

The International Baccalaureate at

Fairview High School



Overview

The IB diploma provides a cohesive and comprehensive two-year program of study for highly motivated juniors and seniors of differing educational backgrounds, abilities, and interests. It is not just a set of examinations, but a rigorous pre-university program, which provides a basis for life-long learning. It aims to provide a balanced program, which stimulates thought and creativity and enhances the international perspective of students. Students who satisfy the demands of the program demonstrate a strong commitment to learning, both in terms of mastery of content and the development of skills. The purpose of IB is to:

- ❑ educate young people to act intelligently and responsibly in a complex society;
- ❑ ensure knowledge of traditional academic disciplines and of the individual's own heritage, while fostering inquisitiveness and openness to new ideas; and
- ❑ equip students with a genuine understanding of themselves and others, heightening the capacity for tolerance and engendering respect for different points of view.

Fairview High School offers a generous collection of subject choices within the IB curriculum. This fact coupled with the wide selection of high-powered extracurricular activities offered at Fairview contributes to one of the strongest overall programs available to students.

What is the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO)?

The IB Organization was created in Geneva in 1963 by a group of member schools of the International Schools Association. These schools formed the International Schools Examination Syndicate (ISES) to plan a full curriculum and examination system. In 1968 the ISES changed its name to the International Baccalaureate Organization and was given legal status under the Swiss Civil Code.

The IBO Headquarters is located in Geneva, Switzerland and the IBO Curriculum and Assessment Center is in Cardiff, Wales. The IBO has regional offices in North and South America, Asia, Europe and Africa. IB North America, the support office to Fairview High School, is located in New York City. Fairview became a member IB school in 1995.

The IB diploma is highly regarded for entry into universities throughout the world and for advanced placement at many colleges and universities in Canada and the United States. Oxford University was the first university to accept the IB diploma as an entrance qualification. Now virtually all universities world-wide recognize the diploma graduate as having completed one of the finest liberal arts education available.

Who is suited for the IB?

IB is for the student who is willing to work hard at his/her studies. It is not necessarily for the “gifted.” A student having one or more of the following characteristics would be a good candidate for the program:

- ❑ an ability to cope with several demanding classes simultaneously.
- ❑ a willingness to develop personal study habits, including self-discipline, self-motivation, and time management.
- ❑ a capacity for thinking critically and creatively.
- ❑ some fluency in a second language, or willingness to become fluent.
- ❑ an international outlook and a genuine concern for others.

The IB Program, while demanding, is open to the average and above-average student. It is **not** an elitist program for exceptionally gifted students, but rather a course of studies for the dedicated student who has a strong desire to learn.

How does one earn the IB diploma?

To earn the diploma, a student must successfully complete the following **four** requirements:

1. Study of six subjects covering all major fields of learning. To allow for specialization, normally three subjects (but not more than four) are chosen at Higher Level (HL), and to ensure a broad education three subjects are chosen at Standard Level (SL). Please consult the latest Curricular Pathways document to determine course offerings.

- Group 1 – First Language (HL only)
- Group 2 – Foreign Language
- Group 3 – Individuals and Society (Social Studies)
- Group 4 – Sciences
- Group 5 – Mathematics
- Group 6 – Arts & Electives

Higher Level (HL) subjects require intensive, in-depth study over two years (four semesters). These generally reflect a student’s areas of interest and academic strength.

Standard Level (SL) subjects are less demanding, but are still on par with introductory level college courses. SL courses require one full year of study (two semesters).

In addition to the exams, students are evaluated on a portion of their regular course work completed in each class (e.g. lab books, homework assignments, projects, etc.).

- 2. Theory of Knowledge course (second semester junior year and first semester senior year)
- 3. Extended Essay, of around 4,000 words, on a topic of the students’ own choice.
- 4. Program of Creativity, Action, and Service (CAS).

The IB diploma is a well-rounded liberal arts and sciences program designed to thoroughly prepare students for university education and beyond. All students at Fairview High School are encouraged to participate in the full IB diploma program, although students may choose to not earn the diploma and participate in the Certificates pathway.

For sophomores and juniors making the big decision to fully engage the Diploma or choose the Certificate pathway, consider the following:

Students get a lot from doing the diploma!

- College admissions officers repeatedly emphasize to us that they greatly value students who pursue the entire diploma because it demonstrates students' willingness to take on academically challenging programs (courses and the other requirements). A student's willingness to expose themselves to academic rigor is the number criterion for college admissions, and the full diploma program provides the most challenging curricular pathway available at Fairview.
- Many students do not attempt to earn the full diploma and are still very competitive for college admissions. Although it is strongly encouraged that students pursue the full diploma, it is certainly not necessary for admission to even some of the most selective colleges and universities.
- Piecing together a combination of IB and AP (Advanced Placement) courses, and respective exams, is most advantageous. Teachers in most, but not all, IB courses will help students prepare for both IB and AP examinations. Please confer with your teachers for additional information.
- Students may earn college credit for good scores on either/both IB and AP exams. Literally, every college and university has their own policy on awarding credit for student exams, but as a general rule of thumb, students must earn the highest available marks (6s and 7s for IB exams and 4s and 5s for AP) to earn college credit or waivers. It does not hurt to try! IB diploma candidates have earned a wide range of credit at their respective universities (some more than others), but these students have all received some form credit. There have been two diploma candidates who graduated Fairview and started at CU as juniors!
- Most importantly, IB graduates are **well prepared for quality university life**. There has not been a single diploma candidate who has returned to Fairview for a visit and said they regretted earning their diploma; most graduates tell us that they were pleasantly surprised how well the IB program at Fairview prepared them for college. This is true for those who attended Stanford or Harvard, and every university in between . . . there is a unanimous agreement that IB here at Fairview is something unique and very much worth the investment.

How do freshmen and sophomores fit into the curriculum since the diploma program is really designed for juniors and seniors?

At Fairview the full IB program is designed for juniors and seniors, and is *supplemented* by rigorous Pre-IB courses. Pre-IB courses are designed to “mimic” full IB courses, emphasizing the same educational philosophy and methods but at appropriate levels. Now that Fairview has obtained the experience of bringing seniors through the entire curriculum and subsequent examination cycles, we have been able to more effectively project the curriculum to freshmen and sophomores.

The entire IB program is self-selecting, which means students who want the IB challenge may simply register for the courses. Since the program is self-selecting, students tend to register for a varying number of IB courses. Some register for just one IB course; others register for six or even seven, and everything in between. This phenomenon is most prevalent within the Pre-IB courses where most students are experimenting with the curriculum. In order to earn the diploma, however, a student must make a commitment to studies in **all** core disciplines (plus ToK, the Extended Essay, and CAS). Thus, to make the IB Program effective, freshmen and sophomores should engage in at least three or more Pre-IB classes each semester.

Although it is certainly recommended to have a foundation in Pre-IB before continuing on to the full IB program, it is not a prerequisite. Freshmen who are considering pursuing the IB diploma need to be careful in mapping their course selections. The challenge is to align IB diploma requirements and Fairview graduation requirements. Here are some areas to plan carefully:

- *Practical Experiences.* The district requires students to earn one semester’s worth of practical experience credits (e.g. typing, business, computing, industrial arts). Since IB students tend to have full schedules as juniors and seniors and thus little room for a practical arts class, we recommend students take their practical experiences classes as soon as possible.
- *Foreign Language.* The Fairview IB Program requires students to complete the level FIVE course in their respective foreign language before taking the IB examination. (Exceptions are Latin and Chinese where students need level FOUR.) Since a student is only at Fairview four years, level ONE of his/her chosen foreign language must already be completed before high school. If this is not the case, a student must “make up” a level during his/her four year tenure at Fairview (consult with the appropriate foreign language teachers on how to do this).
- *Social Studies.* The four-year progression of courses for the traditional student is different from the progression for those pursuing the diploma. The diploma candidate registers for geography and government in his/her freshman year just like the traditional student, but breaks with the traditional curricular pathway as a sophomore and takes IB US History (the traditional student takes World History). As a junior, the diploma candidate takes IB World History, while the traditional student takes US History. Freshman registering for their sophomore year who are considering earning the diploma, should most certainly take the diploma track and register for IB US History as a sophomore.