications and Interpretations course has a heavier focus on understanding that data and the ability to interpret it within the appropriate contexts is at the heart of many modern industries. Therefore, within the Applications and Interpretations course, there is an emphasis on modelling, statistics, and developing strong skills in applying mathematics to the real-world. The course places a greater emphasis on Functions and Statistics and Probability, particularly at Standard Level.

## Group 6 – Arts and Electives

### **Film (Higher Level and Standard Level)**

The DP Film course is one that encourages students to understand, appreciate and critique the full spectrum of the filmmaking process. Practical filmmaking exercises are complemented by reflections on the process which encourages students to reflect on their intentions as well as their ability to collaborate. The course also encourages diversity in the films which are used for written and multimedia analysis. Students are required to have a detailed understanding of a film's political, economic, geographic, historic and social context in order to show a true appreciation of a film's purpose and reception.

### **Theatre (Higher Level and Standard Level)**

This course is a multifaceted theatre-making course of study. It gives students the opportunity to make theatre as creators, designers, directors and performers. It emphasizes the importance of working both individually and collaboratively as part of an ensemble. It offers the opportunity to engage actively in the creative process, transforming ideas into action as inquisitive and productive artists.

### **Visual Arts (Higher Level and Standard Level)**

Students of visual arts study three interrelated areas: visual arts in context, visual arts methods and communicating visual arts. Visual arts in context provides a lens through which students are encouraged to explore perspectives, theories and cultures that inform and influence visual arts practice. Visual arts methods address ways of making artwork through the exploration and acquisition of skills, techniques and processes, and through engagement with a variety of media and methods. Communicating visual arts involves students investigating, understanding and applying the processes involved in selecting work for exhibition and public display. The HL students go into greater depth and breadth with their exploration of these three areas.

**Further online course options are available through IB accredited provider [Pamoja Education](#). Whilst these offerings broaden course options, before considering them students must discuss their ideas with our IB coordinator.**