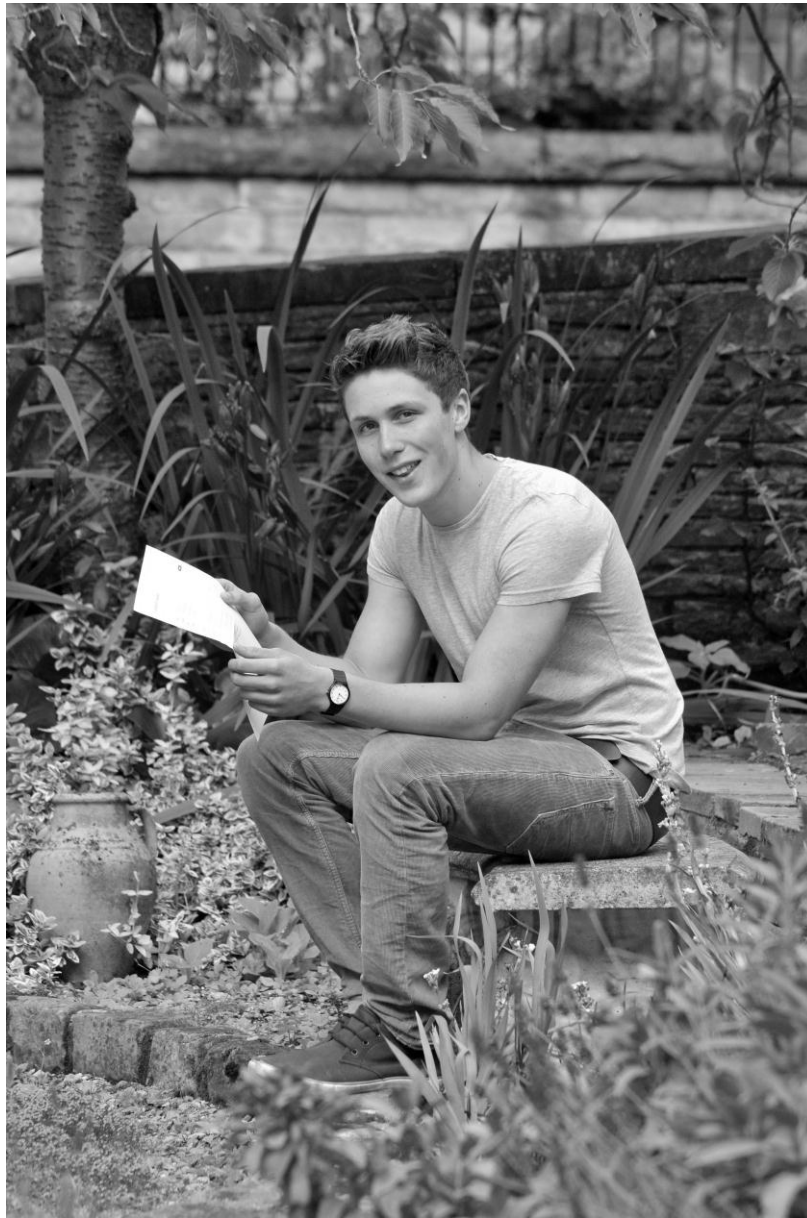




**mgs** | The Manchester  
Grammar School  
Founded 1515

# The MGS guide to the International Baccalaureate



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## Introduction



*'It is a rare thing indeed for teachers, pupils and university lecturers to agree, but representatives from all three groups are big fans of the International Baccalaureate. From a standing start as a niche sixth-form qualification for a privileged few in the Seventies, the IB is now available at 250 schools across the UK.'*

*The Independent* September 2009

The aim of this booklet is to give an overview of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme and explain why we think it will suit many of our Sixth Form students here at MGS.

MGS is an IB World School and we have been offering the Diploma Programme to students since September 2008. IB World Schools share a common philosophy - a commitment to high quality, challenging, international education - a philosophy that we at MGS believe is important for our students. The size of the MGS Sixth Form means that we are able to offer our students a choice between the IB Diploma and an A-level based Sixth Form curriculum.

## The MGS Grid of Subject Choices

Subject Group	Higher Level	Standard Level
1. Studies in Language and Literature	English Literature	English Language and Literature English Literature Literature and Performance
2. Language Acquisition	French German Latin Russian Spanish	French (SL and <i>*ab initio</i> ) German (SL and <i>*ab initio</i> ) Latin Italian (SL and <i>*ab initio</i> ) Russian Spanish (SL and <i>*ab initio</i> )
3. Individuals & Societies	Geography Economics History Philosophy	Economics <b>**</b> Environmental Systems & Societies Geography History Philosophy Political Thought Psychology World Religions
4. Sciences	Biology Chemistry Physics	Biology Chemistry <b>**</b> Environmental Systems & Societies Physics Sports, Exercise and Health Science
5. Maths	Maths	Mathematics Mathematical Studies
6. Arts/Elective	Music Visual Arts <b>or</b> Second subject from groups 2, 3 or 4	Music Theatre Visual Arts <b>or</b> Second subject from groups 2, 3 or 4

\* *Ab initio* – studying a language from the beginning.

\*\* Environmental Systems & Societies is a trans-disciplinary subject and can fit into either group 3 or group 4 offering students added flexibility.

# What is the IB Diploma Programme?

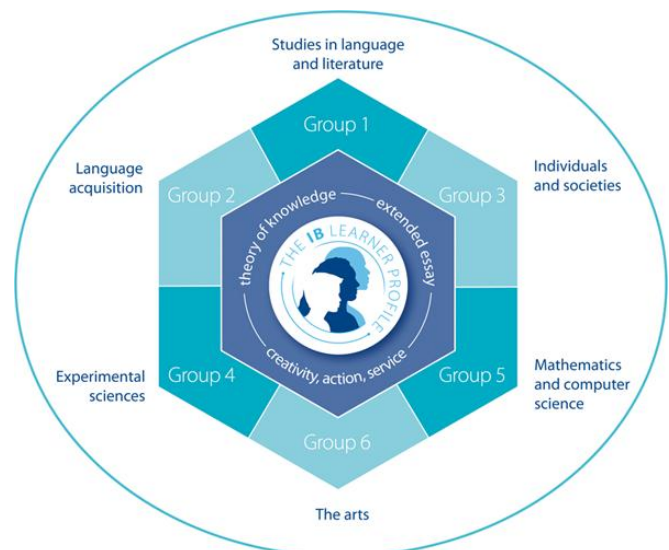
The IB was started in 1968 as a result of collaboration between international academics at Oxford University. At its inception it took the best aspects of the British and French education systems and was designed to offer a comprehensive and rigorous programme for sixth form students. It is now offered in over 190 countries and accepted by all major universities.

The programme aims, among other things, to develop knowledgeable, reflective, caring and inquiring young people, committed to lifelong learning. These aims are not exclusive to the IB. What the IB offers is an independent, integrated and principled approach, together with a distinctive international outlook.

The IB Diploma is represented by a hexagon showing the six subject groups. At the core of the hexagon there are three additional features which embody the philosophy behind the IB.

To be awarded the Diploma students must take one subject from each of the groups. Three are studied at Higher Level (HL) and three at Standard Level (SL).

The table on page 4 sets out our list of subject choices for 2011. In addition to studying six subjects, students must prepare an Extended Essay (max. 4,000 words), complete the Theory of Knowledge (ToK) course and undertake at least 150 hours of Creativity, Action and Service (CAS).



## **The IB Core**

### **Extended Essay**

Students choose a subject area of particular interest to them and engage in original research, producing at the end an essay written in the style of a university dissertation. This is designed to prepare for extended studies on university courses.

Emphasis is placed on:

- formulating an appropriate research question,
- engaging in a personal exploration of the topic,
- communicating ideas,
- developing an argument,
- using an academic referencing system.

Students must demonstrate that they are able to analyse, synthesize and evaluate knowledge. The teacher supervisor monitors the process but the final essay is externally assessed and must all be the student's own work.

### **Theory of Knowledge (ToK)**

The ToK course aims to help students achieve a mature understanding of the nature of knowledge. It does so by comparing different ways of knowing such as perception, language, emotion, and reasoning. There are specific ToK lessons each cycle, but ToK -style discussions take place from time to time in all subject areas. Students are expected to question their own assumptions and think about what knowledge they value and why they value it.

ToK is assessed by means of an essay which is marked externally. The essay title is selected by the student from a prescribed list. There is also an oral presentation which is internally marked.

## **Creativity, Action, Service (CAS)**

The CAS requirement is a fundamental part of the IB diploma programme. It values co-curricular activities and is often one of the things graduates look back on with great satisfaction.

*Creativity* can include a broad range of cultural activities. It is worth noting that the creative element can, and is encouraged to, overlap heavily with service projects. Examples include: artwork, theatrical productions, playing in an orchestra, and web design.

*Action* can include traditional sports or other activities. In all these activities students are expected to take their involvement on to another level.

*Service* projects vary greatly. Students may undertake fundraising activities or take an active role in helping others, perhaps in some of our local primary school. MGS already has a rich tradition in voluntary work and community action; IB students are encouraged to forge new links as well as building on traditional partnerships.

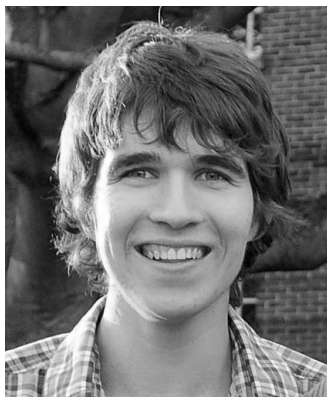
Students are expected to reflect on what they have done throughout the two years, although this is not formally assessed. The CAS programme has many things in common with the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and a number of those taking the IB here in the past have taken a Duke of Edinburgh Award as part of their commitment to CAS. But there is no fixed formula for rewarding and successful CAS involvement. Form tutors will help to guide students, but independence, risk taking and initiative are encouraged.

## Assessment

IB courses are not modular. Subjects are assessed by exams at the end of the two year course. The exams are supplemented by internal assessment which accounts for at least 20% of the marks in each subject.

Each subject is graded from 1 to 7 (with 7 being the highest level). The core requirements of ToK and Extended Essay contribute up to 3 extra points making the maximum possible score 45.

To achieve a grade 7 in any subject, particularly at Higher Level, is a very significant achievement. The International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) is proud of its record of avoiding the sort of grade inflation which has sometimes beset less independent examination awarding bodies. Very roughly, a 7 is equivalent to an A\* grade at A-level, and a 6 is roughly equivalent to a grade A. It is our experience that universities which ask for three A grades from their A-level applicants tend to ask for around 36 points from IB students. Outstanding students may achieve 40 points or more: worldwide, 3.87% of the students who took the IB Diploma in May 2011 succeeded at this level; 0.24% of the whole cohort gained a perfect score of 45. A summary of MGS's results in 2011 can be found on page 15.



*The IB is well worth the extra effort of taking six subjects for the greater range of sciences and arts. The Extended Essay component of the course also proved extremely useful in learning how to research for and write the long essays or academic reports that we now produce weekly at university.*

### **Jonathan Senior**

Reading History at Emmanuel, Cambridge

## Why do students choose to take the IB?

Students choose to take the IB Diploma for a variety of reasons.

- Most students choose the IB because they wish to continue to develop their interests in a broad range of subjects, balancing depth in Higher Level subjects, with breadth in the Standard Level subjects.
- They may also be particularly attracted by the holistic view of education which lies at the heart of the IB Diploma course. In particular, they may value the core activities and the ways in which the attempt is made to integrate them into the whole curriculum.
- They may be interested in the international nature of the IB. Perhaps they are thinking of studying abroad, and believe that the IB will offer a particularly good means of entry to Higher Education overseas. It may be that they like the international dimension of some of the courses. For instance, the English Literature course involves the study of work in translation as well as work written in English from at least two continents.
- They may be particularly keen on the syllabus for specific subjects which they intend to study at Higher Level.
- They may appreciate the opportunity to take up new subjects from the wide range on offer.
- They may be thinking long-term, and believe that the study habits learned on the IB programme are likely to be of enormous advantage to them at undergraduate level and beyond.

## How do Universities View IB students?

*'Cambridge admissions tutors are completely familiar with the IB as a qualification for Cambridge undergraduate courses, and standard offers for matriculation based on the IB are made routinely by all colleges.'*

**David Cardwell**  
Admissions Tutor  
Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge



Universities from across the world recognise the IB and admissions tutors are often extremely enthusiastic about it. A recent Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) study of the performance of IB students at UK universities has shown that there is a clear relationship between IB achievement and success at university. For instance, a fifth of those entering a UK university with a score 36 or 37 points for their IB Diploma (the maximum score is 45) went on to get a first class degree. HESA's findings are consistent with research done by Cambridge University, which reveals a strong correlation between success at IB and final degree outcome at Cambridge. You can find a copy of the full HESA report in the publications section of the school's website.

Schools that have adopted IB often find that the internationalism it brings can broaden perspectives when considering the best places to study. The great majority of our students, though, choose to apply to UK universities, all of which list their entry requirements for IB students alongside their entry requirements for those taking A-levels. You can investigate this for yourself by following the links on the university information website provided by UCAS: [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) .

## Offers made by UK Universities to IB Students at MGS in 2010 and 2011

It is possible to gain an idea of the sorts of university offers made to IB students by looking at the following table, which shows some of the offers made to our students in several representative subject areas.

University	Course title	Points	Specifics of offer
Leicester	History	30	HL 6 (any subject)
Exeter	History	34	
Royal H'way	History	35	
Nottingham	History	36	HL 6 (History)
Warwick	History	36	HL 6 (History)
Durham	History	37	HL18, 6 (History)
LSE	History	37	HL 6 6 6
UCL	History	38	HL 6 6 6
Oxford	History	40	HL 7 (History) 6 6
Cambridge	History	41	HL 7 (History) 7 6
Birmingham	Medicine	36	36 (excl. core), HL 18, 6 (Chemistry)
Leeds	Medicine	36	HL 6 (Biology) 6 (Chemistry) 6
Peninsula	Medicine	36	HL 6 (Biology) 6 (Chemistry)
Queen Mary	Medicine	36	HL 6 (Biology) 6 (Chemistry) 5
Imperial	Medicine	38	HL 6 (Biology) 6 (Chemistry)
UCL	Medicine	38	HL 6 (Biology) 6 (Chemistry) 6
Cambridge	Medicine	42	HL 7 (Biology) 7 (Chemistry) 6
Bristol	French and Russian	33	HL 6 6 5
KCL	French & Hispanic Studies	34	HL 6 (French) 6 (Spanish)
Nottingham	French & Hispanic Studies	34	HL 6, 5 (French & Spanish)
Durham	Modern Languages	36	HL 6 (French) 6 (Spanish)
UCL	Modern Languages	36	HL 17, 6 (French) 6 (Spanish)
Cambridge	Modern and Medieval Langs	40	HL 7 (French or Spanish) 7 6
Sheffield	Geography	33	HL 6 (Geography)
Nottingham	Geography	36	HL 6 (Geography)
St Andrews	Geography	36	
LSE	Geography	37	HL 6 6 6
UCL	Geography	37	HL 17, 6 (Geography), min. 5
Oxford	Geography	40	

## Q & A

### ***Do you have to be a genius to take the IB?***

No. Certainly some of our brightest students have taken the IB. However, it is far from being a course solely aimed at exceptional students; indeed, MGS students across the ability range have enjoyed success with the programme. Much more important than raw ability is attitude to work. If a student enjoys studying, is organised and conscientious, then the IB could be the right choice.

### ***Does taking the IB involve just too much work?***

It is true that to succeed on the IB programme a student needs to be prepared to work. However, through careful choice of courses students can ensure that they do not take on a programme that will be too demanding for them. What students should gain from taking the IB is the ability to organise their work independently. They reap the benefits of this at university. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that the work habits developed by IB students lead to better staying-on rates at university, and proportionately more IB students than those with equivalent qualifications go on to take higher degrees.

### ***Is it harder to get into universities if you take the IB?***

Our IB students have received attractive and achievable offers across a wide range of courses, including languages, humanities and medicine. It is the case, though, that the IB Higher Level Mathematics course is particularly challenging. Universities seem to be aware of this, but it is our experience that not all of them take full account of it when making offers of places to prospective students. It is therefore particularly important that anyone wishing to take Higher Level Mathematics (e.g. because they wish to study Engineering at a top university) is given good advice about their chances of success.

***Is the IB worth doing if you believe you have a weakness in one of the compulsory groups of subjects?***

Our Standard Level courses include a range of accessible and potentially attractive options for everybody, whatever their ability. In some groups, there are new subject options – such as Sports, Exercise and Health Science – which students may find particularly interesting. For those students who do not regard themselves as strong mathematicians, Maths Studies is a very practical and manageable option. Our *ab initio* language courses (in which students start a new language) have proved a popular and successful option for students who do not regard themselves as natural linguists. In addition, there are Standard Level subjects which may well complement a strong interest in a particular Higher Level subject:

- students who particularly like History and/or Philosophy may enjoy the SL course in Political Thought;
- students who enjoy English Literature at Higher Level may relish the chance to study Theatre at Standard Level;
- scientifically-minded students may find the course in Environmental Systems and Societies offered in Group 3 an interesting way to discover the fascination of a humanities subject.

***Is the IB worth doing if you have not enjoyed studying languages?***

The study of languages is a life skill and hugely important; two more years could turn a student into a fluent speaker. Competence in a foreign language can open up study opportunities overseas. Some further degree programmes can insist that a language has been studied to sixth form level, as part of the course can involve study abroad. The business world will often seek to recruit people that can speak a foreign language and work abroad.

***Is the IB a good choice if you want to study medicine?***

Medical schools value the breadth, depth and discipline of students who follow the IB programme, as well as the commitment to service they display through the CAS programme. Medicine is also about communication and the value of studying English and an essay-based subject can be invaluable. Perhaps some prospective medics will be particularly interested in the opportunity to study Philosophy as part of the IB programme. Note that Mathematics at Higher Level is not needed for courses in Medicine or Dentistry.

***If you like Maths, Biology, History and Art, why shouldn't you just do these at A Level?***

And what after that? Such choices represent a very mixed bag which, while offering breadth of study with the range of subjects taken, creates incoherence at the same time. Some university courses may pass students over with these choices. The IB offers the opportunity to keep this breadth coherently because the courses are designed to be studied as a package.



# IB Results 2011

There were 29 students in the 2011 cohort at MGS. Worldwide 41,506 took the Diploma in May 2011.

- Hayden Cooke was one of only 125 students worldwide to achieve a perfect grade of 45. He is now studying History at Oxford.
- Ten of our students (34.5%) achieved an outstanding 40 points or more (this compares with 3.87% of candidates worldwide).
- Our students scored an average of 38.1 points, a performance which confirms the school's position as one of the leading IB schools in the United Kingdom; the worldwide average is just over 29.
- Twenty-one of our students achieved scores of 37 or more.



**The Class of 2011**

## Final thoughts

The IB Diploma programme provides students at MGS with some fascinating choices. Whilst it will not suit the out-and-out specialist, it will suit many of our students and it is a myth that it is only for the elite. Students certainly need to be well organised and highly motivated – but these are the pre-requisites for success on any worthwhile course. For those prepared to take up the challenge, it offers many opportunities for a richly rewarding stay in the MGS Sixth Form.

### What do the IB students say?



*'An intrinsic part of the course involved the study of philosophy. As a scientist, taking the A-level route would have meant I could only have developed an interest in this subject at the expense of one of my science choices. As a consequence, it changed the way I view things – I'm no longer so dogmatic in my beliefs.'*

**Chris Chung**

Reading Medicine at Imperial College, London

*'The range of subjects definitely keeps the course varied and interesting.'*

**Craig Bohrson**

Reading Bio-medical Engineering

Johns Hopkins University, USA

(one of the world's top bio-medical engineering courses)



**For further information please contact:**

**John Tucker, Director of IB**

**[j.n.tucker@mgs.org](mailto:j.n.tucker@mgs.org)**

**0161 224 7201 Ext 527**

**[mgs.org](http://mgs.org)**

