

## 3 IB Courses and the Diploma

### What Are IB Classes Like?

IB courses are the equivalent of introductory college-level courses. Each subject is offered at either a High Level and/or a Standard Level. High Level subjects require intensive, in-depth study over two years, whereas Standard Level subjects are less demanding, and generally are one year long. Each student must complete three, or at most four, High Level courses.

IB courses are very rigorous, and usually have less breadth, but more depth in specific topics, than equivalent AP courses. Many are reading and writing intensive, and there is a focus on critical thinking and analysis, along with personal reflection. Speaking and writing skills are developed during the courses. Group work is also emphasized.

Each subject area includes an international component. For example, in IB English, students read four works in translation and submit two World Literature essays to the IBO international examiners for assessment.

### Internal Assessments

Internal assessments of coursework are conducted by the teachers responsible for evaluating students over the entire period of instruction of each subject. This gives students a chance to show what they can do over time, not just in the pressured context of a final examination.

These assessments are conducted during the year, and include a variety of activities and measures, depending upon the course. These may include written essays, recorded oral discussions and commentaries, performances, labs, portfolios, projects and investigations.

Course assessments are designed to measure the extent to which the student has met the aims of the subject. They go beyond testing the ability to memorize isolated facts and bits of information. They measure what the students have acquired in terms of their ability to integrate knowledge, apply academic skills, and effectively communicate their understanding of the subject matter. Assessments emphasize understanding and application of knowledge, not just the student's ability to regurgitate information.

Some assessments are internally graded (by the teacher), and others are externally graded (by an international examiner). All assessments are conducted using IBO guidelines and assessment rubrics. Internal assessment often involves an "external moderation" procedure to ensure that uniform standards are maintained. In these cases, the teacher submits samples of students' work for that assessed task, along with his own assessments of the work, to the international organization for review, to ensure the consistency of the grading process world-wide.

Assessment for the IB Diploma is “criterion-referenced,” not “norm-referenced.” This means that a normal distribution curve is not used for determining passing/failing grades. Knowledge and skills are assessed according to the student’s own achievement against a set of known criteria.

## **IB Subject Examinations**

Final written examinations are typically given at the end of each course sequence. The exams generally include a variety of assessment techniques such as essays, long and short responses, data-based questions, and multiple-choice questions.

The exams are held over a three-week period in May of the students’ junior and senior years, upon completion of the final course in that subject. The examinations are prepared by the IBO, and are held on the same days in all IB schools around the world. Each subject’s exam is usually held in multiple sessions (called “papers”) over a course of 1 or 2 days. Each session lasts from 45 minutes to 3 hours, depending on the subject.

At the end the student’s senior year, all coursework ends at the beginning of the testing period, to allow students to concentrate on preparing and taking the exams. At DCHS the written exams are held off-site, to ensure maximum beneficial testing conditions.

The completed exams are mailed abroad to be assessed by the examining panels responsible for each subject (international grading team). The international grading team is comprised of people from across the globe, selected by the IBO. Each individual is an expert in his/her respective field. They are secondary school teachers, college professors, and paid professionals.

Final grades are available in July following the examination period. Each subject area results in an assigned score of 1 – 7, with 7 being the highest score.

For performing and visual arts, various assessments are held during the year to satisfy the final exam requirement. These include recorded performances, exhibitions, discussion of work with visiting examiners, and written research workbooks and journals.

## **Assessments of Other Requirements**

The Theory of Knowledge course is primarily taught through teacher-led discussions. The course is assessed through journal entries, oral presentations and one essay of 1500-2000 words. The essay addresses a prescribed topic from a list of ten. Students will receive the list of topics during the second week of class. The oral presentation and the paper combine to determine the score that is submitted to the IBO. The paper is then externally moderated in order to determine the student’s final score.

The Extended Essay is guided and reviewed by an advisor selected by the student. The essay is externally assessed by an IBO international examiner, and is assigned a score based on both general and subject-based evaluation criteria.

The Theory of Knowledge score and the Extended Essay score each result in one of 5 grade designations:

A	Excellent
B	Good
C	Satisfactory
D	Mediocre
E	Elementary

Upon the completion of CAS activities, each student completes self-evaluation forms, which include descriptions of the activities and the student's views on his personal development. The activities and evaluations are documented in a CAS logbook, which is periodically submitted for review by the school's CAS Coordinator. Although these logbooks are not submitted to the IBO, the IB Curriculum and Assessment Centre may request to inspect them at the end of the student's program. The logbooks themselves are not graded or scored. However, completion of the required hours, within the designated time frame, is necessary for the issuance of the IB Diploma.

## Conditions for Award of the IB Diploma

The IB Diploma is awarded on the basis of a system in which a student's completion of each component of the program is assigned points. There are 45 possible points to be awarded.

Each of the six examined subjects is graded on a scale of 1 (minimum) to 7 (maximum). Internally assessed coursework usually counts for a minimum of 20% of this final grade. The final written exam counts toward the remainder of the grade for that subject. The score from the TOK assessment, combined with the Extended Essay, results in a maximum of 3 additional bonus points toward the overall Diploma score.

To earn a Diploma, the following requirements must be met:

- Six subject tests must be taken.
- A minimum of three HL subject tests must be taken with an average score of 4.
- A minimum of two SL subject tests must be taken.
- Successful completion of the TOK class, the Extended Essay and CAS.

Failing conditions include:

- HL exams: a grade of 2, or a 3 not compensated by a 5 in another HL exam
- SL exams: a grade of 1, or more than one grade 2
- Overall: more than three grade 3's, or more than one 3 if there is an SL grade 2
- TOK and Extended Essay: receiving an "elementary" grade in both of these (lowest grade possible)

To be awarded the Diploma, students must obtain a total score of at least 24 points. However, students that have only one failing condition, but have a total score of at least 28 points, will be awarded the diploma.

The Diploma cannot be awarded, whatever the total score, to candidates who have:

- received a grade 1 in any HL subject
- not submitted an Extended Essay
- not followed a course in the Theory of Knowledge
- not engaged in CAS activities

## Diploma Points Matrix for the Extended Essay and Theory of Knowledge

		Theory of Knowledge					
		Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Mediocre	Elementary	Not submitted
Extended Essay	Excellent	3	3	2	2	1	N
	Good	3	2	1	1	0	N
	Satisfactory	2	1	1	0	0	N
	Mediocre	2	1	0	0	0	N
	Elementary	1	0	0	0	Failing condition	N
	Not submitted	N	N	N	N	N	N

### Determination of Diploma Bonus Points

A candidate who, for example, writes a **good** extended essay and whose performance in Theory of Knowledge is judged to be **satisfactory** will be awarded 1 point, while a candidate who writes a **mediocre** extended essay and whose performance in Theory of Knowledge is judged to be **excellent** will be awarded 2 points.

A candidate who fails to submit an extended essay will be awarded 'N' for the extended essay, will score no points, and will not be awarded a diploma.

Performance in both the extended essay and Theory of Knowledge of an **elementary** standard is a failing condition for the award of the diploma.

## IB Diploma v. DCHS Diploma

All students in the IB program receive a DCHS diploma (assuming all high school requirements are met). An IB student is identified as "IB Diploma Candidate" at graduation and on his/her DCHS diploma.

The IB Diploma is not bestowed until July, upon grading of all IB exams and calculation of points awarded in the IB program by the IBO. This diploma is separate from the high school diploma received in May.

Those who do not receive an IB Diploma will receive an IB certificate for all subjects completed on a passing level ("4"). Students may still receive college credit for some of these courses, depending on the guidelines issued by the individual institutions. However, colleges and universities are more frequently providing sophomore standing to students who do receive the IB Diploma, and not just credit for particular high-scoring exams.

## Weighted Grading

At DCHS, AP and IB courses are "weighted," that is, graded on a 5-point rather than a 4-point scale. In this method, an "A" is worth 5 points, a "B" 4 points, etc.

For IB courses, only the course at the end of which the IB test is given will be weighted. For example, a course sequence such as High Level Biology is a two-year set of courses, HL Biology I and HL Biology II. The IB exam is taken at the end of the second course, so only HL Biology II would be weighted. For IB Psychology, a one-year course, the exam is taken at the end of this course, and thus it would be a weighted course.

The two-semester Theory of Knowledge course is also weighted.