

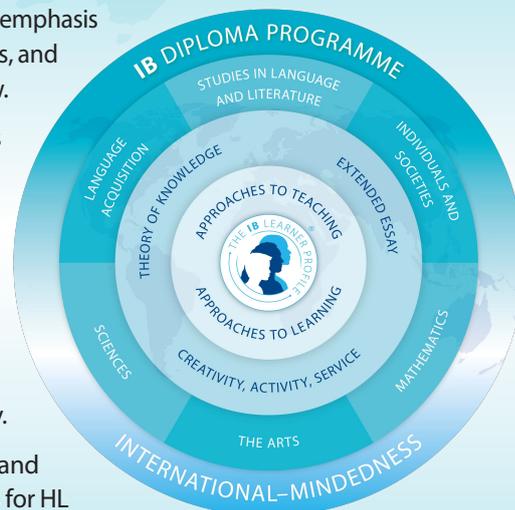
Individuals and societies: Philosophy SL and HL

First assessment 2025

The Diploma Programme (DP) is a rigorous pre-university course of study designed for students in the 16 to 19 age range. It is a broad-based two-year course that aims to encourage students to be knowledgeable and inquiring, but also caring and compassionate. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging students to develop intercultural understanding, open-mindedness, and the attitudes necessary for them to respect and evaluate a range of points of view.

The course is presented as six academic areas enclosing a central core. Students study two modern languages (or a modern language and a classical language), a humanities or social science subject, an experimental science, mathematics and one of the creative arts. Instead of an arts subject, students can choose two subjects from another area. It is this comprehensive range of subjects that makes the Diploma Programme a demanding course of study designed to prepare students effectively for university entrance. In each of the academic areas students have flexibility in making their choices, which means they can choose subjects that particularly interest them and that they may wish to study further at university.

Normally, three subjects (and not more than four) are taken at higher level (HL), and the others are taken at standard level (SL). The IB recommends 240 teaching hours for HL subjects and 150 hours for SL. Subjects at HL are studied in greater depth and breadth than at SL. In addition, three core elements—the extended essay, theory of knowledge and creativity, activity, service—are compulsory and central to the philosophy of the programme.



I. Course description and aims

The DP philosophy course provides students with an opportunity to undertake systematic critical inquiry into profound and challenging questions, such as: What does it mean to be human? What is the relationship between justice, freedom and equality? What do we mean when we say something is right or wrong? These abstract questions arise out of our everyday experiences, and the practice of philosophy deepens and clarifies our understanding of these questions, as well as possible responses.

The aim of the philosophy course is to engage students in philosophical activity, enabling them to:

- develop an inquiring and intellectually curious way of thinking
- appreciate the diversity of perspectives, traditions and approaches within philosophical thinking
- critically examine their own experiences and perspectives
- learn from the thinking of others
- articulate their own views, ideas and arguments
- apply their philosophical knowledge and skills to the world around them.

II. Curriculum model overview

The DP philosophy course comprises a shared core syllabus for all SL and HL students, consisting of the study of the core theme “Being human”, one optional theme and one prescribed text, as well as the completion of the internal assessment exercise. In addition, students at HL must study one further optional theme as well as the HL extension topic “Philosophy and contemporary issues”. The recommended teaching hours for each element of the course are summarised below.

Syllabus content	Recommended teaching hours	
	SL	HL
Core theme: Being human The core theme “Being human” is compulsory for all students.	45	45
Optional themes SL students are required to study one theme from the following list. HL students are required to study two themes from the following list. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aesthetics 2. Epistemology 3. Ethics 4. Philosophy of religion 5. Philosophy of science 6. Political philosophy 7. Social philosophy 	45	90
Prescribed text Students are required to study one text from the “IB list of prescribed philosophical texts”.	40	40
HL extension The HL extension topic “Philosophy and contemporary issues” is compulsory for all HL students.	-	45
Internal assessment: Philosophical analysis SL and HL students are required to write a philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus.	20	20

III. Assessment model

There are four assessment objectives for the DP philosophy course.

By the end of the DP philosophy course, students will be expected to achieve the following assessment objectives.

Assessment objective 1: Knowledge and understanding

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of philosophical concepts, issues and arguments.
- Identify philosophical issues present in both philosophical and non-philosophical stimuli.
- At **HL only**, demonstrate understanding of the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophical activity.

Assessment objective 2: Application and analysis

- Explain and analyse philosophical concepts, issues and arguments.
- Construct and develop clear explanations, making use of relevant supporting examples.
- Analyse the philosophical issues present in both philosophical and non-philosophical stimuli.
- At **HL only**, analyse the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophical activity.

Assessment objective 3: Synthesis and evaluation

- Evaluate philosophical concepts, issues and arguments.
- Construct and develop balanced and focused arguments, making use of relevant supporting evidence.
- Discuss points of view and come to reasoned conclusions.
- At **HL only**, evaluate the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophical activity.

Assessment objective 4: Use and application of appropriate skills

- Produce clear and well-structured written responses.
- Demonstrate appropriate and precise use of philosophical vocabulary.
- In the internal assessment task, demonstrate evidence of research skills, organization and referencing.

Assessment at a glance (SL)

Component	Description	Time	Weighting (% of final grade)
Paper 1	Extended response paper. (Students answer one stimulus-based question on the core theme and one thematic essay question on an optional theme.)	1 hour 45 minutes	50%
Paper 2	Extended response paper assessing the prescribed text.	1 hour	25%
Internal assessment	2000-word philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus	20 hours	25%

Assessment at a glance (HL)

Component	Description	Time	Weighting (% of final grade)
Paper 1	Extended response paper. (Students answer one stimulus-based question on the core theme and two thematic essay questions on two optional themes.)	2 hours 30 minutes	40%
Paper 2	Extended response paper assessing the prescribed text.	1 hour	20%
Paper 3	Unseen text paper assessing the HL extension topic. (Students respond to an 800 word unseen philosophical text discussing a contemporary issue.)	1 hour 15 minutes	20%
Internal assessment	2000-word philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus	20 hours	20%

IV. Sample questions

Paper 1

Evaluate the claim that there is an irresolvable tension between liberty and our obligations to others. (25 marks)

To what extent do you agree that virtue-based approaches fail to provide practical guidance on how we should act? (25 marks)

Paper 2

a. Explain Plato's distinction between knowledge and belief. [10 marks]

b. Discuss the viability of Plato's distinction between knowledge and belief. [15 marks]

a. Explain the view of the state found in the Tao Te Ching. [10 marks]

b. Evaluate the claim that the view of the state found in the Tao Te Ching assumes an overly positive view of human nature. [15 marks]

About the IB: For over 50 years, the IB has built a reputation for high-quality, challenging programmes of education that develop internationally minded young people who are well prepared for the challenges of life in the 21st century and are able to contribute to creating a better, more peaceful world.

For further information on the IB Diploma Programme, visit: <https://ibo.org/en/dp>.

Complete subject guides can be accessed through the programme resource centre or purchased through the IB store: <https://ibo.org/new-store>.

For more on how the DP prepares students for success at university, visit: <https://ibo.org/en/university-admission>.