

Palmer's College



Prospectus for the International Baccalaureate Diploma Course for September 2010

Palmer's College *has been an IB World School since April 2008.*

*For further information about the IBO and its programmes, visit
<http://www.ibo.org>.*

The IB Diploma

The International Baccalaureate (IB) has existed since 1968. It is taught in nearly 3000 schools in 138 countries. The most famous and respected international qualification, it provides a complete alternative to A Levels. With all the recent publicity about A Level standards, the IB is increasingly seen as a highly-respected, challenging alternative. It is certainly demanding for students, but it gives them a high-quality and impressive qualification by universities and employers all over the world. And our experience is that the students really enjoy it and thrive on its challenges.

Three key reasons for choosing the IB

1. A Levels are a set of separate subjects, whereas the IB is a subject package. When you pass, you receive a Diploma which recognises your all-round abilities. This will show an impressive range of breadth and depth.
2. The IB helps you to develop and demonstrate high-level critical thinking and research skills, and also enhances your personal development. These qualities are why universities and employers welcome the IB Diploma enthusiastically.
3. We live in an increasingly inter-dependent, globalised world. As an international qualification, the IB aims to help young people live and succeed in it.

The IB Diploma – Key Facts

- The IB is a two-year course.
- You take six main subjects from a choice of about 20.
- You study three of these subjects at Higher Level, which carry a bigger workload, and three at Standard Level, which are lighter in workload.
- You study a wide range of subjects, including Maths and Literature, a Science, a Humanities subject, and a Foreign Language.
- It does not matter if you have not taken another Language to GCSE – you can learn one from scratch!
- You are not expected to be an expert in everything but just to have a wide range of interests. IB Students often say that they re-discover a love for a subject they had not particularly liked at school.
- If you are particularly keen on Sciences, Humanities or Languages, you can take a second subject in one of these three areas. Otherwise, you can complete your timetable with courses such as Art, Film or Computer Science.
- In addition, there are three smaller, extra components (called the “Core”) which give you the extra skills and experiences to really impress the universities (see page 4).

Choosing Your IB Subjects

This is the list of likely subjects for September 2010, subject to sufficient student interest. Choose one from each group. However, instead of a choice from group 6, you can choose another subject from groups 2, 3 or 4. Environmental Systems and Societies can count as your choice in either group 3 or group 4.

In addition, you take the three Core activities (see next section).

Group	Group Name	Subjects	Level	
			Higher	Standard
1	Language A	English	√	√
2	Language B: Foreign Language either for post-GCSE students or for Beginners	French	√	√
		German	√	√ <i>Beginners only</i>
		Italian	Not available	√ <i>Beginners only</i>
		Spanish	√	√ <i>SL & Beginners</i>
3	Individuals and Societies	Geography	√	√
		History	√	√
		Psychology	√	√
		Social & Cultural Anthropology	√	√
3 or 4		Environmental Systems & Societies	Not available	√
4	Experimental Sciences	Biology	√	√
		Chemistry	√	√
		Physics	√	√
5	Mathematics	Mathematics	√	√
		Maths Studies	Not available	√
6	The Arts (Computer Science isn't an Art, but is in this group for timetable reasons)	Art	√	√
		Computer Science	√	√
		Film Studies	√	√

The “Core”

Remember that we called the IB a subject package rather than just a random collection of subjects like A Levels. This package is particularly attractive to employers and universities because of its three extra elements, which say a lot more about you as an individual than A Levels possibly can.

Between them, these three elements show that you:

- think critically and with an open mind
- have mastered high level research skills of the sort you will need at university
- have made a real difference to the life of your community and college

None of these are big elements of the programme, in terms of the timetable or assessment, but they are extremely important to the Diploma, and students enjoy the varied opportunities they offer. The three Core elements are:

1. CAS

Creativity, Action, Service. The IB philosophy is to educate the whole person and help you become a responsible, caring world citizen. CAS lets you demonstrate this, by sharing your energy and talents with others. You will develop greater self-awareness, social concern, and the ability to co-operate with others.

Activities can include things you do already, such as playing a musical instrument or sports, taking part in art, drama or the Duke of Edinburgh awards. Creativity can also include art, music, dance or theatre work. Service might be at College, in a local school, in the local community or elsewhere in the world. For example, you might teach children to swim or play an instrument, help to clear an area of litter, or raise funds for a charity or local voluntary group. There are lots of possibilities; if you have an idea, please ask whether it is possible. Otherwise, we have plenty of activities you can take part in.

2. TOK

Theory of Knowledge is the cement that holds the Diploma together. It sounds a bit strange, but is based on lively activities and discussions that help you understand some troubling questions you have probably asked. For example, how do you know that what you think is green appears the same colour to others? Do the words we use mean the same thing to other people? What about words that don't seem to exist in other languages? Can we know anything without words?

TOK challenges you to think critically about ways of knowing. This is partly philosophy, partly critical thinking and partly just an opportunity for you to reflect on what links the various subjects that you study. This is the key difference in between IB and A Levels. A Levels encourage you to put knowledge in compartments: IB tries to see associations.

For example:

- Why does Maths seem more certain about its subject matter than Sciences or Humanities? Is it really always certain?
- How do we use language differently in English, our chosen foreign language, a science or Film, and what is there about language that enables us to think in these different ways?
- What do our different subjects tell us about whether it matters to live a moral life?
- To what extent do our personal experiences and beliefs influence what we claim to know? This may sound abstract but, in fact, ToK classes are lively and fascinating.

3. Extended Essay

When you have been taking the IB for a while, we ask you to choose a topic related to one of your subjects that you would like to research in detail. We provide you with a personal supervisor, but the final work is yours. It is great to have the chance to work at this level on your own – you set the question, you work out how to research it and then undertake the research, and you write up your conclusions. Universities say that IB students are much better prepared for a degree course than those who have taken A Levels; the Extended Essay is a significant reason for this.

The Workload

- Higher Level subjects take 4 hours a week throughout the course. Standard Levels usually take 3 hours a week in the first year and 2 in the second year.
- You may start four HL subjects, reducing one of these to SL during the first half-term. This allows you to see which subjects you like best.
- The Extended Essay takes about 40 hours outside class in the middle of the course, from February to October.
- ToK takes about two hours a week and CAS administration another hour in year 1, but both reduce in year 2.
- This gives you weekly class time of about 23 - 24 hours in Year 1 and 20 - 21 in Year 2. So, your total taught time is a bit larger than for A Level students, but not dramatically so, especially as many A Level students have extra subject workshops.
- In addition, you will need extra time for CAS activities, both within and outside the College day.
- There is no study leave at the end of year 1, for the very good reason that you don't have any exams until the end of the course!
- Private study time is similar to A levels. Obviously, it will vary, but as a guide, consider 3 hours per week for each HL, and 2 hours for each SL, subject. A Level students study fewer subjects, but they are expected to devote more private study time to each.

Palmer's College Online IB Diploma Prospectus, 2010 (first edition, August 2009)

This is what a first year IB timetable might look like. In the second year, there is less teaching time, to give you time for university applications, Extended Essay and revision. Lessons are an hour unless there is a number in brackets, indicating a 45-minute lesson. The shaded blocks are private study time. S = Standard and H = Higher:

Lesson	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	H 1	H 3	S1	S 3	
2	H 2	H 2	H 3	S 2	S 3
Break (15)					
3	S 1	<i>Tutorial (30)</i>	H 3	H 3	H 1
4	(45)	CAS (45)	(45)	ToK (45)	ToK (45)
5	<i>Tutorial (10)</i>	ToK (45)	<i>Tutorial (10)</i>	<i>Tutorial (15)</i>	<i>Tutorial (10)</i>
Lunch (45 - 50)					
6	S 2	S 3	H 1	S 1	H 2
Break (15)					
7	S 2		H 1		H 2

Coursework

All IB courses contain coursework, spread over the two years of the IB programme. As you can see from the table, these are significant parts of the work.

Group	Subjects	Coursework
1	English	50%
2	Foreign Language	30%
3	Humanities	25%
4	Sciences	24%
5	Maths	20%
6	Art, Film	100%
	Computer Science	35%
	Theory of Knowledge/ Extended Essay	100%

Exams

Unlike A levels, the IB only has exams at the end. The maximum exam time for HL subjects is 5 hours and for SL subjects 3 hours. Of course, you will be given regular tests and a set of 'mock' exams at the end of the first year, to assess your progress.

Incidentally, the exams are in early May of the second year, a full month before A2s. So, not only do you leave College early (and secure all the best vacation work, since this is also before university students get home for the Summer), but you receive your results a month earlier than A Levels, in early July. So, that anxiety of waiting to secure your university place is reduced.

Marks and the Diploma

- In each subject, you can gain a score of 1 (lowest) to 7 (highest).
- You also score up to 3 extra marks for your combined Theory of Knowledge work (one 1200-word essay and a ten minute presentation) and Extended Essay.
- This gives you a mark out of 45.
- You need a minimum of 24 points to pass the Diploma.
- According to UCAS, the UK university admissions system, an IB Score of 28 is equivalent to three grade A passes at A Level, though universities tend to compare it more with a score of around 32 – 34 points.
- You can re-sit the exams in November, but your aim (and ours) should be to get you a good result first time! Palmers' pass rate for A levels is superb, and above the national average; we intend that the IB results should be at least as good.

After the IB

The IB Diploma is recognised by universities in well over 100 countries including, of course, the UK and all other EU states. It is also welcomed by a range of employers here and abroad.

If you want to check what universities in other countries think of the IB, go to www.ibo.org and click on search for university recognition policies. For the UK, these comments from university prospectuses are typical:

The University of Bristol welcomes applications from students offering the IB and values the broad educational experience represented by a high standard in the Diploma.

The IB is highly regarded at Cambridge University for entry to all subjects.

The University of Sheffield regards the IB as a good preparation for university study and is pleased to consider candidates offering the IB Diploma.

IB subjects prepare you to study any course at university. They do not usually worry whether you have taken the subject before, if you have studied related subjects. This applies to most degrees, including Accounts, Business Studies, Computer Science, Economics, Engineering, Law, Management, Medicine, Politics, and Sports Science.

You can find more information on www.ucas.com. Search by subject and then select a university to find its entry requirements. You have to click through lots of screens, and not all universities list it in the same way, but if you persist you can find the IB scores they require. Oxford and Cambridge tend to ask for around 38-40 points. Other top universities like Warwick and King's College London expect around 36 for their most competitive subjects. Among local universities, Essex tends to ask for around 30 – 32, Queen Mary's around 30 – 34 and Anglia Ruskin around 24 - 30.

If you want to know what IB subjects you will need for a particular university course, please contact the IB Co-ordinator at Palmer's.

IB or A Levels?

A Levels have been criticised for falling standards. This may not be entirely fair, but it does mean that universities are keen on an alternative course like the IB, which guarantees that there it has no "grade inflation". However, good students should get into good universities whichever course they take. So, do not worry whether A Levels or the IB is 'better'; they are just *different* - and this gives you more choices.

A Levels	IB
4 subjects studied in Year 12 at AS; 3 continued in more detail in Year 13 to A2	3 subjects studied at Standard level and 3 at Higher Level throughout Years 12 - 13
Exams each year	Exams at end of the 2-year course
Possible to fail individual exams; re-sits possible in the following January or June	Possible to fail Diploma if very weak in 2 subjects; re-sits possible in November
Very wide choice of subjects	More limited choice of subjects
Enrichment courses perhaps available in subjects like voluntary service <u>or</u> sport <u>or</u> business technology <u>or</u> creative subjects	Enrichment included in package: theory of knowledge <u>and</u> extended essay <u>and</u> CAS courses
May be accepted for university entry in some other countries	Accepted for university entry in over 120 countries
'Grade inflation' makes university entry very competitive for some subjects	IB Diploma students widely welcomed by universities
Minimum entry requirements: 2 Bs and 4 Cs at GCSE, plus specific requirements for each individual subject	Minimum entry requirements: Five GCSE passes at B or above, including in English, Maths and a Science. B also needed for HL subjects if taken at GCSE
Minimum time in taught classes per week: Year 12: 21 hours plus a daily tutorial Year 13: 16.25 hours plus a daily tutorial	Minimum time in taught classes per week: Year 12: 23 hours plus a daily tutorial. Year 13: 20 hours plus daily tutorial.
Different groups of students in each subject; often, a different teacher and class each year	Familiar group of students (and teachers) in each subject for both years
Classes often contain well-motivated, committed and interesting students	Only well-motivated, committed and interesting students need apply!

How do I Apply?

Just complete the standard Palmer's application form, found at the end of the Prospectus or online at www.palmers.ac.uk. If you are not sure whether you want to do the IB or A Levels, just say this on the application form. Besides, there are opportunities to change your mind at various stages before the courses start in September 2010.

You will then be invited to visit the college, with your parents or carers, and talk through the options with one of the experienced Palmer's staff.

In the meantime, if you want to know more about the IB diploma programme, just contact the IB Co-ordinator, John Death. The College switchboard is 01375 370121, or you can e-mail jdeath@palmers.ac.uk.

Each year, there are opportunities to come to the College to find out more:

October 6 th , 2009	IB Open Evening, 7 pm
October 22 nd , 2009	Palmer's College Open Evening
November 3 rd , 2009	IB Discovery Day (a day for Year 11s to find out about the IB). If your school has not told you about this day, contact the College to ask how to attend.
January 21 st 2010	Palmer's College Open Evening

To check on the dates, look on the website.

Please ensure that you have the most recent edition of this prospectus, to ensure there have been no changes to the details listed here.