



PRINCE  
ALFRED  
COLLEGE



# IBDP Handbook

For students commencing the Diploma in 2026

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**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.**

## INQUIRERS

**KNOWLEDGEABLE**

## THINKERS

## COMMUNICATORS

## PRINCIPLED

## OPEN-MINDED

## CARING

## RISK-TAKERS

## BALANCED

## REFLECTIVE

**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.**

## Introduction

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) is a comprehensive and engaging pre-university course taken in Years 11 and 12. The programme offers students:

1. a balanced and stimulating academic experience, that develops lifelong learners who can contribute to solving global issues of the future
2. an internationally respected university entrance qualification into universities in Australia and worldwide
3. rigorous and engaging education that prepares students for success at university and beyond, through the development of high level critical thinking, communication and research skills
4. an opportunity to develop a sense of their own cultural and personal identities, while respecting and engaging with the alternative perspectives of others
5. development as critical and compassionate thinkers who are able to put their knowledge into action in principled and caring ways

The IB Diploma Programme is successful and is growing exponentially. The IB works with over 5700 schools in 160 countries to offer the four IB programmes to well over a million students. The Diploma Programme for students aged 16 to 19 started in 1968 with first examinations in 1970 and is now offered by over 4000 IB World Schools. 80 schools are currently offering the IB Diploma in Australia. Thousands of individual examiners worldwide participate in the assessment of student work. Prince Alfred College has been teaching the IB Diploma Programme since 1997. Over the last five years, the median ATAR of IB diploma students is over 95.



# The IB Diploma Programme

The IB Diploma Programme offers a balance between the benefits of a broad education and the opportunity for specialisation in areas of interest. In all subjects the emphasis is on the mastery of subject content along with the development of critical thinking, research, written and reflective skills. To achieve a broad and balanced programme students must choose one subject from the six subject groups below, with the exception of the Arts, which may be replaced by a second subject from groups 2, 3 or 4. Students must choose three subjects for study in greater depth at Higher Level (HL) and three subjects for study in somewhat lesser depth at Standard Level (SL).

## Group 1: Language and Literature

English A Literature

Chinese A Literature

By negotiation with the IBDP Coordinator, Literature may also be studied as a self-taught subject in a student's first language.

## Group 2: Language Acquisition

Chinese B

English B

French B

Italian B (May examination session)

Spanish ab initio

Other languages may be available through negotiation with the IBDP Coordinator.

## Group 3: Individuals and Societies

Economics

History

Environmental Systems and Societies (SL anticipated only)

## Group 4: Experimental Sciences

Biology

Chemistry

Physics

Sports, Exercise and Health Science

Environmental Systems and Societies (SL anticipated only)

## Group 5: Mathematics

Mathematics: analysis and approaches

Mathematics: applications and interpretations (SL only)

## Group 6

Film

Music

or a second subject from Group 2, 3 or 4

## The IB Core (TOK, EE, CAS)

In addition to the above subjects, the Diploma student must complete the IB Diploma core which is made up of three additional requirements:

- (1) The **Theory of knowledge** course (ToK).

This is an engaging interdisciplinary course that provides students an opportunity to bring together their learning in different subjects and reflect on the ways that disciplines produce knowledge. Students examine perspectives on the methodology underlying disciplines, and how contemporary debates in politics, language and technology are shaped by knowledge issues. The ToK course teaches students valuable critical thinking skills such as arguing perspectives, analysing arguments and linking abstract ideas to real life examples.

- (2) The **Extended essay**

This project offers the opportunity to investigate a topic of special interest and acquaints students with the kind of independent research and writing skills expected at university. Students work with a supervisor over the two years to write a 4000 word research essay in one of the subject areas they are studying.

- (3) Actively participate in **Creativity, Activity, Service** (CAS).

CAS involves students in a range of activities alongside their academic studies throughout the Diploma Programme.

**Creativity:** arts and other experiences that involve creative thinking.

**Activity:** physical exertion contributing to a healthy lifestyle.

**Service:** an unpaid and voluntary exchange that has a learning benefit for the student.

Students are able to use their co-curricular participation in sport, music and drama productions to fulfil their CAS requirements.

## Why should I study the IB Diploma Programme?

These are some of the key reasons why students should choose to study the IB Diploma:

### Recognised and Respected Globally

The IB is a prestigious qualification widely respected by leading universities in Australia and throughout the world. IB graduates are recognised for their depth of knowledge, commitment to principles, extra-curricular achievements, and their high quality research, writing and thinking skills. This translates into favourable entry into prestigious universities worldwide, as well as access to credits and selection rank adjustments in Australia (see below for further information on the Universities Language, Literacy and Mathematics Scheme and the University of Adelaide IB Recognition Scheme). International students, or boys whose first language is not English, can study a literature subject and complete an Extended Essay in their first language, which will enable them to receive a Bilingual Diploma which satisfies language proficiency requirements for universities in both languages, thereby keeping options open for study within Australia or internationally.

### Advantageous ATAR

Over the last five years, the median ATAR of PAC IB diploma students is over 95. The extra challenge of the IB Diploma is recognised with advantageous ATAR conversions. For students seeking a high ATAR for entry into competitive degrees, the IB has an advantage in that there is no scaling applied to IB subject results. This means that Standard Level subjects are equal to Higher Level subjects in their contribution to ATAR. IB scores in the 40+ range receive ATARs of 97 and above. In the past five years, 38% of PAC IB graduates have achieved a score in this range, which translates to even higher selection ranks for SA universities for most degrees.

But the IB Diploma is not just for the high performers. Mid-range students benefit enormously from the generous ATAR

conversions they receive as IB graduates. A student with straight B grades in SACE is likely to get an ATAR of 80.00 at maximum, or as low as 60.00, depending on the scaling applied. A student who achieves equivalent grades in the IBDP could receive an ATAR of between 85.30 and 88.75, or up to 93.30 for SA universities, after adjustment factors. An IB score of 35 – very achievable for most PAC students - is enough to get entrance to Law at University of Adelaide.

### **Find who you are and what you stand for**

In the IB, you study the why, not just the what: you engage with perspectives and debates that help you to find who you are and what you stand for. The design of the curriculum takes you beyond learning subjects in isolation, to make links between them and consider how you can use the knowledge you gain to make a difference in the world. This approach is built into the IB Core, and into the design of every subject. The ability to pursue your passions in depth in the Extended Essay and in the Internal Assessments of each subject is one of the strongest drawcards for IB students.

### **We support you to go as far as you can go**

Although the IB is challenging, we provide the support to take you as far as you can go. IB classes are engaging and focused, giving students the opportunity to engage in topics and discussions at a much deeper level than they might otherwise experience. Our IB staff are experts in their areas and passionate about the IB, and follow their classes through the full two years of the programme where possible, which creates strong relationships and tailored support for every boy's individual learning journey.

### **IB Graduates are different**

IB students develop a lifelong love of learning, and are better prepared for university. They learn to think, write and research at a very high level.

Recent independent research from the University of Oxford, University of Turku (Finland) and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) has demonstrated that IB Diploma students, compared with students of similar aptitude in other curriculum systems:

- have superior critical thinking, analysis and reasoning skills
- are better equipped to critically appraise information and detect "fake news"
- are more likely to gain entrance to university degrees at prestigious universities
- are more likely to succeed at university
- are more likely to complete their degree and enrol in postgraduate study

### **Balanced and Holistic education**

The IB offers a balanced, well-rounded education that means students don't narrow their focus too early, and have the opportunity to follow six subjects through to the end of school. This keeps options open for university and careers, and provides the communication skills and grounding in a broad range of subject areas for students to take on any challenge after school. Alongside this, the IB values extracurricular pursuits, and as part of the CAS programme, boys are encouraged to develop through pursuing personal interests and taking part in collaborative service to the community.

### **The IB Diploma works for boys**

Assessment in the IB Diploma is concentrated in exams at the end, which can suit boys' approaches to learning at this crucial age. This means boys are able to be assessed when they are at their best, at the end of the course. The structure reduces the pressure of managing multiple deadlines and allows for more time spent on learning and putting learning into action.

### **Comments from PAC IB Diploma graduates:**

*"...it prepared me exceptionally well for the diverse range of challenges that confront any teenager leaving high school and entering university."*

*"...I realised I just couldn't miss the opportunity to participate in something as life-changing as this course."*

*"...I enjoy it because it is rigorous and I am getting a good education."*

## Recognition of the Diploma by Universities



The clearest indication of the value of the IBDP has been the wide recognition it has received from Ministries of Education and universities around the world.

Since the first examinations were administered in 1970, over 500,000 students have earned the Diploma. Many of them have chosen to continue their studies, often in other countries, by using their IB credentials in making application.

The terms of recognition vary from country to country. In some instances a negotiated agreement between the IB and a central national authority has been drawn up thereby requiring all institutions in that country to accredit the Diploma in the same way. In others it is left to individual universities to define their own conditions. More information is available from the IB website.

### IB and Australian Universities

The IB Diploma has become well known at Australian Universities as an increasing number of IB students have been admitted. Comparability scales have been developed to compare IB scores with local scores. IB Diplomas are accepted for entry into courses at the University of Adelaide, Flinders University, University of South Australia and most other Australian Universities. Some Australian Universities offer credit for IB students. The University of Adelaide, for example offers up to 4 units of first year credit for each IB subject studied.

### IB and USA Colleges

Being an IB student can help students applying to USA colleges in two ways. Firstly, the fact that a student is attempting the IB Diploma shows that the student is committed to serious and challenging academic work. This may help gain admission to college. Secondly, many colleges award credit or advanced placement for good IB examination scores. There is considerable variation in credit policy between colleges, between departments within a college, and even from year to year.

### IB and UK Universities

The IB Diploma is well recognised by British universities. After considering the student's application submitted in the autumn before graduation the university may offer the student a place on the condition that they achieve certain IB grades. If she/he gets these grades she/he is guaranteed a place. If she/he just fails to achieve the required grades the university may still admit her/him if they have spare places following the publication of the UK examination results (A-levels) in August.



## Recognition of the Diploma by Universities

The Universities Language, Literacy and Mathematics Bonus Scheme encourages students to strengthen their preparation for undergraduate studies by undertaking a language other than English, or specified English and Mathematics subjects.

The Scheme will apply to all courses offered by Charles Darwin University, Flinders University, the University of Adelaide, University of South Australia, Tabor College of Higher Education and Torrens University Australia except:

### Charles Darwin University

- 114831 Bachelor of Clinical Sciences/Doctor of Medicine

### Flinders University

- 214941 Bachelor of Clinical Sciences/Doctor of Medicine

### The University of Adelaide

- 314552 Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery
- 314553 Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery (Bonded Medical place)
- 324491 Bachelor of Science (Veterinary Bioscience)

In this Scheme, students will be awarded two points, up to a total maximum of four points, for successfully completing a subject in any one of these four categories:

- A Group 2 Second Language subject
- English A Literature (SL or HL) or English A Language and Literature (SL or HL) or Literature and Performance (SL)
- Mathematics

Successful completion is defined as gaining a minimum grade of 3 if the subject has been taken at higher level (HL), or a minimum grade of 4 if the subject has been taken at standard level (SL). Because the Scheme is designed to encourage enrolments in these subjects rather than reward outcomes, no higher bonuses will be granted for higher achievement.

Refer to the University guides for further information.

## Award Ceremony

An award ceremony is held early in February each year at the Adelaide Town Hall in conjunction with the other IB schools in South Australia to celebrate the outstanding achievements of Diploma Graduates.



## Choosing your Diploma Programme Subjects

Use this document along with the Senior School Curriculum Handbook to make your selection and discuss these fully with your parents. Remember that you need to choose six subjects, one from each group and that 3 must be at Higher Level and 3 at Standard Level. Take into account:

1. Your interest and ability in the subject.
2. Your commitment to your studies and ability to work independently.
3. Your university and career plans - ask the IB Coordinator and Student Counsellors.

### IB subject groups

GROUP 1	English A, Chinese A
GROUP 2	Chinese B, French B, English B (ESL), Italian B, Spanish ab initio (SL only)
GROUP 3	History, Economics, Environmental Systems and Societies (ESS) (SL anticipated)*
GROUP 4	Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Sports, exercise and health science, ESS (SL anticipated)*
GROUP 5	Mathematics: analysis and approaches; Mathematics: applications and interpretations
GROUP 6	Film, Music or another subject from Groups 3 or 4

In making choices at Group 6, students should be very aware of their special interests and abilities. In particular, students with previous success in the arts should consider taking up one of the IB Arts offerings. Learning in the arts is an important part of the IB vision and reflects all aspects of the IB Learner Profile.

*\* ESS is a special subject that is anticipated (completed in one year) at SL only, and counts for either a science or a humanities subject requirement (or both)*

### Sample Diploma Programmes

Example 1: Humanities Focus

Subjects	Core Requirements
English A1 (HL)	Creativity, Activity, Service Theory of Knowledge Extended Essay
French B (SL)	
History (HL)	
Sports, exercise and health science (SL)	
Mathematics: analysis and approaches (SL)	
Economics (HL)	

Example 2: Science focus

Subjects	Core Requirements
English A1 (HL)	Creativity, Activity, Service Theory of knowledge Extended essay
Spanish ab initio (SL)	
Economics (SL)	
Chemistry (HL)	
Mathematics: analysis and approaches (HL)	
Physics (HL)	

Example 3: Talented musician / artist

Subjects	Core Requirements
English A1 (HL)	Creativity, Activity, Service Theory of Knowledge Extended Essay
Chinese B (SL)	
ESS (SL)	
Music (HL)	
Mathematics: applications and interpretations (SL)	
Film (HL)	

All students considering taking the Diploma should discuss their proposed subject choices with the IBDP Coordinator before completing course selection forms.

All IBDP subjects at Year 11 are accredited SACE Stage 1 subjects. ESS (anticipated) counts for 20 Stage 2 credits as part of Recognised Learning for the SACE.

IBDP students may either continue with DP in Year 12 or transfer into SACE Stage 2. SACE block recognition will be granted on the basis of satisfactory completion of DP studies. The SACE Board requires a DP score of 3 in English or Mathematics subjects, to meet the Literacy and Numeracy SACE requirements, and a grade of 3 or above for all other subjects.

## IB Assessment Methods

A variety of assessment techniques are used by the IB to award an IB grade. These techniques vary from subject to subject.

### 1. Internal Assessments

In some subjects a proportion of the final marks is based on assessment by the subject teacher. In all cases the teacher's assessment is moderated by IB examiners who require the school to submit samples of students' assessed work.

This applies to coursework in Languages, Individuals and Societies, Sciences, Mathematics, Arts and to the TOK Exhibition. Internally assessed work usually counts for about 20% of the final grade in a subject.

### 2. Oral Examinations - in Languages.

These are conducted by the subject teacher and recorded before being submitted to the IB examiners for moderation.

### 3. Written Examinations - in all subjects except Arts subjects and Theory of Knowledge.

These may include multiple choice tests, short answer questions, data and document based questions and essays. The examination scripts are marked by external examiners appointed by the IBO. The marking standards of these examiners are moderated by the Chief Examiner for the subject.

### 4. Theory of Knowledge

In Year 12, students are given a choice of six essay titles (prescribed by the IBO). They choose one to respond to. In addition, they must prepare and present an Exhibition. All Theory of Knowledge essays are marked by examiners appointed by the IB.

### 5. Extended Essay

Depending on the topics chosen, each student is assigned a mentor / teacher who supervises the student through the research process. All Extended Essays are marked by examiners appointed by the IB.

### 6. Creativity Activity Service Activities

Students complete self-evaluations of their activities and then activity supervisors also write a brief evaluation. These are then discussed with the CAS Coordinator. The IB Coordinator must verify that each student has completed all CAS requirements. Samples of CAS work are submitted to the IB as part of the IB evaluation process.

# IBDP Grading

The grading scheme used for IBDP examinations is as follows:

- 1 - Very poor

2 - Poor

3 - Mediocre

4 - Satisfactory
- 5 - Good

6 - Very good

7 - Excellent

A grade will not be awarded in any subject where the student has failed to complete any of the required assessment components.

For a Diploma student the grades achieved in the six subjects are added together to obtain a total points score. Bonus points are added to the total as follows:

## Bonus points matrix

		Theory of knowledge (ToK)				
Extended essay		Excellent A	Good B	Satisfactory C	Mediocre D	Elementary E
	Excellent A	+3	+3	+2	+2	Failing Condition
	Good B	+3	+2	+2	+1	
	Satisfactory C	+2	+2	+1	0	
	Mediocre D	+2	+1	0	0	
	Elementary E	Failing Condition				

A candidate who writes a **Good** Extended essay and whose performance in Theory of knowledge is judged to be **Satisfactory**, will be awarded 2 bonus points.

A candidate who fails to submit any work for Theory of Knowledge will not be awarded a Diploma. The failure to submit an Extended Essay is also a failing condition.

## IB Diploma Score

The maximum score for the IB Diploma is 45.

Students study six subjects with a possible score of 7 in each (6 x 7 = 42).

A maximum of 3 bonus points (ToK and Extended essay) is added to give the final possible total of 45.





## Conditions for the award of the Diploma

These conditions are an abridged version and should be read in conjunction with the following document published by the IBO – General Regulations: For students and their legal guardians, available at <http://www.ibo.org>.

All assessment components for each of the six subjects and the additional Diploma requirements must be completed in order to qualify for the award of the IB Diploma, except under the conditions stipulated in articles 18 and 19 of the IBO – General Regulations: For students and their legal guardians.

The IB Diploma will be awarded to a candidate provided all the following requirements have been met.

- CAS requirements have been met.
- The candidate's total points are 24 or more.
- There is no "N" awarded for Theory of Knowledge, the Extended Essay or for a contributing subject.
- There is no grade E awarded for Theory of Knowledge and/or the Extended Essay.
- There is no grade 1 awarded in a subject/level.
- There are no more than two grade 2s awarded (HL or SL).
- There are no more than three grade 3s or below awarded (HL or SL).
- The candidate has gained 12 points or more on HL subjects (for candidates who register for four HL subjects, the three highest grades count).
- The candidate has gained 9 points or more on SL subjects (candidates who register for two SL subjects must gain at least 5 points at SL).

Please note:

- A candidate who fails the Diploma is not awarded an ATAR score. They may still gain access to university through alternative entrance pathways.

## IB Diploma Programme Fees

Fees for the IB Diploma Programme are charged separately from the school tuition fees. These charges contribute towards the school's costs of running the programme.

Fees are calculated each year and will be shared with parents prior to their child's commencement of the IBDP. For more information regarding fees please email the IBDP Coordinator Mr Corin Bone ([cbone@pac.edu.au](mailto:cbone@pac.edu.au)).



## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Is the IB hard work?

Yes, like any final school qualification, it is demanding, but it is manageable. The work in IB is challenging but the hard work pays off with the rewards of substantial learning and the opportunity for depth and exploration of areas of passion. As a guideline, 15 hours per week outside school time is usually required for success.

### 2. Is the IB only for high-achieving students?

No! The IB is a global program that is designed for students at all levels of ability. It can extend high achieving students, but all students are supported to succeed in the IB. ATAR conversions are generous for middle-achieving students. See above (p7) for details.

### 3. Do you need to already study a language in year 10 to do IB?

No, there are also beginner language courses (eg Spanish Ab Initio) for students who have not studied a language in Year 10. Ab initio courses are only offered at Standard Level.

### 4. Do IB students get study lessons?

In Year 11 students study a full load of 6 subjects plus TOK and CAS. In Year 12, all Standard Level subjects will offer students guaranteed study lessons, at times of year appropriate to the course. Students who have completed anticipated ESS in Year 11 will have five study lessons per week in Year 12.

### 5. Is IB only for students thinking of studying overseas?

No! Most students who select the IB do so because of the quality of the educational experience, not because they want to go to an overseas university. Many IBDP graduates from PAC remain in Adelaide for university. However, the IBDP is an excellent option for opening doors internationally if that is the desired pathway.

### 6. Can the IB get me a high ATAR?

Yes! IB ATARs are generous, and recognise the quality of IBDP students. Many IB students from PAC in past years have achieved very high ATARs in the high 90s (38% students in last 5 years have achieved over 40 points (=97+ ATAR)).

### 7. Can the IB get me into Medicine?

Yes! The IB is excellent preparation for a medical career, as IB students learn not only science and maths prerequisite subjects, but also reasoning, ethics and communication skills, all of which are tested as part of the Bachelor of Medicine selection process. IB scores of 43 and above are usually required for entry to undergraduate Medicine degrees.

### 8. When do you choose subject levels (HL and SL)?

Subject levels are chosen as part of the Year 11 subject selection process. They are not fully finalised until early Year 12, so moves between levels may still be able to be made until term 1 of year 12 if needed.

### 9. Do standard level subjects count for less than higher level subjects?

No, both Standard and Higher Level subjects count for 7 points each.

### 10. Is there scaling in IB?

No, all subjects are worth the same (7 points). This means that there is no advantage in selecting the hardest possible subjects. It's a good idea to select a range of subjects that includes some challenging and some easier subjects.

### 11. What if English is my second language?

Students who speak Chinese as their first language can study Chinese A and English B. They may write their extended essay in Chinese. Other languages may be possible for Language A as a self-taught subject with a tutor, by negotiation. Students who have less than a proficient level of English (as measured by testing in year 12) may be entitled to extra time in assessments to accommodate their extra challenge of writing in a second language. Chinese A students receive a Bilingual Diploma which can satisfy language proficiency requirements for both English and Chinese speaking universities.

### 12. Can the IB accommodate for students with learning needs?

Yes, the IB accommodates assessments for students with any learning need, provided evidence is supplied to the IB for the adjustment.

### 13. How much extra time does CAS take?

CAS is intended to extend and value things that students already do in their extra-curricular pursuits, and not to be an onerous extra commitment. There is no requirement for multiple hours of CAS every week, but there will be a few occasions where CAS experiences are more intensive. The CAS project (usually completed in year 12) will require more time for planning.



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