

IB Diploma Programme

The Diploma Programme (DP) curriculum is made up of six subject groups and the DP core.

The three core elements are

- Theory of knowledge (TOK), in which students reflect on the nature of knowledge and on how we know what we claim to know.
- The extended essay (EE), which is an independent, self-directed piece of research, finishing with a 4,000-word essay.
- Creativity, activity, service (CAS), for which students complete a final project related to those three concepts.

The six subject groups are:

1. Studies in language and literature
2. Language acquisition
3. Individuals and societies
4. Sciences
5. Mathematics
6. The arts

Choosing subjects in the Diploma Programme

Students choose courses from each subject group, however, students may opt to study an additional sciences, individuals and societies, or languages course, instead of a course in the arts.

Students will take some subjects at higher level (HL) and some at standard level (SL). HL and SL courses differ in scope but are measured according to the same grade descriptors, with students expected to demonstrate a greater body of knowledge, understanding and skills at the higher level.

Each student takes at least three (but not more than four) subjects at higher level, and the remaining at standard level.

Standard level subjects take up 150 teaching hours. Higher level comprises 240 teaching hours.

Group 1: Language and Literature

Language A: Language and Literature - English

The language A: language and literature course introduces the critical study and interpretation of written and spoken texts from a wide range of literary forms and non literary text-types. The formal analysis of texts is supplemented by awareness that meaning is not fixed but can change in respect to contexts of production and consumption.

The course is organized into three areas of exploration and seven central concepts, and focuses on the study of both literary or non-literary texts. Together, the three areas of exploration of the course allow

the student to explore the language A in question through its cultural development and use, its media forms and functions, and its literature. Students develop skills of literary and textual analysis, and also the ability to present their ideas effectively. A key aim is the development of critical literacy.

Group 2: Language Acquisition

Language B: Spanish and French

The language B courses are language acquisition courses for students with some previous experience of the target language.

Students develop the ability to communicate in the target language through the study of language, themes and texts. In doing so, they also develop conceptual understandings of how language works. Communication is evidenced through receptive, productive and interactive skills across a range of contexts and purposes that are appropriate to the level of the course (and beyond those for language ab initio).

The language B syllabus is organized into five prescribed themes: identities, experiences, human ingenuity, social organization and sharing the planet. Optional recommended topics and possible questions for each theme are presented in the guide, but are not prescribed.

For more information go to: [Language B in the DP](#)

Language Ab Initio: Spanish and French

The language ab initio course is a language acquisition course for students with no prior experience of the target language, or for those students with very limited previous experience.

Students develop the ability to communicate in the target language through the study of language, themes and texts. In doing so, they also develop conceptual understandings of how language works. Communication is evidenced through receptive, productive and interactive skills across a range of contexts and purposes that are appropriate to the level of the course.

The language ab initio syllabus is organized into five prescribed themes: identities, experiences, human ingenuity, social organization and sharing the planet. The language ab initio syllabus prescribes four topics for each of the five prescribed themes for a total of 20 topics that must be addressed in the language ab initio course.

For more information go to: [Language Ab Initio in the DP](#)

Group 3: Individuals and Societies

History

History is a dynamic, contested, evidence-based discipline that involves an exciting engagement with the past.

The Diploma Programme (DP) history course is a world history course based on a comparative, multi-perspective approach to history and focused around key historical concepts such as change, causation and significance. It involves the study of a variety of types of history, including political, economic, social and cultural, encouraging students to think historically and to develop historical skills. In this way, the course involves a challenging and demanding critical exploration of the past.

The DP history course requires students to study and compare examples from different regions of the world, helping to foster international mindedness. Teachers have a great deal of freedom to choose relevant examples to explore with their students, helping to ensure that the course meets their students' needs and interests regardless of their location or context.

For more information go to: [History in the DP](#)

Economics

Economics is an exciting, dynamic subject that allows students to develop an understanding of the complexities and interdependence of economic activities in a rapidly changing world.

At the heart of economic theory is the problem of scarcity. While the world's population has unlimited needs and wants, there are limited resources to satisfy these needs and wants. As a result of this scarcity, choices have to be made. The DP economics course, uses economic theories to examine the ways in which these choices are made:

- at the level of producers and consumers in individual markets (microeconomics)
- at the level of the government and the national economy (macroeconomics)
- at an international level where countries are becoming increasingly interdependent through international trade and the movement of labour and capital (the global economy).

By focusing on the six real-world issues through the nine key concepts (scarcity, choice, efficiency, equity, economic well-being, sustainability, change, interdependence and intervention), students of the DP economics course will develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that will encourage them to act responsibly as global citizens.

For more information go to: [Economics in the DP](#)

Group 4: The Sciences

Biology

Biologists investigate the living world at all levels using many different approaches and techniques.

At one end of the scale is the cell, its molecular construction and complex metabolic reactions. At the other end of the scale biologists investigate the interactions that make whole ecosystems function. Many discoveries remain to be made and great progress is expected in the 21st century.

For more information go to: [Biology in the DP](#)

Chemistry

Chemistry is an experimental science that combines academic study with the acquisition of practical and investigational skills.

It is often called the central science as chemical principles underpin both the physical environment in which we live and all biological systems. Apart from being a subject worthy of study in its own right, chemistry is often a prerequisite for many other courses in higher education, such as medicine, biological science and environmental science.

For more information go to: [Chemistry in the DP](#)

Physics

Physics is the most fundamental of the experimental sciences, as it seeks to explain the universe itself from the very smallest particles to the vast distances between galaxies.

Despite the exciting and extraordinary development of ideas throughout the history of physics, observations remain essential to the very core of the subject. Models are developed to try to understand observations, and these themselves can become theories that attempt to explain the observations.

For more information go to: [Physics in the DP](#)

Group 5: Mathematics

Mathematics: Application and Interpretations

Mathematics Applications and Interpretation is a course designed for students who wish to gain a good knowledge of mathematics, but with an emphasis on the applied nature of the subject. They may have found more traditional mathematics courses a challenge and it will appeal to students who enjoy the practical application of mathematics to real life situations. This course is suitable for students who may go on to further study in subjects that utilise mathematics in this way such as biology, the human sciences and business.

Mathematics: Analysis and Approaches

Mathematics Analysis and Approaches is a course designed for students who wish to study mathematics in-depth and gain a formal understanding of the subject. It will appeal to students who are interested in exploring real and abstract applications of mathematical concepts. They will enjoy problem solving and generalisation. This course is suitable for students who may go on to further study in subjects that have a significant level of mathematics content, for example economics, chemistry, mathematics, engineering, or physical sciences.

For more information go to: [Mathematics in the DP](#)

Group 6: The Arts

Visual Arts

The visual arts are an integral part of everyday life, permeating all levels of human creativity, expression, communication and understanding.

They range from traditional forms embedded in local and wider communities, societies and cultures, to the varied and divergent practices associated with new, emerging and contemporary forms of visual language. They may have socio-political impact as well as ritual, spiritual, decorative and functional value; they can be persuasive and subversive in some instances, enlightening and uplifting in others. We celebrate the visual arts not only in the way we create images and objects, but also in the way we appreciate, enjoy, respect and respond to the practices of art-making by others from around the world. Theories and practices in visual arts are dynamic and ever-changing, and connect many areas of knowledge and human experience through individual and collaborative exploration, creative production and critical interpretation.

The IB Diploma Programme visual arts course encourages students to challenge their own creative and cultural expectations and boundaries. It is a thought-provoking course in which students develop analytical skills in problem-solving and divergent thinking, while working towards technical proficiency and confidence as art-makers. In addition to exploring and comparing visual arts from different perspectives and in different contexts, students are expected to engage in, experiment with and critically reflect upon a wide range of contemporary practices and media. The course is designed for students who want to go on to study visual arts in higher education as well as for those who are seeking lifelong enrichment through visual arts.

For more information go to: [Visual arts in the DP](#)

The IBDP Core

Theory of Knowledge (TOK)

Theory of knowledge (TOK) plays a special role in the International Baccalaureate® (IB) Diploma Programme (DP), by providing an opportunity for students to reflect on the nature of knowledge, and on how we know what we claim to know. It is one of the components of the DP core and is mandatory for all students. The TOK requirement is central to the educational philosophy of the DP.

How is TOK structured?

As a thoughtful and purposeful inquiry into different ways of knowing, and into different kinds of knowledge, TOK is composed almost entirely of questions.

The most central of these is "How do we know?", while other questions include:

- What counts as evidence for X?
- How do we judge which is the best model of Y?
- What does theory Z mean in the real world?

Through discussions of these and other questions, students gain greater awareness of their personal and ideological assumptions, as well as developing an appreciation of the diversity and richness of cultural perspectives.

Assessment of TOK

The TOK course is assessed through an oral presentation and a 1,600 word essay. The presentation assesses the ability of the student to apply TOK thinking to a real-life situation, while the essay takes a more conceptual starting point. For example, the essay may ask students to discuss the claim that the methodologies used to produce knowledge depend on the use to which that knowledge will be used.

What is the significance of TOK?

TOK aims to make students aware of the interpretative nature of knowledge, including personal ideological biases – whether these biases are retained, revised or rejected. It offers students and their teachers the opportunity to:

- reflect critically on diverse ways of knowing and on areas of knowledge
- consider the role and nature of knowledge in their own culture, in the cultures of others and in the wider world.

In addition, TOK prompts students to:

- be aware of themselves as thinkers, encouraging them to become more acquainted with the complexity of knowledge
- recognize the need to act responsibly in an increasingly interconnected but uncertain world.
- TOK also provides coherence for the student, by linking academic subject areas as well as transcending them.

It therefore demonstrates the ways in which the student can apply their knowledge with greater awareness and credibility.

Extended Essay (EE)

The extended essay is a required component of the International Baccalaureate® (IB) Diploma Programme (DP). It is an independent piece of research, culminating with a 4,000-word paper.

What is the significance of the extended essay?

The extended essay provides:

- practical preparation for undergraduate research
- an opportunity for students to investigate a topic of personal interest to them, which relates to one of the student's six DP subjects, or takes the interdisciplinary approach of a World Studies extended essay.

Through the research process for the extended essay, students develop skills in:

- formulating an appropriate research question
- engaging in a personal exploration of the topic
- communicating ideas
- developing an argument.

Participation in this process develops the capacity to analyze, synthesize and evaluate knowledge.

An extended essay can also be undertaken in world studies, where students carry out an in-depth interdisciplinary study of an issue of contemporary global significance, across two IB diploma disciplines.

How is study of the extended essay structured?

Students are supported throughout the process of researching and writing the extended essay, with advice and guidance from a supervisor who is usually a teacher at the school. Students are required to have three mandatory reflection sessions with their supervisors. The final session, a concluding interview, is also known as viva voce.

The extended essay and reflection sessions can be a valuable stimulus for discussion in countries where interviews are required prior to acceptance for employment or for a place at university.

Creativity, Activity, and Service (CAS)

What do CAS projects involve?

CAS requires students to take part in a range of experiences and at least one project. These should involve:

- real, purposeful activities, with significant outcomes
- personal challenge
- thoughtful consideration, such as planning, reviewing progress, reporting
- reflection on outcomes and personal learning

We don't prescribe specific projects or activities to students. All students should be involved in activities they've initiated themselves. IB World Schools will then suggest particular projects.