

# How to Speak IB: A Glossary

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Program has a plethora of acronyms and terms that are used more often than not - this can feel pretty overwhelming at times! This glossary will help you successfully navigate your way through speaking the IB. As always, if you need more help defining all the parts of the IB, please don't hesitate to contact your IB Coordinators and/or IB District Support Specialists!

[Free, online “Nano PD” for cross-programme learning offered by the IB found here](#)

IB Community [Vimeo resources here!](#)

Click the programme-specific flag(s) to access information: (linked below): :



## Full Continuum Terms

**Action and service learning (SL):** Involves learning by doing, which enhances learning about self and others. IB World Schools value action that encompasses a concern for integrity and honesty, as well as a strong sense of fairness that respects the dignity of individuals and groups. Principled action means making responsible choices, sometimes including decisions not to act. Individuals, organizations and communities can engage in principled action when they explore the ethical dimensions of personal and global challenges. Action in IB programmes may involve service learning, advocacy and educating self and others.

*\*Note: The IB is in the process of reframing this area. [Community engagement](#) will eventually address service and other elements of the IB framework continuum-wide. Communications will be published over the next few years to realize this shift across all four programmes. The graphic below depicts SL as service as action/CAS/service learning.*

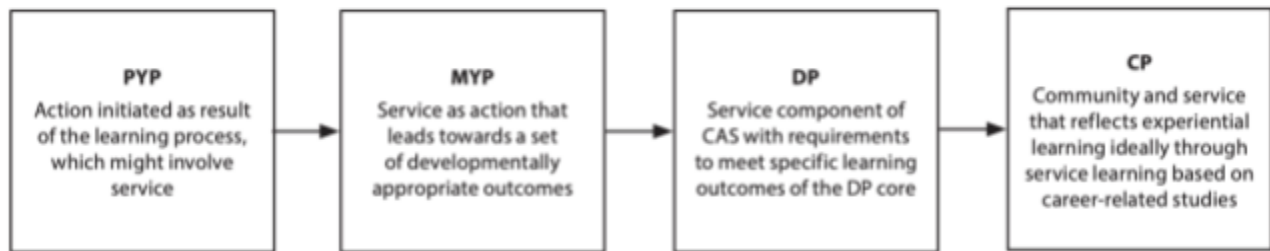
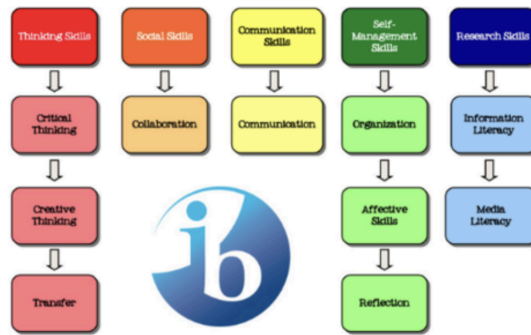


Figure 4

**Approaches to learning, or “ATL skills”:** The IB Approaches to Learning is a set of essential skills that are taught intentionally, and while they differ throughout the programs in the continuum of the IB, all provide students with the tools to enable them to take responsibility for their own learning. Students and teachers practice a range of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, both individually and collaboratively, and include 5 skills categories: Research, Communication, Thinking, Social, and Self-Management. (See graphic below)



In the MYP, these five categories are elaborated upon through 10 clusters (see image below). Further still, they are specified using detailed indicators, or the actual actions taking place and being taught.

*\*Enhancing the MYP, starting in 2027, will roll out changes to ATL skill use for Middle Years Programmes. Stay tuned for more as it becomes available.*

**Approaches to teaching:** Centered on a cycle of inquiry, action, and reflection. Approaches to teaching are grounded in six, broadly written elements that give teachers flexibility to choose specific strategies to employ that best reflect their own particular contexts and needs of their students.

**IB Approaches to teaching are...**

Based on inquiry	Focused on conceptual understanding	Developed in local and global contexts	Focused on effective teamwork and collaboration	Designed to remove barriers to learning	Informed by instruction
Students actively investigate questions, develop critical thinking skills, and construct their own understanding.	Learning revolves around powerful, enduring big ideas and transferable concepts rather than isolated facts.	Learning connects meaningfully to students' personal experiences while extending to broader global perspectives and challenges.	Students develop social skills and deeper understanding through purposeful cooperative processes and collective problem-solving.	Teaching intentionally addresses diverse learning profiles, interests, readiness levels, and cultural backgrounds.	Instruction and feedback evolve dynamically through systematic data gathering, thoughtful analysis, and reflective practice.

**Authorization:** This process, which occurs in multiple phases over at least one (if not two or more) years, is how a school becomes an IB World School. Authorization has three primary aims: To provide guidance and support to schools as they work towards authorization; To confirm that the school is prepared to offer the IB programme with fidelity to the IB's programme standards and practices, rules, and regulations; To plan for ongoing development and improvement after authorization as an IB World School. Several stages make up the authorization process. For more information, please [click here](#).

**Command terms:** Key terms and phrases used in examination questions and are understood as described in the guides provided by the IB. Although these terms will be used frequently in examination questions, other terms may be used to direct students to present an argument in a specific way. In MYP and DP, these are defined in the back of each subject guide for years 1-5. The MYP often uses command terms as a means to describe the levels of achievement on rubrics, so their understanding and application is crucial for teachers and students.

**Conceptual teaching and learning:** Refers to H. Lynn Erickson's model, which describes [concept-based learning](#) as what students know, do, and understand, shows the ability to **transfer** to new contexts and situations. While this resource is not an IB publication, it is a strong example of a thorough explanation of Concept-based learning published by ManageBac (an IB-specific learning management system). This is not an endorsement of ManageBac's platform by CPS; rather, it is a reliable, professional resource to review for further understanding of conceptual teaching and learning in IB contexts. Here you will find two videos: One [defines conceptual understanding and transfer learning](#), and the other shows [how it might look in practice in a school](#).

**Evaluation:** Development is ongoing as an IB World School, no matter the programme(s) offered. All IB World School are regularly evaluated to ensure that the standards and practices of its IB programme(s) are being maintained. Evaluation takes place at least once every five years. As part of the process, the school engages in a submission of preliminary documentation, a self-study based in deep reflection, and a visit from a team of IB practitioners to verify those submissions and produce a report to inform the next five years of implementation.

**From principles into practice:** Each programme's guide to all things requirements, recommendations, and other needs for the development and maintenance of a school's programme(s). These can be found on the Programme Resource Center within MyIB, which is available to candidate and authorized IB World Schools.

**IB Educator Network (IBEN):** Active and retired practitioners who run IB-sanctioned workshops, IB authorization and evaluation visits, consult as part of the authorization process, and serve as examiners and other key positions to support the IB programmes and their development.

**IBO:** International Baccalaureate Organization; [What is an IB education?](#) (IBO Publication Nov 2019)

**Inquiry/inquiry-based learning:** At the heart of the IB approach to learning, inquiry-based learning is a teaching and learning approach that places emphasis on active student engagement, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Among the key features of inquiry-based learning are questioning, investigation, critical thinking, active participation, and authentic learning experiences.

**International mindedness:** A view of the world in which people see themselves connected to the global community and assume a sense of responsibility towards its members. It is an awareness of the interrelatedness of all nations and peoples, and is a recognition of the complexity of these. Internationally minded people appreciate and value the diversity of peoples, cultures and societies in the world. They make efforts to learn more about others and to develop empathy and solidarity towards them to achieve mutual understanding and respect (Oxfam 2105; UNESCO 2015).

**Learner profile:** Ten attributes that members of the school community develop active, compassionate and lifelong learners, which can be found across the continuum of all four IB programmes.



**Learning Experiences:** Sometimes known as lesson plans, these IB plans outline a variety of elements of lessons, including, but not limited to approaches to learning skills, learner profile attributes, formative assessments, differentiation, and applicable student and teacher-generated inquiries.

**MyIB:** IB's platform for communication, sharing of resources, news, and other important items. Access is gained through a school's coordinator. The IBC is also responsible for maintaining the members of staff who have access to the platform (through the MySchool tile). All staff members should be registered and use MyIB regularly! Elements of the platform include the:

- Programme Resource Center (PRC) - the IB's repository for updates, news, and documentation
- IB Exchange - a platform in development to share vetted curricular items across the globe
- IB Answers - The IB's help desk
- MySchool - houses reports, information about those who are registered as staff with roles in the school, shows identifying information for the Head of school, billing contact, IB coordinator(s), etc.
- Programme Communities - engage with educators from around the world using these forums that are monitored by members of the IB Educator Network.

## Primary Years Programme Terms – [What is the PYP?](#) (link)

[Free, online “Nano PD” for the PYP offered by the IB found here](#)

### Who’s it for?

**Primary Years Programme (PYP):** The IB’s youngest learners, ages 3-12, or generally PK-5th grade in the US.

**Agency:** Defined by voice, choice, and ownership, PYP learners actively engage in various stages of learning, including thinking about, planning, modifying, and creating. They are involved in discussion and questioning by being self-directed learners who understand concepts through the construction of their projects/play. For more about agency in the PYP and assessment, for example, please read this article from the [IBO Community Blog](#), entitled “[Agency in Assessment](#)” from March 2023.

**Central idea:** Makes use of the PYP specified concepts and contextually developed concepts. The central idea is engaging, relevant, challenging and significant. It is written in a neutral voice, and should be substantial and open-ended enough to support learners’ understanding of the transdisciplinary theme.

**Exhibition:** An authentic process for students to explore, document, and share their understanding of an issue or opportunity of personal significance, which occurs in the last year of the PYP. The exhibition serves as an annual event where learning in community takes place and celebrates the end of the journey students have experienced throughout their years in the programme.

**Line(s) of inquiry:** Clarifies the central idea and defines the scope of the inquiry. Supportive of the central idea, the line(s) extend the unit’s inquiry, give focus to students’ research, and deepen students’ understanding. Each unit will have three or four lines of inquiry, written as short phrases and often connected to the key concepts.

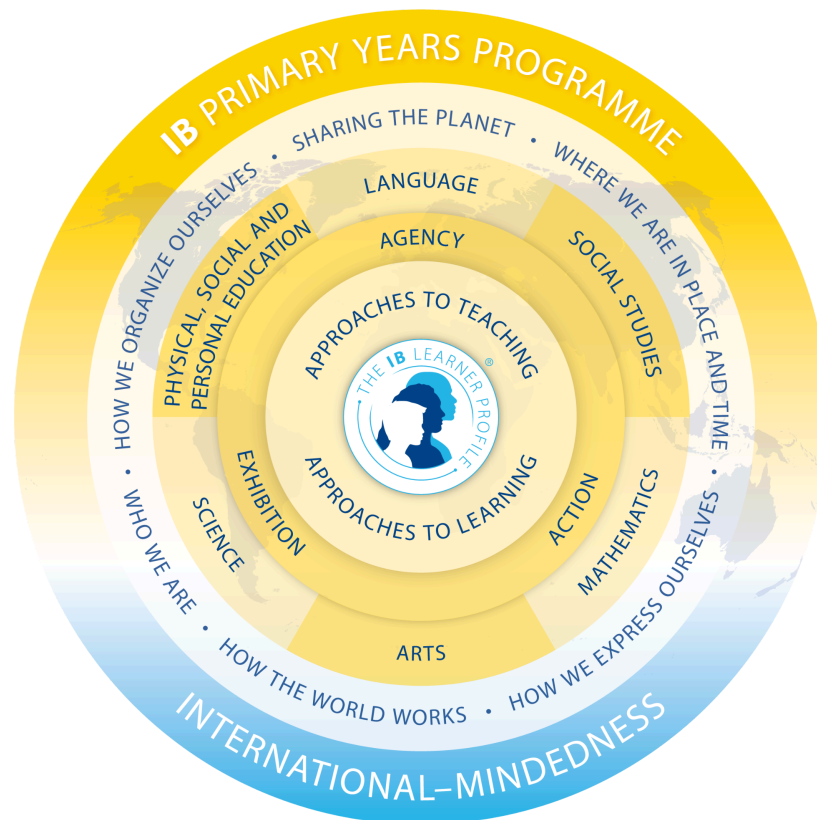
**Specified concepts:** Serve as a starting point to help frame a unit of inquiry and drive learning experiences. Used in any order, students apply their learning through the use of seven key concepts, which give their inquiries meaning, direction, and connection. These concepts are **abstract, timeless, and universal**, and include change, perspective, and responsibility, among others. The use of specified and other concepts that may be drawn from local/regional/national curriculums also supports integration with other subjects, such as using mathematical modeling to understand scientific phenomena. Read more in [PYP: Learning and teaching](#).

**Programme of inquiry (POI):** The programme’s full curriculum mapped out according to transdisciplinary themes that correlate with the units they plan to teach.

**Transdisciplinary themes:** Themes that are about issues that have meaning for, and are important to all of us. The programme offers a balance between learning about or through the subject areas and learning beyond them. The six themes of global significance create a Transdisciplinary framework that allows students to “step up” beyond the confines of learning within subject areas. The linked document takes us to the updates document for 2024, as pictured below.



**UoI (Unit of inquiry):** A 6-8 week in-depth exploration of a concept. Students will inquire into a central idea or as specified understanding by being guided by lines of inquiry and teacher questions.



# Middle Years Programme Terms - [What is the MYP?](#)

[Free, online “Nano PD” for the MYP offered by the IB found here](#)

## Who’s it for?

**Middle Years Programme (MYP):** Grades 6-10 (typically in US; always ages 11-16), referred to as MYP Years 1-5 (6th grade = Year 1, etc).

**“Best-fit” judgment:** Reflects the criterion-related philosophy of MYP assessment. In distinction from criterion-based assessment, the MYP approach does not require students to meet every strand of a criterion in order to be awarded a specific achievement level or progress to the next level. MYP assessment relies on teachers’ professional judgment to develop and apply shared understandings of “what good looks like”.

**Criterion-referenced:** How students are measured against a set of agreed-upon learning outcomes with an MYP devised rubric rather than graded on a “bell curve” as in norm-referenced assessments.

**Global contexts:** MYP global contexts provide common points of entry for inquiries into what it means to be internationally minded, framing a curriculum that promotes multilingualism, intercultural understanding and global engagement. These contexts build on the powerful themes of global significance that structure teaching and learning in the PYP, creating relevance for adolescent learners. Teaching and learning in the MYP involves **understanding concepts in context**. When teachers select a global context for learning, they are answering the questions:

- *Why are we engaged in this inquiry? Why are these concepts important?*
- *Why is it important for me (or my students) to understand? Why do people care about this topic?*
- *How does this concept and topic relate to the real world?*

**Global context exploration:** Allows for multiple dimensions of meaningful challenges facing young people in the world today, which then act as a catalyst to develop creative solutions and understanding within the statement of inquiry and throughout the unit. (***Why does this matter to me?***)

**Inquiry questions:** A scaffolded set of inquiries that can support students in developing their understanding of the unit’s statement of inquiry. They should represent a balance of three types of questions: factual, conceptual, and debatable questions, while explicitly addressing the key and related concepts and the selected global context exploration used in the statement of inquiry. They are written to allow for exploration through multiple subject areas by remaining grounded in the concepts, not content, of the unit.

**Key concepts:** 16 key concepts that represent understandings that reach beyond the eight MYP subject groups from which they are drawn. They are meant to be **broad** in nature, and connect in a multi-disciplinary way. Units should focus only on ONE key concept per unit; units should represent a variety of key concepts across the school year and subject areas.

*\*Note: The IB is in the process of reframing this area. Official IB guidance is expected by 2028, but pilot implementation is happening currently.*

**MYP objectives:** Specific targets that are set for learning in that subject group. They define what the student will be able to accomplish as a result of studying the subject. The objectives of each subject group represent the use of **knowledge, understanding** and **skills** that must be taught. **They encompass the factual, conceptual, procedural and metacognitive dimensions of knowledge**. To access the subject briefs from all eight MYP subject groups, [click here](#).

**MYP assessment criterion and strands:** Align with the subject group’s objectives (see above definition). Teachers use provided assessment criteria to judge the extent to which students show achievement for each objective for the unit and the course. Strands are elements of subject-group objectives or criteria; put another way, strands are a detailed breakdown of what each objective or criterion encompasses or entails.

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**MYP rubric:** Set of criteria (like standards) by which the student work is scored. Students are provided the rubric at the beginning of the year, as well as the start of each unit, and should be very familiar with what is expected of them by the end of the school year/program.

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### **Projects:**

- **Community project:** Occurs in Year 3 of the MYP (8th grade in the US) and provides an important opportunity for students ages 13-14 to collaborate and pursue service learning.
  - *\*Note: The IB is in the process of reframing this area. Official IB guidance is expected by 2028, but pilot implementation is happening currently.*
- **Personal project:** Schools register all MYP Year 5 (10th grade in the US) students for external moderation of the personal project, promoting a global standard of quality. The project is made up of a process, a product, and a reflective report. A link to a free, iB Nano-PD about Personal project is [found here](#).

**Related concepts:** Concepts that promote **depth** of learning and add coherence to the understanding of academic subjects and disciplines. Each subject area has twelve (12) related concepts. They are grounded in specific subjects and disciplines and they are useful for exploring key concepts in greater detail. Inquiry into related concepts helps students to develop more complex and sophisticated conceptual understanding. Related concepts may arise from the subject matter of a unit or the craft of a subject—its features and processes.

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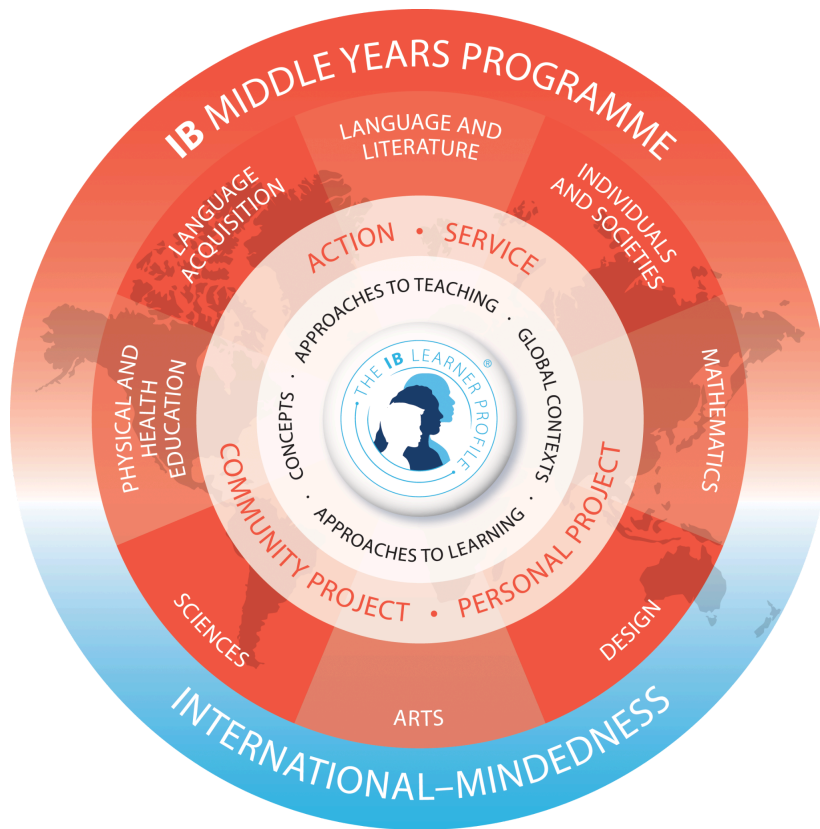
**Standardization of assessment (calibration):** Process by which teachers come to a common understanding on the criteria, achievement levels, and how they are applied. Teachers increase the reliability and standard understanding of their judgments. This is a best-practice method to ensure understanding of key elements to awarding levels, as well as standardize interpretation and application of MYP criterion.

**Statement of inquiry:** Sets conceptual understanding in a global context to frame classroom inquiry and direct purposeful learning. Statements of inquiry summarize “what we will be learning and why” in language that is meaningful to students and uses the concepts and global context exploration to guide teaching and learning. Should transcend the disciplines by leaving content out and focusing on conceptual understanding. Is made up of 1 key concept, 1-3 related concepts, and ONE global context exploration. Does NOT include content - remains as conceptual as possible for all students to access!

*\*Note: The IB is in the process of reframing this area. Official IB guidance is expected by 2028, but pilot implementation is happening currently.*

**Subject groups:** Eight in total, 50 hours each per school year. All eight are required in MYP Years 1-3, while there is more flexibility in Years 4-5 in programming. These include Language and literature (ELA), Language

acquisition (World Language), Individuals and societies (Social studies), Sciences, Maths, Arts, Physical and Health Education, and Design.



# IB Diploma Programme Terms - What is the DP?

Free, online “Nano PD” for the DP offered by the IB found here

## Who’s it for?

**Bilingual diploma:** Students who have completed these conditions through multiple languages may be eligible for a bilingual diploma. A bilingual diploma will be awarded to a successful student who fulfills one or more of the following criteria:

- Completion of two languages selected from the studies in language and literature subject group with the award of a grade 3 or higher in both languages.
- Completion of one of the subjects from the individuals and societies, or sciences subject groups in a language that is not the same as the student’s nominated studies in language and literature language. The student must attain a grade 3 or higher in both the studies in language and literature language and the subject from individuals and societies, or sciences subject groups.

**Diploma Programme (DP):** Diploma programme (grades 11 and 12 in US)

**DP core:** The core is made up of three required components, which aim to broaden students’ educational experience and challenge them to apply their knowledge and skills.

- **Creativity, activity, service (CAS):** Over 18 months and using the three “ strands - Creativity, activity, service) students work within the 7 learning outcomes defined by IB in which they need to prove that they are participating in CAS activities on an ongoing basis), as well as a group project. It aims to provide a 'counterbalance' to the academic rigor of the educational programme.
- **Extended Essay (EE):** an independent, self-directed piece of research, culminating with a 4,000-word paper. Students choose their own topics and are supervised by a faculty advisor.
- **Theory of Knowledge (TOK):** Taught over 100 hours during the programme, TOK integrates all six subjects with the goal of teaching students that all knowledge is related. Students reflect on the nature of knowledge and on how we know what we claim to know.

**EA - External Assessments, or ‘papers’:** These are exams DP and CP students take at the end of their coursework over the 2-year programme. All DP courses in CPS are currently taught as two year courses, and all EAs in CPS take place in May of the students’ Y2/senior year. These tests are sent to qualified graders around the world to be scored. The results are combined with their internal assessments - these result in a grade of 1-7 (7 most qualified). The test results are released in early July.

**Group subjects:** DP students can take classes in up to 6 subject areas; at least one course in each group is required; the sixth group has options (see note below). All students take minimum three or a maximum four subjects at higher level, (HL) and the remaining at standard level (SL). See this [link for a list of IB DP courses a school can offer](#).

- Group 1: Language and Literature (English)
- Group 2: Language Acquisition (Spanish or French)
- Group 3: Individuals and Societies (social sciences)
- Group 4: Sciences

- Group 5: Mathematics
- \*\*The exception to this is Group 6, or arts. A second subject from groups 2-5 may be substituted for a Group 6 course in DP.

**HL (Higher level):** Courses that meet for 240 hours over 2 years of the DP.

**SL (Standard level):** Courses that meet for 150 (or more) hours and can be 1 or 2 years in length.

**IA -Internal Assessment:** refers to oral exams, projects, essays, experiments, case studies, presentations, etc. that are scored by the classroom teachers. A randomly selected of these assessments are sent to IB to ensure that the IB teacher is scoring according to the IB rubric. These IAs count for a percentage of the overall IB grade for each subject (see specific subject briefs for exact breakdown).

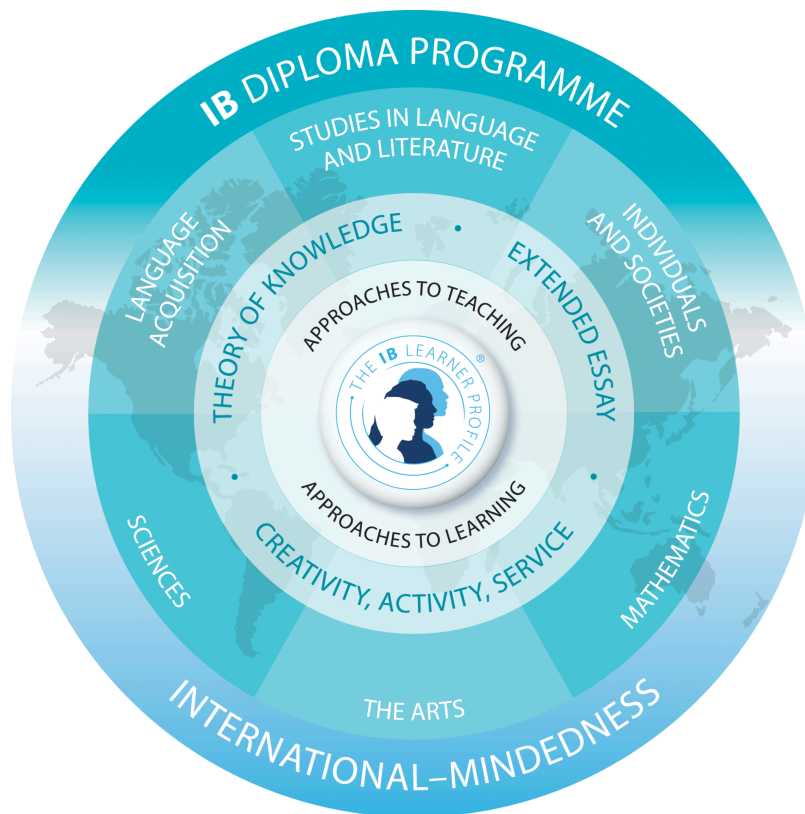
**Paper:** This refers to the exam in May and is otherwise known as the external assessment; graded by an examiner usually in another country. Depending on the subject, students could sit for 2-3 papers in one subject. Students who regularly utilize exam accommodations during the regular course may access some accommodations on their IB exams (papers).

**PG - Predicted Grade -:** IB teachers submit predictions of the grade they believe the student will earn in their IB subject. Students do not see these grades, nor do they figure into their ultimate IB grade in the subject. However, examiners can use PGs if a student has an unforeseen circumstance and they can't complete their exam (death in the family, car accident, national emergency, etc.)

## How is the IB Diploma outcome calculated?

To earn an IB Diploma, points are calculated by adding together the grades achieved from each of the six subjects and the core. Candidates receive a grade of 1-7 for each subject and up to three points for the core elements (EE and TOK). Standard level (SL) and higher level (HL) subjects are equally valued in determining the candidate's final points. To achieve a diploma, students must earn at least 24 points and have met the conditions listed below.

The highest score that a candidate can achieve is 45 points. The maximum points of 45 is obtained from 6 (subjects) times 7 (top grade) plus 3 points from the core.



Abbreviations and acronyms are used in *Diploma Programme Assessment procedures* and other IB publications. This list contains those used here.

A	Anticipated student
C	Course student
CAS	Creativity, activity, service
CP	Career-related Programme
D	Diploma student
DP	Diploma Programme
EE	Extended essay
H	Carry mark forward from a previous session
HL	Higher level
IA	Internal assessment
IBIS	IB information system
MCQ	Multiple-choice (examination)
MYP	Middle Years Programme
N	No grade issued for the subject and level (or other diploma requirement)
P	Pending (mark or grade not available)
PG	Predicted grade
PYP	Primary Years Programme
R	Retake student
SBC	Site-based coordinator (for DP courses online)
SBS	School-based syllabus
SL	Standard level
SSST	School-supported self-taught (applies to language A: literature SL only)
TOK	Theory of knowledge

Notes

# IB Career-related Programme Terms - [What is the CP?](#)

[Free, online “Nano PD” for the CP offered by the IB found here](#)

## Who’s it for?

**Career-related Programme (CP):** Career-related Programme (Grades 11 and 12 in US); Three part framework that comprises at least 2 Diploma Programme courses alongside the distinctive CP core and a career-related study (CRS).

Note: Each student takes at least two subject courses which are common with the school’s DP offerings. CP candidates complete the same assessment process as DP candidates and receive a grade for these courses. A candidate cannot register simultaneously to complete the IB diploma and the CP, despite courses being common to both. The programme requirements of each prevent them from being completed simultaneously.

**[Career-related Study/Studies \(CRS\):](#)** Career-related studies; designed to prepare students for higher education, an internship or apprenticeship, or a position in a designated field of interest.

**[The CP core:](#)** The Career-related Programme core bridges the IB academic courses and the career-related study and provides students with a combination of academic and practical skills. There are four elements to the CP core. They are:

- **Personal and Professional Skills (PPS):** Personal and professional skills is designed for students to develop attitudes, skills and strategies to be applied to personal and professional situations and contexts now and in the future. In this course the emphasis is on skills development for the workplace, as these are transferable and can be applied in a range of situations.
- **Community engagement:** Community engagement (CE) offers opportunities for students to learn in, from, and with communities as well as to apply knowledge and skills in other areas of learning. CE invites students to engage with communities in dialogic, reciprocal, reflective and reflexive ways, and to expand their understanding from a personal to a relational to a systems dimension. Students engage in an inquiry-based process of exploring and preparing, relating and acting, and evaluating and sharing that is aimed at responding to relevant opportunities and challenges identified both by and with the communities. (taken from *CP Community engagement guide*, published August 2025)
- **Language and cultural studies:** Language and cultural studies (LCS) invites students to better understand and expand their linguistic and cultural repertoires, and imagine how they could future engage with a range of linguistic and cultural groups. As partners in inquiry, students and teachers explore their linguistic and cultural repertoires and reflect on them in the context of local and global communities. (taken from *CP Language and cultural studies guide*, published August 2025)
- **Reflective Project (RP):** The reflective project is an in-depth body of work focused on an ethical dilemma in a career-related area. It is developed over an extended period of time; as a product of the students’ own initiative, it provides a thoughtful representation of their cumulative personal experience and skills gained over the course of the Career-related Programme (CP). Students have the ability to develop their RP using a variety of format options, which include written, verbal, visual, and audio-visual modes of communication. (taken from *CP Reflective project guide*, published May 2025)

## How is the CP outcome calculated?

To achieve a CP certificate, a candidate must meet all of the following requirements.

- The school has confirmed that the candidate has completed the specified career-related study.
- The candidate has been awarded a grade 3 or more in at least two of the DP courses.
- The candidate has been awarded at least a D grade for the reflective project.
- The school has confirmed that all personal and professional skills, service learning and language development requirements have been met.
- The candidate has not received a penalty for academic misconduct from the Final Award Committee.

**Bilingual CP Certificates:** In addition to the usual certificate, a “bilingual certificate” can be awarded to a candidate who completes:

- two DP language courses selected from studies in language and literature with the award of a grade 3 or higher in both
- a DP language course from studies in language and literature and completes a DP course from individuals and societies or sciences in a response language that is not the same as that taken from studies in language and literature. The candidate must attain a grade 3 or higher in both courses.



## University resources for the IB

Information regarding university admissions and resources for school counselors [can be found here.](#)

Online database for university admissions and resources for students, families, and counselors [can be found here.](#)