

Education system

International Baccalaureate

described and compared with
the Dutch system

This document provides information about the education system of the International Baccalaureate. We explain the Dutch equivalent of the International Baccalaureate for the purpose of admission to Dutch higher education.

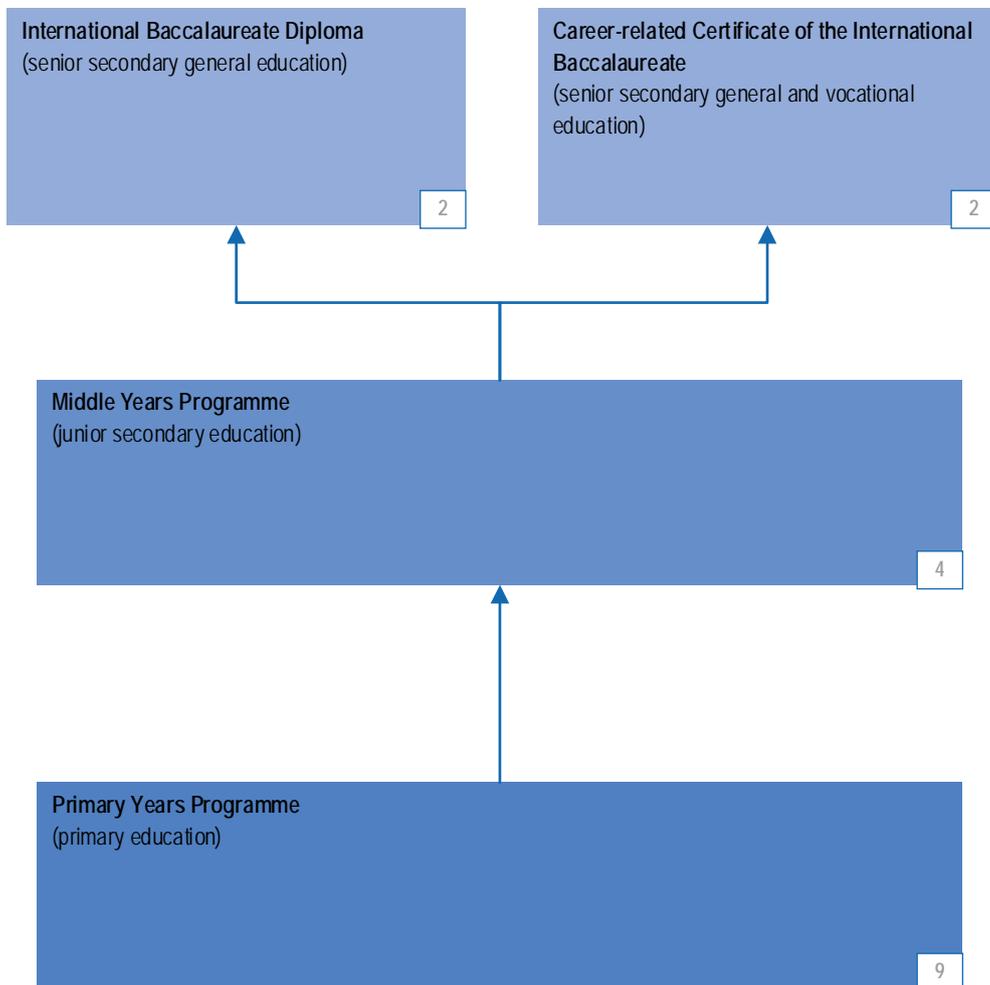
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We assemble the information for these descriptions of education systems with the greatest care. However, we cannot be held responsible for the consequences of errors or incomplete information in this document.



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■ Education system International Baccalaureate



 Duration of education

■ Evaluation chart

The left-hand column in the table below lists the foreign qualification. The other columns show the Dutch equivalent along with the comparable levels in the Dutch and European qualifications frameworks.

Degree or qualification	Dutch equivalent and NLQF level		EQF level
International Baccalaureate Diploma	VWO diploma	4+	4
DP Course result (formerly known as Certificate)	Modular certificates at VWO level (deelcertificaten)	-	-
Career-related Certificate of the International Baccalaureate	At least HAVO diploma with vocational subjects	4	4

NB

- The information provided in the table is a general recommendation from which no rights may be derived.
- NLQF = Netherlands Qualifications Framework. EQF = European Qualifications Framework.
- The EQF/[NLQF level](#) is not so much a reflection of study load or content; rather, it is an indication of a person's knowledge and skills after having completed a certain programme of study.
- Information about Dutch equivalent qualifications can be found on our website: [the Dutch education system](#).
- [The Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market \(SBB\)](#), evaluates statements on foreign qualifications and training at VMBO and MBO level. The evaluation may vary if SBB evaluates the diploma for admission to VET schools or the labour market in the Netherlands.

■ Introduction

The International Baccalaureate was founded as a non-profit organisation in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968. A group of teachers from the International School of Geneva developed the IB Programme with the help of other international schools.

This was originally a single programme to prepare pupils for admission to higher education, but it has since been expanded to cover three curricula for pupils between the ages of 3 and 19: the Primary Years Programme, the Middle Years Programme and the Diploma Programme. The most recent offering is the IB Career-Related Certificate for students aged 16 to 19. There are currently more than 999,000 IB pupils in 3,343 schools in 141 countries around the world.

The curriculum and the examinations are drawn up and organised under the responsibility of the International Baccalaureate (IB). International schools that wish to offer the programme must go through an authorization process and are then subject to a stringent quality management system under the responsibility of the IB. The IB is administrated through three Global Centres situated in Bethesda, The Hague and Singapore. In addition, there is the Assessment Centre in Cardiff and the foundation office is in Geneva.

In principle, the programmes are followed in succession, but it is possible for a school to be authorized for one programme only. A characteristic of the programmes is that various disciplines (language, the humanities, natural sciences, mathematics and arts) are integrated. In addition, particular attention is paid to culture, language acquisition, research and community service.

While the IB now offers a sequence of four programmes – the Primary Years Programme (PYP in 1997), the Middle Years Programme (MYP in 1994), the Diploma Programme (DP in 1969) and the IB Career-related certificate (IBCC in 2011) – each programme will continue to be self-contained, since the IB has no requirement for schools to offer more than one programme. The four programmes together form a coherent sequence.

■ Primary Years Programme (PYP)

The IB Primary Years Programme, for pupils aged 3 to 12, focuses on the development of the child both in the classroom and in the world outside. A school may implement the PYP in any language (with permission from the IB). All curriculum documents are produced in English, French and Spanish. A number of curriculum documents are also available in Arabic, Chinese, and Turkish.

The most distinctive feature of the IB Primary Years Programme are the six transdisciplinary themes:

- Who we are;
- Where we are in place and time;
- How we express ourselves;
- How the world works;
- How we organize ourselves;
- Sharing the planet.

The significance of these themes is that they define much of the global context for learning in the PYP. The transdisciplinary themes outlined above form the “knowledge” component of the programme. Other essential elements such as concepts, skills, attitudes, and action are also part of the PYP curriculum framework.

■ Middle Years Programme (MYP)

Originally an initiative by the International Schools Association, this programme has been included as one of the three IB Programmes since 1994. The Middle Years Programme (MYP) prepares pupils aged between 11 and 16 for the Diploma Programme. It provides thorough academic grounding with the intention of creating links between the various subjects.

The Middle Years Programme can be taught in any language, but is mainly taught in English, French, Spanish and Chinese. The programme comprises eight groups (subject areas):

- Language A (mother tongue);
- Language B (a second language);
- Humanities;
- Sciences;
- Mathematics;
- Arts;
- Physical education;
- Technology.

Within the subject area Humanities, the courses that can be chosen are integrated humanities, geography, history, economics, politics, civics, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. The subject area Mathematics covers the five mathematical branches: number, algebra, geometry and trigonometry, statistics and probability, and discrete mathematics.

In the subject area Sciences, schools can choose to offer either biology, chemistry or physics on the one hand or an integrated course covering all three disciplines on the other. As for the subject area Arts, schools offer a balance of visual arts and the performing arts.

During the final year, pupils carry out a personal project, an independent piece of research over an extended period of time in which they demonstrate the skills they have acquired during the programme.

Assessment

Assessment is criterion-related, so students around the world are measured against pre-specified criteria for each subject group. Teachers may modify these criteria to be age-appropriate in the earlier years of the programme. External checks (either moderation or monitoring of assessment by IB examiners) are carried out on this internal assessment to ensure worldwide consistency of standards. For schools that require official IB certification for their students, moderation is carried out every year.

Diploma Programme

Developed in 1968, the Diploma Programme is the oldest of the three programmes. The goal of the Diploma Programme was – and is – to offer a secondary education study programme that supports student mobility, both cultural and geographic. Since 1970, more than half a million pupils have obtained the IB Diploma.

The Diploma Programme is a 2-year general secondary education programme for the 16-19 age group. The curriculum was developed for pupils with a wide range of educational backgrounds and nationalities and prepares them for university or higher education. It is offered at some 2300 schools all over the world in three world languages (English, French and Spanish). A pilot is currently in progress in which the programme is offered in German and Chinese as well.

Curriculum

The curriculum of the Diploma Programme is divided into six groups of subjects. To satisfy the examination requirements of the programme and receive the IB Diploma, pupils must choose a subject from each of these groups, which ensures a broad set of subjects for each pupil. The groups are set out as follows:

- Group 1: Studies Language & Literature
first language (generally the native language or the “best language”);
- Group 2: Language Acquisition
Language ab initio, Language B or Language A2 (phased out in 2012) or the Classical Languages (classical Greek/Latin);

- Group 3: Individuals and Societies
history, geography, economics, business & management, psychology, philosophy, social and cultural anthropology or information technology in a global society and World Religions;
- Group 4: Experimental Sciences
biology, chemistry, design technology, physics or environmental systems & societies (a transdisciplinary subject in groups 3 and 4);
- Group 5: Mathematics and Computer Science
mathematical studies (SL), mathematics (SL), mathematics (HL) or further mathematics (SL, from 2012 an HL subject) or computer science (SL/HL, in combination with a mathematical subject);
- Group 6: the Arts
film, music, theatre and visual arts and dance (all SL/HL).

Instead of an Arts subject, the sixth subject can also be a second subject from one of the first five groups.

There are also several interdisciplinary subjects; these are subjects that satisfy the requirements of more than one group. To make sure the overall requirements of the Diploma Programme are still satisfied (six subjects), an alternative sixth subject must be chosen. Two interdisciplinary subjects may be included in the student selection. The present interdisciplinary subject is Environmental systems and societies (SL) in groups 3 and 4; a number of subjects will be added to this. See under [Developments](#).

In addition to the subjects listed above, the IBO is testing new subjects by means of a pilot phase. The pilot subjects for the 2011 examinations were:

- Group 3: Global Politics SL/HL (May and November)
- Group 4: Sports, exercise and health science (SL) (May and November)
- Group 6: Dance (HL/SL) (since September 2011)
- Interdisciplinary subject groups 1 and 6: Literature and performance (SL) (May and November)

In addition to the interdisciplinary subjects and the pilot subjects, there is a third category of school-based syllabuses (SBS). IB schools that have held at least two examination sessions may offer their "own" subjects at standard level in groups 3, 4 and 6. These subjects respond to regional needs, but do need to be approved by the IBO. In order to satisfy the IB Diploma requirements, only one school-based subject may be included in the programme. Moreover, by choosing a SBS a pupil opts out of obtaining a bilingual diploma.

For an overview of current curriculum choices for the Diploma Programme, see the IB Diploma Programme [Manual](#).

To satisfy the attainment targets of the IB Diploma, a pupil chooses three subjects at standard level (SL) and three subjects at higher level (HL). Pupils may also follow four subjects at higher level, on condition that they achieve at least 12 points in three subjects at the examination.

The study load for the standard level is 150 hours, compared with 240 hours for the higher level.

In addition to following the six subjects, pupils must write an extended essay, pass the subject “Theory of Knowledge” (TOK) and participate in “Creativity, Action, Service” (CAS) activities. The extended essay, with a length of 4,000 words, is an individual research project based on one of the six chosen subjects. The focus in TOK is on analytical reasoning. CAS encourages pupils to take part in artistic activities, sports and community service in addition to their school work. These three elements constitute the DP “core”.

The Diploma is awarded if pupils have scored at least 24 points in the six chosen subjects and have successfully completed the three core subjects (TOK, extended essay and CAS). Twelve out of twenty-four points should be obtained on Higher Level. The maximum number of points that can be achieved for a Diploma is 45 points.

It is also possible to obtain a Bilingual Diploma. For this, pupils must satisfy the following requirements:

- two languages A1, or
- one A1 language with one A2 language, or
- one subject from group 3 or 4 in a language other than the A1 language with a satisfactory grade, or
- an extended essay in a subject from group 3 or 4, written in a language other than the A1 language.

The A2 language has been phased out; the last examinations were held in 2012. See under [Developments](#).

Besides the standard IB Diploma and the Bilingual Diploma, pupils can apply for a Non-regular Diploma. If granted, the pupil concerned is given permission, as an exception, to follow three subjects from one group: the regular subject from that group, a subject that replaces the group 6 subject and the exception for which permission is given. The non-regular Diploma may be useful in view of specific admission requirements in the country where the prospective student is planning to attend higher education. For example, a pupil who wishes to study medicine in the Netherlands may submit a request to take a written examination in multiple subjects from group 4, in order to satisfy the relevant cluster requirements in the Netherlands for biology, chemistry and physics. Written permission for this must be obtained from the IBO.

In terms of level, the IB Diploma is comparable to a VWO diploma.

About 80 per cent of examination candidates obtain the IB Diploma; less than 1 per cent pass with 45 points.

DP Courses (previously known as IB Certificate)

When these requirements are not satisfied or a school does not offer the entire Diploma Programme, the DP Course result is awarded.

In terms of level, the DP course result is not comparable to a full VWO diploma, but to modular certificates (*deelcertificaten*) at VWO level in the examination subjects concerned.

■ Examination

The examination is held at the end of the second year and includes oral and written components. The examinations are set and assessed externally.

No examinations are held for Theory of Knowledge and the extended essay; these are completed under the supervision of the teacher. However, the end product is assessed externally.

For subjects that are taken at higher level, a maximum of 80 percent of the final grade is determined by a written examination lasting 4 to 5 hours and an assessment of practical work. For subjects at standard level, the examination lasts a maximum of 3 hours.

All candidates must be registered by the school in a particular category. There are four categories: Anticipated (A), Diploma (D), Retake (R) and Course (C). Anticipated candidates take examinations after the first year to complete one or two SL subjects. All SL subjects except for Language ab initio and pilot subjects can be examined after the first year. The Diploma candidates are the pupils taking the final examinations at the end of the second year with the intention of obtaining the Diploma. Retake candidates were registered previously as Diploma or Retake candidates and are trying again to obtain the full Diploma after 6 months or 1 year. DP Course candidates are taking examinations in several subjects, but are not trying to obtain the full Diploma.

Even if they have obtained a certificate in six subjects, these pupils do not qualify for a Diploma because they have not passed the TOK, CAS or the extended essay components. The Diploma must be obtained in no more than three sessions. This may be either Anticipated – Diploma – Retake or Diploma – Retake – Retake.

There are two examination sessions, in May and in November; the results are published on 5 July and 5 January respectively. Once the results have been published, pupils can register for higher education. The results can be requested digitally; a printout stating clearly that the Diploma has been obtained is sufficient for provisional admission. The actual documents are sent to the schools in August and February respectively and must always be produced on admission.

■ The IB Career-related Certificate (IBCC)

The IBCC is a programme for the age group 16-19 that combines academic courses with career-related studies in a flexible framework tailored by the school. With a focus on the needs of the student, it offers a specialised pathway to higher education.

Curriculum

The programme can only be offered by authorized IBCC schools and includes the following two components:

1. IB Diploma Programme courses:
Between two and four IB Diploma Programme courses can be studied. The Diploma programme courses can come from any of the six groups or study areas (see above), and can be studied at higher level, standard level or a combination of the two. IB Diploma programme courses are rigorous and academic in nature, preparing students for higher education.
2. The IBCC core:
The IBCC core specifically promotes attributes of an IB education such as reflection, open-mindedness, communication and critical thinking.

Approaches to learning emphasize the development of transferable skills needed to operate successfully in society. The approaches to learning course aims to develop personal qualities and values as exemplified in the IB learner profile. Other attributes encouraged by the course include responsibility, perseverance, resilience, self-esteem and honesty.

Community and service emphasizes the affective development of students and concentrates on the concepts of partnership and learning.

Language development requires all IBCC students, regardless of their choice of Diploma Programme courses, to improve their language proficiency in a target language other than their best/mother tongue language.

Reflective project is an extended piece of work. It requires students to reflect on an ethical dilemma associated with a particular issue drawn from the student's career-related studies. The reflective project is submitted at the end of the IBCC programme.

Additional requirement: a career-related study (examined by external educational provider).

The IBCC has been designed to offer a professional counterpart to the academic Diploma Programme. It is the school's responsibility to offer the career-related studies to their students. However, it is important that schools choose a locally recognised educational provider that enables students to go on to further education.

■ Examination IBCC

There is a combination of direct IB assessment of student learning and of internal assessment performed by the schools themselves. The chosen Diploma Programme courses will be assessed by the IB, combining external and internal assessment. The approaches to learning, community and service and language development will be assessed and authenticated by the school. The reflective project is internally assessed but externally moderated by the IB.

Assessment of additional requirements

The career-related study is assessed/validated by the relevant external authority, **not** the IB.

Certification

Pupils who successfully complete the IBCC will receive the Career-related Certificate of the International Baccalaureate and a statement of results.

In terms of level, the *Career-related Certificate of the International Baccalaureate* is comparable to at least a HAVO diploma with vocational subjects.

■ Admission to higher education

For admission to higher education in the Netherlands, the candidate must have passed the entire IB Diploma Programme and obtained the IB Diploma. Provisional admission can take place on the basis of the results that are made available online on 5 July or 5 January. It is not unusual for provisional admission to be granted on the basis of a printout of the list of results. However, pupils must always be able to produce the Diploma at a later time. It is also important that the results list states that the Diploma has been obtained.

Pupils who successfully complete the IBCC will receive the Career-related Certificate of the International Baccalaureate and a statement of results. The Career-related Certificate of the International Baccalaureate grants access to higher professional education (HBO) in the Netherlands.

Since no full diploma has been obtained, DP Courses are not sufficient for admission to higher education in the Netherlands, neither higher professional education (HBO) nor academic education (WO).

Knowledge of Dutch

Exemption from the Dutch language test can be granted if a candidate has taken Dutch as Language A (SL or HL) or as Language B at HL.

■ Assessment systems

The Diploma is awarded if a candidate has obtained at least 24 points. The subjects are assessed using grades from 1 (the lowest) to 7 (highest):

Numerical grade	Description
7	Excellent
6	Very good
5	Good
4	Satisfactory
3	Mediocre
2	Poor
1	Very poor
N	No grade

A maximum of 3 points can be obtained for TOK, the extended essay and CAS. The result is indicated with a letter:

Letter grade	Description
A	Excellent
B	Good
C	Satisfactory
D	Mediocre
E	Elementary
N	No grade

The Diploma can therefore be obtained with a maximum of 45 points.

More information about the value of foreign grades can be found on our [website](#) (Dutch only).

■ Quality assurance and accreditation

An international school that wishes to offer the Diploma Programme or one of the other two programmes must be approved by means of an authorisation process to ensure that the school offers the programmes correctly. After approval, schools are subject to ongoing assessment and evaluations to make sure they continue to satisfy the quality requirements.

For a list of authorized schools, see the [website](#) of the International Baccalaureate Office.

■ Development

Diploma Programme – Terminology

Since September 2011, certificates that do not lead to the full IB Diploma have been called Diploma Programme Courses. These certificates will be awarded after the examinations in September 2013. Instead of the IB Certificate, the Diploma Programme (DP) Course Results will be awarded.

To prevent confusion, the IB Diploma will be called the Diploma of the International Baccalaureate from September 2013, and will be accompanied by the Diploma Programme (DP) Results.

The subjects formerly known as transdisciplinary subjects have been called interdisciplinary subjects since September 2011. This concerns Environmental Systems and Societies (groups 3 and 4), World Arts and Cultures, and the newly developed Literature and Performance (groups 1 and 6, see below).

Former name	Since September 2011
IB Certificate	Diploma Programme Course
IB Diploma	Diploma of the International Baccalaureate
Transdisciplinary subjects	Interdisciplinary subjects

Diploma Programme – Groups 1 and 2

In 2011 the structure of groups 1 and 2 (languages) was altered, with the main change being the phasing out of Language A2. Within group 1, three subjects are now offered instead of one:

1. Language A literature (replaces language A1)
2. Language A: language and literature (a new subject)
3. Literature and performance (SL) (from the pilot phase)

Language A literature is offered in the 50 languages already available; Language A: language and literature is offered in 16 languages. The group name was changed to Studies in Language and Literature.

Within group 2 - Language A2, the subjects Language ab initio, Language B and Classical languages have been retained, but Language A2 is no longer offered and has been replaced by the new subject in group 1, Language A: language and literature. The name of group 2 was changed to Language acquisition.

Below is an overview of the changes:

Group 1	
Language A1	Studies in language and literature
Old curriculum:	Since September 2011:
Language A1	Language A: literature (SL/HL)
-	Language A: language and literature (SL/HL)
-	Literature and performance (SL)
Group 2	
Second Language	Language acquisition
Old curriculum:	Since September 2011:
Language ab initio (SL)	Language ab initio (SL)
Language B (HL)	Language B (SL/HL)
Language A2	-
Classical Languages	Classical Languages (SL/HL)

To satisfy the language requirements of the Diploma Programme, the subjects must be combined as follows: Pupils are required to follow one subject from group 1 and in addition, to select a second language from group 1 or 2. It is possible to study a third language as an elective instead of a subject from group 6.

The alterations to groups 1 and 2 mean that the requirements for the Bilingual Diploma have also changed. Since September 2011, pupils have been required to follow two subjects from group 1 in different languages and complete these with at least a satisfactory grade, or follow a subject from group 3 or 4 in a language other than Language A and complete this subject with at least a grade 3. The option of writing the extended essay in a foreign language has been dropped.

Diploma Programme – Groups 3 and 4

Within group 3, the SL subject World Religions has been offered since September 2011. The first examinations will be held in May 2013. The subject Sports, Exercise and Health Science at SL will be added to group 4 from 2012

Diploma Programme – Extended Essay/TOK/CAS

The extended essay, TOK and CAS will be offered as separate elements from 2012 so that pupils that do not follow the full programme can still acquire these skills. These subjects will be included in the list of results from 2014.

Diploma Programme Online Course

In collaboration with Pamoja Education, eight subjects will be offered as online courses. For the time being, an IB World School can apply for authorisation as an IB “Open” World School and can then offer the IB Programme to pupils outside the school in that capacity. It is not yet known whether and, if so, how online courses can be identified on diplomas and lists of results.

■ **Composition of file**

The IB Diploma or a printout of the online results if the diploma has not yet been awarded.

■ **List of institutions**

[Website](#) of the International Baccalaureate Office with a list of IB World Schools.

■ **Useful websites**

- [Website](#) of the International Baccalaureate Office.
- The IB Diploma Programme [Manual](#).