

Independent Schools Scholarships

When IB potential is spotted early

IB diploma study is rigorous and suits critical, creative thinkers.

BY MONIQUE BUTTERWORTH

Established in 1968, International Baccalaureate (IB) study is recognised and respected by leading universities worldwide, with the rigorous IB diploma program offered to students in years 11-12.

Trent Driver, deputy head (academic) at Stanmore's Newington College, says studying an IB course asks students to combine their capacity to be knowledgeable and inquiring thinkers with the skills of a principled and open-minded learner. The IB prioritises risk taking and reflection, asking students to critically think about how they learn as much as what they learn.

So is IB diploma potential identifiable among the qualities of short-listed 10-year-olds applying for a year 7 scholarship?

"There is a real breadth to students' experience in their primary years and we enjoy the chance for them to share that with us when we talk with them," says Driver.

"We are at our most inquisitive about the world when we are younger and tapping into that when we meet students allows them to show how confidently they can communicate and make their thinking visible."

Most students seeking a high school scholarship to an independent Sydney school sit an academic test, with short-listed candidates then invited to an interview with educators.

"Our conversations are not new tests to take or hurdles to jump, but a chance to help us understand how we can make interested and interesting young people critical and creative thinkers through programs like the IB diploma in the years ahead," Driver says.



Trent Driver, deputy head (academic) at Newington College; above, Trinity Grammar headmaster Tim Bowden.

"The IB learner profile recognises the skills that underpin how we learn will give young people confidence to deal with any academic challenge, and that is as true in year 5 as in year 12."

He says the school considers how it can best support young candidates to become more reflective and empathetic, and take more risks across their high school years.

"The challenge for any school is to give them the skills and capacity to do the things that they have no idea they will want to do in the years ahead."

Tim Bowden, headmaster of Trinity Grammar School, says the Trinity

philosophy recognises students from about age four are capable, curious and competent.

"Successful students are not defined by grades. Academic success is celebrated, but non-academic factors are of equal importance and celebrated regularly. If students embody the attributes of the IB learner profile, these qualities will set them apart," says Bowden.

"The IB learner profile are lifelong characteristics that are highly regarded by universities and employers. But they are also a sort of decency quotient, a measure of

character that goes beyond academic and career success.

"Building those character traits starts early and can have a long-term impact on how a child will learn at school," he adds.

"The IB learner profile qualities provide a language to think about the students and their potential that highly repetitive drilling for test scores does not.

"We are all more than the academic scores we achieve. The IB learner profile allows us to view the complete package, if you will: a student's mind, body and spirit."

Changes aim to bring more certainty for diploma students

A new and improved ATAR-equivalence ranking and maths curriculum are timely moves for the IB.

BY FRAN MOLLOY

The pandemic has disrupted education so the International Baccalaureate (IB) organisation has come up with two assessment scenarios to give more certainty.

This year's diploma exams, as in 2020, will be offered in a dual route, with the organisation working with schools to determine the best assessment method based on local COVID-19 restrictions.

In NSW, IB diploma exams are scheduled to begin in late October.

ATAR EQUIVALENCE REVIEW
Diploma graduates receive an overall score out of 45, which Australia's Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) converts to a rank comparable to an ATAR, based on a national IB conversion table from the Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admission Centres (ACTAC).

However, students starting the two-



Antony Mayrhofer, director of learning services, with students at St Paul's Grammar.

year diploma this year - whose results will be ranked for 2023 university admissions - will face a new conversion schedule based on more detailed percentage marks for each subject. By offering more conversion points and detailed information, the ACTAC conversion table seeks to give students

a tertiary admission rank that better reflects results.

CURRICULUM CHANGES

Maths is a compulsory diploma subject, with students choosing between standard or high-level study and enthusiasts able to choose more

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advanced maths as an 'in-depth' subject.

This year's graduating diploma students will be the first to be assessed under the new maths curriculum, introduced in 2020 - but that's no big deal, says Antony Mayrhofer, director of learning services at St Paul's Grammar School in Sydney and IB Schools Australasia Standing Committee member.

The IB has a seven-year curriculum review cycle for all six diploma subject groupings: sciences; mathematics; the arts; individuals and societies; language acquisition; and studies in language and literacy. "It's a thorough review which surveys teachers and academics around the world to uncover best practice in teaching, the ideal material that should be addressed by students and how learning material should be delivered to students," he says.