

# WINTER PARK IB FAQ

## **1. What sort of student should be interested in IB? What skills are useful or necessary to an IB candidate?**

Among the common characteristics of successful IB candidates are:

- A broad interest in all countries, cultures, beliefs and customs
- An ability to articulate information, both orally and in writing
- An ability to reason, (i.e., see relationships, draw conclusions, deduce, etc.)
- A willingness to participate in discussion and to work responsibly with others
- A broad range of interests beyond the classroom
- A commitment to service
- Good attendance and work habits.

The IBO states emphatically that the IB Diploma Program is not necessarily for the most able students, but for the most motivated students. Motivation, commitment, and self-discipline are the common traits of many successful IB candidates.

## **2. What if my student did not study a foreign language in middle school? Can he still participate in IB?**

Yes. However, students who have studied a foreign language for several years will be better prepared to sit for the Language B exam than those who have studied it for only four years. The speaking skill often develops more slowly than the listening, reading, and writing skills, so the oral interview component of the IB assessment will be more manageable and likely more successful for longtime language learners.

## **3. Do all the students in an IB program generally earn the IB Diploma?**

About Ninety percent of the students who participate in the IB Diploma Program earn the IB Diploma. Those who do not earn the Diploma may receive IB Certificates for IB courses successfully completed.

## **4. What happens if students fail an IB exam? Can they retake it? Who will help them prepare to do so? How long must they wait before retaking it?**

If a student fails an IB exam, he/she may retake it the next year. If a student has failed an exam at the end of grade 11, he/she may retake the exam in May of grade 12. The IB instructor works throughout the IB course to familiarize students with the sort of questions and activities they will face on the IB exams.

## **5. Are grades in IB classes weighted?**

Yes, they are. Unweighted and weighted GPA's are side by side on the transcript.

## **6. What is the difference between an HL and an SL course?**

An SL course must include a minimum of 150 hours of teacher contact time, while an HL course represents a minimum of 240 hours of teacher contact time over two years. Naturally, HL courses cover a larger body of content than SL courses. HL and SL exams are similar in format and assessment, and there is a core of material common to the curriculum in both levels.

## **7. Can students waive or test out of IB courses?**

No. Students must complete all the course work for a given IB course before sitting for the exam in that course.

## **8. What if a student fails one of his/her IB exams? Will (s) he still earn the IB Diploma?**

No. Students must successfully complete three Higher Level (HL) courses and three Standard Level (SL) courses in the six IB curriculum groups over the term of grades 11 and 12. In addition, failure to complete the Extended Essay, Theory of Knowledge, or CAS (Creativity, Action, Service) components of the Diploma Program will result in non-awarding of the IB Diploma. Students not earning the IB Diploma will receive an IB Certificate for each IB course and exam completed successfully. Students may retake an IB exam if they wish, in order to raise a failing score to a passing one. Further details of this option are available from the IB Coordinator.

**9. If a student fails an IB exam, does he/she lose credit for the course from Winter Park's viewpoint?**

No. IB exams are graded on a range of 1 to 7 points, with a 4 or better considered a passing grade. If students earn fewer than 4 points on an exam, they may not apply those points toward the total needed to earn the IB Diploma. However, that does not affect the course grade or the Winter Park High School diploma.

**10. Who trains IB Diploma candidates to write the 4000-word Extended Essay? What help or guidance do they receive?**

The writing of the Extended Essay is supervised by teacher mentors who meet at regular intervals with the students throughout the course of the Extended Essay project. Diploma candidates begin the Extended Essay in the second semester of grade 11 and complete the project by the end of first semester of grade 12. The IB Coordinator works with all of the teacher mentors to ensure a supportive atmosphere for the students' research and to avoid problems along the way.

It is the school's responsibility to ensure that each candidate submitting an Extended Essay is supervised by a teacher at the school with appropriate qualifications and/or experience in the subject chosen by the candidate. Each candidate will share in the selection of the mentor, but the ultimate approval of a given staff member will reside with the school.

**11. What do we do if there is a personality conflict between my student and the IB instructor? Can we switch teachers?**

Probably not, because our IB instructors have received specific training in IB curriculum content, IB instructional methodology, and IB assessments. It is likely that there is only one IB instructor teaching a given course, so switching to another class will not be possible. Besides, one of the criteria for success in IB is the ability to work responsibly and cooperatively with others, a skill much in demand by employers.

**12. My student struggles with a certain core subject and really does not want to take any more of it. Can he still get an IB Diploma?**

IB requires IB Diploma candidates to complete studies in each of six areas: English, foreign language, the social sciences, experimental science, mathematics, and an elective. In addition, they must successfully complete the Theory of Knowledge course, the Extended Essay, and the CAS (Creativity, Action, Service) components of the Diploma Program. Failure to complete any one of the elements of the program will result in non-awarding of the IB Diploma, although such students may still earn the Winter Park High School diploma.

**13. What is "malpractice" in IB terms?**

This is the term IB uses to describe any of several dishonest academic practices such as cheating, plagiarism, failure to acknowledge fully and in detail the words and/or ideas of another person, etc. Malpractice is grounds for non-awarding of the IB Diploma and exclusion from sitting for the IB exams, even if students have successfully completed all other elements of the program.

**14. What is the difference between an IB course and the AP courses that other schools may offer?**

One may think of an AP course as an in-depth study of a particular subject area, while IB is a broad-ranging, cross-curricular, integrated study that can lead to an IB Diploma. Both AP and IB are challenging and rigorous. Both can offer the opportunity for college credit or advanced placement. Students do not have to take an AP course to take the AP exams, while IB students must complete the IB course work before taking the IB exams. IB focuses on the application of knowledge to new situations and stresses an international perspective. The most notable advantage of the International Baccalaureate Program is its emphasis on internationalism, a rich interweaving of multicultural materials and topics missing from most other rigorous high school programs.

**15. How is IB more advantageous than dual enrollment or another special program currently available to Winter Park students?**

IB offers the opportunity for a baccalaureate diploma in a globally focused program with widely recognized international standards and assessments. IB may be appealing to students who desire a challenging program but who wish to remain on their home campus. IB is respected and recognized by colleges and universities worldwide for the excellence of its program. The strongest reason for

pursuing the IB Diploma is its reputation for preparing students for successful work in post-secondary study: the confidence to handle challenging work, self-assurance in presenting and defending one's ideas, and appreciation for other cultures and ideas. Studies undertaken the past few years by several U.S. universities (University of Florida, The College of William and Mary, Virginia Tech, Case Western Reserve, and Marquette University) have all begun to show the advantages of the IB Diploma Program in preparing students for post-secondary success.

**16. I want to take advantage of an off-campus program the district offers. Will that fit with IB?**

The IBO requires that students complete all of the course work for their IB classes on campus, under the instruction and guidance of the Winter Park IB teachers

**17. What happens if a student has already been accepted by a college/university and then he does not pass his IB exams? How does it affect his starting college?**

IB exams are administered in May. The exam results are not published until mid-July following grade 12, so if the student has been accepted at a college, it is likely that his acceptance was not solely dependent on his earning the IB Diploma. However, failure to earn the Diploma might affect the advanced-placement status of the student, scholarships, or other forms of recognition offered in anticipation of the student's successful completion of the IB Program.

**18. What are the due dates for the Extended Essay, the IB exams, and completion of the CAS (Creativity, Action, Service) component of the Diploma Program?**

Exact dates for completion of these elements of the program vary from year to year. CAS begins the first day of the grade 11 and completed by February of grade 12. Students begin the Extended Essay in the second semester of grade 11 and complete it by November of grade 12. Other papers and internal assessments will be staggered over the course of the school year to avoid several major projects falling due at the same time. The IB exams are administered in May of each year.

**19. What does the term "transparency" mean when used in reference to the IB Program?**

"Transparency" refers to IB's requirement that students be informed from the first day of class of the program's aims, objectives, content, and assessment criteria. This will enable them to understand the requirements of the course, to evaluate their own progress, and to take their share of responsibility in the learning process.

**20. When and by whom are the IB exams given? Are there people available to help prepare my son/daughter to sit for these exams?**

The IB Coordinator administers exams over a three-week period in May of each year and mails the papers abroad to be evaluated and graded by IB examiners. The IB instructor teaches the entire course according to the IB curriculum, using assessments in the same format as those the student will encounter on the IB exams. The IBO states that there should be no surprises as to what students are expected to be able to do on IB exams.

**21. Who grades my student's exams and papers? How do I know that the IB graders are qualified to do so if they are not teachers I know personally?**

A team of over 3000 IB examiners worldwide grades IB papers, assessments, and final exams. All of them are experienced IB instructors, trained in writing IB curriculum and assessments, and they have ongoing training under the direction of a Chief Examiner for each subject area. In addition, our instructors grade some of the papers and other internal assessments and send them to the IB Curriculum and Assessment Office in Europe for moderation (that is, for feedback and a second evaluation by the IBO to verify that the instructor has adhered to IBO standards in grading the papers). Both the IB exams and IB examiners must meet rigorous international standards.

**22. What if my student is ill or has a family emergency on the day of his IB exams? Is there a make-up date?**

No, there is not. The IB exam in a given subject area is given on the same date in every school worldwide where IB is offered. If a student misses the exam, he is considered not to have completed the course. In the case of dire emergency, the IB Coordinator notifies IBO, who will determine whether any special accommodation will be made and of what it will consist. Holidays, family celebrations, and vacations are common situations where U.S. citizens may be used to school's making accommodation, but such possibilities do not exist within the IB Diploma Program.

**23. When do we learn the results of the exams? Why so late?**

Exam results are issued in mid-July. The IB Coordinator will issue candidates a PIN number so that they may access their IB scores at the earliest possible date. Each candidate's papers are viewed and reviewed by at least twenty people by the time results are published, and with papers coming in from over 800 schools, it is impossible to publish the results earlier.

**24. Whom do I contact if there is a problem in my student's IB course?**

As always, the classroom instructor must be the first line of communication in working out a problem or getting help. If resolution of the problem is not achieved through this route, both the student or the instructor can inform the IB Coordinator.

**25. On what is the candidate's grade based?**

Students are evaluated on both internal assessments (graded by the IB teacher) and external assessments (graded by IB examiners around the world). Internal assessments may include projects, presentations, discussions, portfolios, papers, and interviews. External assessments might include projects, exhibitions, papers, written exams, interviews, and possibly oral interviews, as in English and foreign language.

**26. Will a candidate receive a Winter Park High School diploma as well as an IB Diploma if he/she earns it?**

Yes. Students who successfully complete IB Diploma Program will earn a Winter Park High School diploma as well as the IB Diploma.

**27. What are grades 9 and 10 doing to prepare students for the IB?**

To help ensure success in the rigorous and demanding IB Diploma program, Winter Park has the Pre-IB program, a comprehensive 9th-10th grade continuum where coursework is integrated and sequential...so that students can leverage learning to their maximum advantage.

As a preparatory strand for the IB Program, students engage in an extensive course of study in math, science, world language, social studies and language arts—with an emphasis on independent study, in-depth learning and accelerated curriculum requirements. The program moves at a vigorous pace...integrating creativity, problem-solving, higher-order thinking skills, communication, leadership, planning, and goal-setting, and research. Students who participate in this program are required to take a core curriculum of classes, as well as participate in community service projects.

**28. How will IB affect my student's study, work, and leisure time?**

IB candidates participate in athletics, drama, debate/forensics, music, student government, charitable work, and still manage to go out on weekends. If students are well organized and focused, they can even manage to work while participating in IB. The key is to balance one's responsibilities. Parents also play a significant role in students' success in IB. Parents must recognize the commitment involved in IB participation and be ready to support the students' efforts fully.