

IBDP vs. American High School Diploma: FAQs

The purpose of this Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document is to help you understand the difference between a US High School Diploma and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IBDP) at Dubai American Academy (DAA). It is important for you to make a fully informed decision about the best pathway for your child after s/he enrolls at DAA for grade 11 or for current grade 10 students as they make the decision as to which pathway best suits them.

We strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) website, www.ibo.com and the Advanced Placement, <https://apstudent.collegeboard.org> It is equally important that you review DAA's High School Handbook, our High School Program of Studies, and the High School College Handbook.

Q1: What is the obvious difference between the IB Diploma Program (IBDP) vs. the American Diploma Program?

A: The IB Diploma is issued by the International Baccalaureate Organization and consists of two years of study in grade 11 and 12. Students must take subjects in six different subject groups and successfully complete the IB Core of CAS (Creativity, Activity and Service), Theory of Knowledge, and the Extended Essay (refer to the IB website for further information). Students who complete the IB Diploma will concurrently be awarded the American Diploma.

The American Diploma is a US High School Diploma awarded by Dubai American Academy and accredited by the North East Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) . Over the course of grades 9-12, students choose a range of subjects from the High School Program of Studies to ensure they meet all DAA graduation requirements. If graduation requirements are successfully met, a High School Diploma is awarded. Refer to the High School Program of Studies for further information.

Q2: What are the subjects provided for the IB Diploma Program vs. the American Diploma Program?

A: DAA provides a wide range of both IB and non IB subjects. These are all outlined in the High School Program of Studies. A student can take a mixture of IB certificate courses, AP Courses and high school college preparatory classes.

Q3: Are the IB Diploma Program and the American Diploma Program students in the same classes or different classes?

A: Those students who chose to take an IB certificate course or courses as part of their American Diploma will be in the same classes as IB Diploma students. Expectations for IB certificate course students (non- full IB Diploma) are exactly the same on a course by course basis for all students.

Q4: Is there a difference in administering the entry exams for the IB Diploma Program and the American Diploma Program?

A: No, the entry exam is just one piece of the entire application.

Q5: Is the entry exam marked differently for the IB Diploma Program vs. the American Diploma Program?

A: No, the entry exam is just one piece of the entire application.

Q6: What are the entry requirements/ scores for the IB Diploma Program vs. the American Diploma Program?

A: Because the IB Diploma is very demanding, an applicant must demonstrate that s/he will be able to be successful in such a rigorous academic program. DAA students moving from grade 10 into the IB Diploma will need recommendations from grade 10 teachers for IB subjects they want to take at the Higher Level. This includes both Certificate and Diploma students. Students who apply for the American Diploma Program cannot switch to the IB Diploma program after acceptance.

Q7: How do IB courses work and what makes a student eligible to take IB courses?

A: All IB courses follow the individual course requirements outlined by the IB. There are no specific eligibility requirements beyond teacher recommendations. However, math placements are based on grade 10 grades and/or scores on the math sections of the admissions test (MAP). Foreign languages must be a clear “language of acquisition”, for students. The only first language course open to students in formal classes is English and Arabic. French and Spanish are second language courses. Students of high fluency in another language may wish to consider literature as a “self-taught” language (again please review the IB website). Please let the registrar know if you are considering a self-taught language. Parents should keep in mind that all IB Courses have an additional exam fee not covered in tuition cost.

Q8: What is better; the IB Diploma Program or the American Diploma Program?

A: It truly depends what your university goals are; please see the High School College Handbook.

Q9: What are the graduation requirements for the IB Diploma Program vs. the American Diploma Program?

A: To graduate with an American High School Diploma, students must complete a minimum of 22 credits spread across different subject areas in accordance with KHDA guidelines for US curriculum schools. In order to receive an IB Diploma, students must score a total of 24 points on six IB exams, with a minimum score of 4 in all higher level classes, as well as complete all CAS and Extended Essay requirements.

Q10: What is GPA and how does it work?

A: GPA stands for “Grade Point Average” and is an American system that measures academic proficiency. Most universities in the US use the GPA system. Please consult the HS Handbook for more information on how DAA uses GPAs. Each IB or AP course is weighted with an additional 0.25 added to the course grade. Therefore, if a student obtained a B (3.0) on the report card/transcript it would be weighted as a 3.25.

Q11: What advantage does IB offer for my child’s future?

A: The IB Diploma Program is recognized as one of, if not the most, rigorous High School academic programs in the world. Requirements of the full IBDP (such as the Extended Essay and Community, Activity and Service requirements) ensure that students are well-prepared and transition smoothly into university.

Q12: Can you transfer from a non-IB school to DAA in Grade 11&12?

A: Yes, but your application will need to demonstrate that you will be able to be successful in such a rigorous academic program.

Q13: Will the American Diploma program be sufficient to apply at any University worldwide?

A: The American Diploma at DAA is NEASC Accredited, meaning that it qualifies students to apply to colleges and universities that accept USA High School Diploma qualifications. This could also qualify students for a foundation year in some countries worldwide. Please consult the High School College Handbook and please be sure to research countries and universities that you are interested in to see if the American Diploma at DAA is accepted as a post-secondary qualification.

Q14: Can you explain what Accreditation means?

A: DAA is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) as well as the Council of International Schools (CIS). Because of these accreditations, universities around the world recognize a DAA High School Diploma (aka “US Diploma”) as legitimate.

Q15: Why do I have to indicate IB Diploma or American Diploma on my application to DAA?

A: Because DAA offers students the option of taking the American High School Diploma and the full IB Diploma, class sizes are determined according to student demand. Students who hold a seat at DAA have the first opportunity to select the classes they would like to take. When applicants to DAA identify themselves as wanting the American High School Diploma or the IB DP, a factor that must be taken into consideration for acceptance is the number of seats available in various classes.

Q16: What is the difference between an IB and AP Course?

A: Both IB and AP courses are recognized for their academic rigor. Each IB or AP course is weighted with an additional 0.25 added to the course grade. Therefore, if a student obtained a B (3.0) on the report card/transcript it would be weighted as a 3.25.

AP Courses are one year long and we can open them to students from grades 10-12. All IB Courses at DAA run for two years and are open to students in grade 11 and 12. Both AP and IB Courses finish with an external exam in May.

Q17: How do IB and AP courses impact GPA?

A: Students who take an IB or AP course at DAA receive a 0.25 GPA increase per subject. For example, a B in a non IB/AP course has a GPA value of 3.00, whereas a B in an IB/AP course has a value of 3.25.

Q18: Can students change IB Courses once started?

A: Students can make changes in the 8-day add-drop period. Students can move levels within a course during the first year of the course. For example a student who is finding Math HL too challenging, they can drop down to Math SL. If they are a full diploma student they would have to find another course that they could move to HL. Students need to be aware that a change in level may mean that they need to change their subject teacher. Students cannot change courses after the first 8-days of Grade 11 without a valid written reason. For example, students cannot change from Chemistry to Physics at any level after the September 30 deadline in grade

11. Any changes post add-drop and before September 30th will be recorded as a “W” (withdrawal) on the High School Transcript.