

The International Baccalaureate Diploma

Growing in popularity around the world, the IB Diploma Programme, for students aged between 16 and 19 years, is well respected by parents, teachers and employers alike, as JANE VERNON SMITH discovers.

With demand being generated worldwide, the IB Diploma Programme (IBDP) is widely offered and is particularly popular with international students wherever they may be studying, thanks to the global-minded outlook that it promotes.

"The IB programmes are, and always have been, popular with our international students," says Marie-Louise Brown, IB Co-ordinator at the Anglo-European School <http://acessex.co.uk> in the UK, "as these are students that may want to study or work abroad post sixth-form, and the IB is perfect for this. The subjects in IB are always set in a global context too, and this suits students who may struggle with traditional British courses where the focus is, perhaps, narrower."

At Brookes Shawnigan Lake School www.shawnigan.brookes.org (formerly Dwight School, and renamed in September 2016 to reflect its membership of Brookes Education Group) in Shawnigan Lake, Canada, home countries of this year's IB graduates include Japan, China, Hong Kong and Vietnam. Linda Bayes from the school comments, "The IBDP appeals to both domestic and international students for a variety of reasons. International students know that the IB will give them a stronger application to post-secondary institutions, and, since it is an international credential, they will not be limited to a particular country to study."

Demand from Asia is rising, according to fellow Canadian schools, Luther College High School www.luthercollege.edu in Regina and Lower Canada College www.lcc.ca in Montreal. At the same time, the number of schools offering IB programmes in the Asia-Pacific region has also been enjoying strong growth of late, according to IBO data, with recent authorisations there raising the total number of participating schools to 700 across 29 countries.

New Zealand's Rangitoto College www.rangitoto.school.nz is offering the IBDP for the first time in 2016, alongside the New Zealand national qualification, NCEA. In this first year, notes Marketing

and Relationship Manager, Beth Leyland, 15 students have opted to take the qualification, and it has attracted a number of Korean and Chinese students.

"Our school chose the IB," she explains, "because we wanted to offer a more international course, which would be recognised around the world... We believe that the IB prepares students well for tertiary study and employment and that it produces more well-rounded students, who are ready for the challenges ahead."

She relates that the decision involved a large amount of work to ensure the school

"The subjects in the IB programme are always set in a global context"

was fully prepared. "It was a long and thorough process...and involved trainers visiting the school and our staff travelling abroad. New classes were timetabled into our system to accommodate the IB classes, and the whole school was given professional development around the decision to provide a new course, the process we went through in deciding which course to select, and the details of the IB Diploma Programme."

Elsewhere in New Zealand, the programme has been offered at Diocesan School for Girls www.diocesan.school.nz in Auckland since 2008. Commenting on the programme, the school's Director of International Students, Simone

Clark, observes, "The IBDP fits with our strategic vision to inspire leadership, foster meaningful relationships and grow knowledge in an innovative, quality environment. The values of independent thinking, academic excellence, community service and respect for others underpin the IB approach to learning, as well as our own school philosophy," she says.

Comparing the programme with the Advanced Placement (AP) programme which is available in the USA and Canada, offering college-level courses to school-age students, Derek Frostad, IB Co-ordinator at Luther College High School, points out that both are rigorous, advanced programmes that can earn students university credits. However for the IB, this is not central to its mission and philosophy, he observes. Rather, according to its mission statement, it "aims to develop enquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect."

There are many other reasons why participating schools adopt the IBDP. Derek also highlights the fact that, "Almost all exams are in written response format, marked by human beings, ensuring a greater validity of assessment." On top of that, he notes that IB schools are expected to adhere to high standards in order to maintain authorisation to offer the Diploma Programme, with their status being reviewed every five years.

In the UK, St Clare's, Oxford www.stclares.ac.uk, which has been teaching

Key facts

- There are four IB programmes:
 - the Primary Years Programme (PYP), for students aged 3-to-12 years
 - the Middle Years Programme (MYP), for students aged 11-to-16 years
 - the Diploma Programme (DP), for students aged 16-to-19 years
 - the IB Career-related Programme (CP), providing career-related education leading to further/higher education, apprenticeships or employment, for students aged 16-to-19 years
- On 1 February 2016, there were 5,578 IB programmes being offered worldwide, across 4,335 schools
- Established in 1968, the IB Diploma Programme was the first programme offered by the IB
- The Career-related Programme is the most recent, having been introduced in 2012
- IB programmes are currently offered in three languages: English, French and Spanish
- According to IBO data, just under 62 per cent of IB schools are in the Americas, just over 22 per cent are in Africa, Europe and the Middle East, and 16 per cent are located in the Asia-Pacific region
- Between February 2011 and February 2016, the number of IB programmes offered worldwide grew by 46.4 per cent

the IB Diploma for longer than any other school or college in England, according to Business Manager, Richard Gorst, “The Diploma fitted our ethos and the international nature of this place. The college was founded after the second world war and our mission was then, and still is today, to ‘advance international education and understanding’.”

The Anglo-European School was the UK’s first state school to offer the programme in 1977. According to Marie-Louise, the main benefit of the programme is its breadth of study. “Refining your future to three or four subjects aged 16 [as is the case with the UK’s A-level system] doesn’t really suit many students,” she remarks. “Studying six subjects at an advanced level means that even those students preferring the sciences will have a high standard of literacy and those more literature-focused or artistic students will still be numerate to a good level.”

Furthermore, individual schools choose their IB subjects from a wide range available. “As a small school,” says Helen Taylor-Cevey, IBDP Co-ordinator at Switzerland’s Collège Alpin Beau Soleil www.beausoleil.ch, “we offer an incredible variety of subjects, such as eight taught mother-tongue languages (English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Japanese) and five sciences (Biology, Chemistry and Physics, plus the applied sciences of Environmental Systems and Sport, Exercise and Health Science).”

She adds, “We offer courses which are accepted worldwide and are known as being strong preparation for university, no matter what field a student chooses for his/her future career.”

Lower Canada College has recently widened the study opportunities open to its IB students through the introduction of online courses provided by Pamoja Education. These are IB-approved and count

A selection of schools offering the IB diploma programme

Country	School	No. pupils (total)	No. international pupils	No. studying for IB diploma	PYP/MYP offered?	Teaching language for IB diploma	Accommodation type
Canada	Brookes Shawnigan Lake School, Shawnigan Lake www.shawnigan.brookes.org	145	89	26*	MYP	English	Boarding
Canada	Lower Canada College, Montreal www.lcc.ca	c775	100	75-80		English	Host family
Canada	Luther College High School, Regina www.luthercollege.edu	460	65	16		English	Boarding
Czech Republic	Carlsbad International School, Karlový Vary http://carlsbadschool.cz	75	72	40		English	Boarding
New Zealand	Diocesan School for Girls, Auckland www.diocesan.school.nz	1,350	60	42	PYP	English	Boarding
New Zealand	Rangitoto College, Mairangi Bay www.rangitoto.school.nz	3,200	262	15		English	Host family
Spain	Colegio San Patricio, Madrid www.colegiosanpatricio.es	550	30	35	PYP, MYP	Spanish, English	Boarding
Switzerland	Collège Alpin Beau Soleil, Villars-sur-Ollon www.beausoleil.ch	238	238	65		English	Boarding
Thailand	The Regent’s International School, Bangkok www.regents.ac.th	640	224	60		English	Boarding
UK	Anglo-European School, Ingatstone http://aessex.co.uk	1,200	–	75		English	–
UK	Haileybury, Hertford www.haileybury.com	759	–	110		English	Boarding
UK	St Clare’s, Oxford www.stclares.ac.uk	288	256	288		English	Boarding and day students
USA	Cheshire Academy, Cheshire (CT) www.cheshireacademy.org	430	135	37		English	Boarding
USA	St George’s School, Spokane (WA) www.sgs.org	550	38	c14		English (with option to take a some classes in student’s native language)	Host family

* remaining students studying IB subjects

towards the IB Diploma, advises the school’s Director of Enrolment and Communications, Dawn Levy, who adds, “This has had its most profound impact on our ability to offer alternative language courses to international students.” Pamoja Education online courses are also offered as an extra by St George’s School www.sgs.org in the USA for an additional fee.

Meanwhile, at fellow US school, Cheshire Academy www.cheshireacademy.org, a number of recent course additions have enhanced the ability of students whose mother tongue is not English to pursue the IB Diploma, notes Cody Barbierrri, Associate Director of Social Media, Public Relations and Sports Information at the school. These courses include Literature & Performance, History of the Americas and Sports, Exercise and Health Science, all at standard level in 2015, and English Literature, Physics, Environmental Systems & Societies, Computer Science, Music (all at standard level) as well as Music at higher level for 2016-17.

A further advantage of the IB, according to Gema Sepò Llanos, International Department Co-ordinator at Colego San Patricio www.colegiosanpatricio.es in Spain, is that, “The IBDP, by its very nature, is constantly being revised and updated, both in terms of the syllabus content for each subject, [but] also the manner in which it is evaluated. This allows the course to keep abreast of current trends and developments without having to cede to current fads or fashions,” she highlights.

While some schools offer the IB Diploma Programme exclusively, others also



PHOTOS: CHESHIRE ACADEMY

provide an alternative study route for 16- to-18 year-olds, while others allow students who have elected not to study for the full diploma to take some IB classes.

Gema seeks to clear up what she sees as a misapprehension about the IB. "There does seem to have existed a perception that the IBDP is only for certain types of mainly academically brilliant students, but, in our experience, this is not the case at all," she comments. "While it is a demanding programme, it is flexible enough to cater for many different types of student, and its insistence on developing the personal qualities of the student through the Learner Profile, allow it to be much broader in scope than a more traditional programme." Having introduced the IBDP in September 2015, the school now only offers this study route at sixth-form level.

At Carlsbad International School <http://carlsbadschool.cz> in Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic, which also began offering the programme in 2015, Associate Director of Admissions, Thomas Keen, concurs with this view, noting, "It is challenging, but it is far from exclusive. The only students we don't recommend taking the IBDP are those who simply don't have the foundation of academic English to be successful," he

comments. "That being said, those students can still receive IB certificates for subjects where English language knowledge is not requisite to [being] successful, such as Mathematics or Art."

All students take the IB at Regent's International School www.regents.ac.th in Thailand, and Principal, Peter Hogan, points out that those who struggle with the demands of the full diploma – such as those who fail to satisfy the entire set of requirements or who opt to take fewer than six subjects – may be awarded an IB Certificate. According to Peter, the full

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diploma is suitable for more academically able students who have at least five A* to C grades at GCSE level.

St George's School, Spokane, in the USA began offering IB classes in autumn 2014, and now expects all students to attempt the diploma, according to IB Co-ordinator and International Student Co-ordinator, Elizabeth Tender. She underlines that whether a student is a candidate for the

full diploma, someone who is sitting only certain IB exams or someone only seeking a St George's School diploma, most courses are taught at the same level.

At Haileybury www.haileybury.com in the UK, pupils are offered a choice between the IBDP and UK A-levels. The percentage taking the IB Diploma is about 40 per cent, and, says IB Co-ordinator, Kate Brazier, "It is a personal choice, although sometimes we do recommend one programme over the other for certain individuals."

Two alternative pathways are on offer, meanwhile, at Anglo-European School – the IB Careers programme and A-levels. Students are able to select one route, or they may take a combination of A levels and IB subjects. "Diploma students tend to be academic all-rounders who lead busy and active lives outside of their studies," she comments. Currently, says Marie-Louise, 60 per cent of the cohort adopt a pathway involving the IB in some way.

Canada's Luther College is similarly flexible in its approach, with Derek noting that, "In our incoming grade 10 class [in autumn 2015], 81 per cent of students elected to take at least one IB class, and 20 per cent elected to take the full IB Diploma." *jus@studytravel.network*




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