think differently
Universities don't understand IB – myth

The IBDP is the second most common qualification for students applying to UK HEI after A-Levels. University Admissions departments are very familiar with the Diploma, and work hard to keep their policies up-to-date, to take account of the Diploma’s evolution. For its part, the IBO funds a team of liaison officers who travel the country to meet Admissions tutors and make sure they recognise what IB applicants offer to HEI.

There is clear evidence that being an IB student gives you an advantage in the admissions process to UK HEI.

1,000 IB students applied to Oxford in the last UCAS cycle. IB students thus made up 5.8% of applicants but accounted for 7.1% of offers made.

Across all courses at all UK universities, the offer rate for IB students is slightly (1%) but consistently higher than for those with A-Levels.

The UCAS summary of IB is here http://www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/explore-your-options/entry-requirements/tariff-tables/IBdip

See below for news about the revised UCAS tariff from 2017.

Recent research attests to the long-term pedigree of IB students:

The Institute of Education research demonstrates that IB students with points of 37 or more are 5.4% more likely to achieve upper second class degrees than their equivalent A Level colleagues.

An independent survey of qualifications in 2010 by the Education Policy Improvement Centre (EPIC) found that:

... 150 university faculty and admissions staff from the UK, the IB Diploma Programme was rated higher than other qualifications based on the breadth of the curriculum; development of critical thinking, time-management and communication skills; and motivation of the students.

- 97% were satisfied the Diploma Programme prepares students for university.
- 96% favoured a broad curriculum of the type IB offers.
- 57% felt the Diploma Programme offers an advantage to students as preparation for higher education.

(source: https://www.epiconline.org/ib/)
The IB is a new qualification – myth

The IB was founded in 1968, the year of The Prague Spring and the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jnr. The IB is currently studied by over 200 schools in the UK and over 2,300 worldwide. So, about 52,000 students take the Diploma examinations each May and another 6,000 in November.

At the time of writing, A Levels are being reformed. Changes in A Levels were first proposed back in June 2012, and teaching of the revised specifications will begin in September 2015. Students doing A Levels from now onwards will have a very different educational experience from those who completed their courses in summer 2014 or before. In light of this, some see IB as more of a ‘safe bet’ for their Sixth Form programme.

You have to get nearly 100% to get a Level 7 – myth

This is a strange myth which needs careful explaining. There is no one set of grade boundaries in IB – they vary according to the subject and level. For example, in a subject such as Geography, you might need around 76% for a Level 7, in Maths it may be around 83%, and in Chemistry 78%. In one History paper you need just 69% for a Level 7, so 14 out of 20 in your essay would do the job! These grade boundary percentages fluctuate only slightly year on year during the process. With several successful cohorts under our belt, and an all-time average points score per candidate of 40, SPSFC teachers are fully aware of where the grade boundaries lie in their subject and what standard is required to achieve the top grades.

A* is better than a Level 7 – myth

This myth came about when A* was introduced but has been scotched recently thanks to the changes in the UCAS tariff from 2017, which reflect well on the IBDP. From 2017, A* will equate squarely to a 7, 6 to A, 5 to C, 4 to D, and 3 to 0.75 of an E! Therefore in both qualifications it will be equally possible to tell excellent students from the merely very good ones, although IB, with its wide spread of possible aggregate grades, will still make it easier to distinguish true stars.
Grade inflation dogged the old A Level, the same must be true in IB – myth

Naturally, all students strive to achieve the highest grade they can, and one of the weaknesses of the old A Level system was grade inflation. This came about through developments in teaching the examination in schools, changes in curriculum content and exam style, and modularity. University entrance grades had to rise to account for the trend of ever-higher grades. In the IB, with no political pressure to raise results, grades have stayed largely the same since the first IB exams in 1970. Around 7% of results are Level 7 and around 21% are level 6.

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/secondaryeducation/8870425/Fresh-warning-over-A-level-grade-inflation.html

You need 42 points or more at IB to be classed a success – myth

The only university to require up to 42 points is Cambridge. Not all courses at Cambridge require this score. Oxford might offer 39 points for Law and so might Imperial for Engineering. The government (HEFCE) equates 34 points with ABB at A Level. This is an important marker for universities for their own funding issues.

42 IB points would mean around A*A*A*A at A Level. The myth about lesser IB scores not being classed as a success probably stems from the fact that many students get nearly all A* GCSE, and so as they look forward to Sixth Form, they expect similar grades. Both A Level and IB are a lot harder than GCSEs, and although it’s good to aim high, students must be realistic and not put themselves under pressure in the quest for perfect scores in everything.

39 points is a lot harder than A Levels of A*AA plus an A or B in an extra AS Level – myth

Comparing IB and A Level in terms of their difficulty is like comparing cats and dogs – there are some similarities but also massive differences. At SPSFC we believe that which path you choose depends on how you see yourself as a learner. Both routes entail an awful lot of hard work!

IB Maths is really hard – it depends

There are three types of Maths in the IB. Maths Studies exists at SL only and is pitched at about GCSE standard. It deals with the sort of maths problems you will meet in daily life and business. It is a lot easier than Maths SL – in fact we estimate that students of the same ability will score 3 points higher in the Maths Studies SL exam than in the Maths SL exam.

Maths Studies is looked down upon by Admissions tutors – myth

You only have to do Maths SL if your future degree subject requires it – perhaps for Economics or Medicine or Biochemistry – and you must check this fact with your proposed universities very carefully. Maths Studies is worth exactly the same number of IB points as Maths SL.
What is Maths HL, then?

Maths HL is very different from Maths A-Level. Read this testimony from one of our former students, Hattie. She achieved a total of 34 points and went to Bristol University to read Chemistry.

"...I had to take a maths unit as part of my course this year and I would say that taking higher level maths prepared me extremely well for this. On my course there were four possible modules to take and I chose one that required maths at A-level but was still run by the chemistry department and so was directly related to my course, rather than extending my maths knowledge a lot further as some of the others did. I found that I had a much greater and in depth knowledge of many of the areas we study than the A-levellers on our course and so was at a great advantage in this area."

I have a phobia to Maths – can I really not avoid it in IB?

Sorry. All IB students have to do some Maths. But think of the advantages of entering the adult world with proper numerical skills and the nous to apply them – how else will you be able to calculate the interest on your mortgage, which energy tariff to choose, or what your hotel bill is likely to add up to? See below for a relevant article.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9701000/9701609.stm

Science is not my thing either

As with Maths, the important thing with IB sciences is to bolster your scientific literacy and confidence so that you will be able to understand and participate in scientific debate. At Standard Level, we offer an accessible course called Environmental Systems & Societies. This is an applied course with a mixture of biological science and policy relating to many issues which are current in the world today.
IB kills your social life – myth

It is true that IB students are very busy. The thing to remember is that many activities which have a social dimension can be counted for CAS hours. So, at the same time as you are fulfilling the requirements of the Diploma Programme, you are also having fun with your friends. Examples of this include performing on stage, giving concerts, competing in organised sport, running a charity expedition to the Gambia or coordinating a charity outreach project.

The workload is unreasonable – myth

The key is organisation. You will prosper in IB if you can do simple things well, such as keeping your notes in order, being on time, remembering deadlines and looking back at your previous work before beginning a new task. None of these things is hard in itself and learning proper work routines is great preparation for life at university and beyond. With the right approach, there is every opportunity to have a good work-life balance with IB, and no reason at all to spend every moment of the day and night slogging away.

You can’t be a scientist if you do the IB – myth

Not true. If you like science, you can double up in Group 4 and take two sciences. You do not have to have all three sciences to be a university scientist! Many would argue that studying a range of subjects including humanities, literature and language will make your future life as a scientist more portable, and you will be able to communicate your discoveries more effectively.

You can’t be a medic if you do the IB – myth

Not true. We have medical students who have achieved offers from many of the UK’s major medical schools including Oxford, Imperial and UCL. As long as you take Biology and Chemistry HLs you are absolutely fine.
It's all breadth and no depth – myth
Not true. HL subjects provide extremely good depth. The IAs and especially the EE allow you to dig deep into your subjects. Even SL subjects stand up very well when compared with other courses.

I don’t need a foreign language for work/life – myth
A senior recruitment consultant for the ICT industry spoke to us recently. When applying for a Chief Executive position, a person who can speak a second language with reasonable fluency can command 2 or 3 times the salary of a person who cannot. Languages are a vital life skill and you are greatly upgrading your future by studying a language to 18. Remember we offer Italian ab initio SL. This takes you from scratch to just above GCSE level in 2 years. Look at the MFL page on our website for more information.

But the IB is just too hard – myth
Nothing in life is easy. But if you want to do IB and need a lighter load, perhaps you could opt for Maths Studies SL, Italian ab initio SL, Environmental Systems & Societies SL, or Music.

IB leaves no free periods on my timetable – myth
Overall, you will have 2 fewer free periods if you do IB than you would with 4 A Levels.

IB has no modules to act as stepping-stones – myth
Firstly, you should know that 20% - 25% IB assessment is made up of coursework (Internal Assessment, IA). You complete some of it in your first year and some in your second. [Actually, Art is based entirely on work completed during the course. Assessment happens internally with external moderation – there are no final examinations at all. Music also has more IAs]. IAs are your stepping stones and if you approach them in the right way they will give you confidence and momentum for the final exams in May of your second year.
Still not convinced?

Listen to one of our former students. Lucy came to us from Saffron Walden County High. She ended with 39 points and went to Edinburgh to read Russian Studies. She is spending her year abroad in Perm, Siberia.

“Yes, I definitely feel the IB prepared me well for university. The extended essay (EE) has really helped me with my uni essays so far; it taught me how to choose appropriate secondary sources, and use them in such a way as to enhance the argument of my essay. Most of what I did for the EE was left up to me. I think this prepared me for the fact that at uni there’s much less guidance than there is at school/college; it’s up to you what you write/which books you choose. It also made me aware of the importance of referencing/bibliographies.”

Damian Henderson
IB Co-ordinator
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