



Stamford American
SCHOOL HONG KONG

STAMFORD AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OPTIONS AND THE IBDP



*STAMFORD HONG KONG 2023 GRADUATING CLASS



Stamford American
SCHOOL HONG KONG

AN INSPIRING WORLD OF EDUCATION



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OUR HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP TEAM



Marco Longmore
Head of School

Stamford American School Hong Kong is an IB World School that creates an inspiring world of education for students ages 5-18. Our vision is, “Thrive in a rapidly evolving world.” Combining an engaging inquiry-based learning approach with rigorous American academic standards ensures every student achieves growth and enjoys learning.

Stamford American School is passionate about offering three unique graduation pathways to cater to the diversity of our international learning community. All graduates receive the Stamford American U.S. High School Diploma accredited by the Council of International Schools (CIS), which provides your child a passport to universities globally. Children can also pursue the full IBDP or select curated IB courses to broaden their horizons, as over 5,000 universities in 100 countries accept the IBDP.

We invite all learners to pursue the complete IBDP or choose their best-fit pathway through our University Counseling services. Personalized university guidance attention ensures students and parents successfully navigate these critical choices that lead to university acceptance. Grade 11 and 12 students benefit from small cohorts and instruction from experienced IB expert faculty regardless of the pathway.

This guidebook outlines the overall structure of our High School and the courses offered for students in Grades 11-12, as well as essential details about the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP). As a caring and collaborative school, this book is just the start of a conversation to help us work together to help your child find and follow their path.



Teresa Foard
Secondary School Principal

Ms. Teresa Foard joined Stamford in 2020 from the International School, Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC) in Vietnam, a Cognita school, where she served as the Assistant Principal and IBDP Coordinator. She has rich experience in leading, planning, administering, and teaching the IBDP in international schools. Under her leadership, students have celebrated perfect IBDP scores of 45 points. Ms Foard is an IB workshop leader who trains IB teachers and leaders in the Asia Pacific region. Working in partnership with students, faculty and parents, Ms. Foard brings the skills and expertise to ensure student achieve academic excellence at Stamford Hong Kong.



Gregory Slosek
IBDP Coordinator

Mr. Greg Slosek joined Stamford in 2023. He has over twenty years of service in education, which has mostly been in administrative and teaching roles in the international community. Mr. Slosek is an IB workshop leader as well as an IBDP examiner in both History and Theory of Knowledge. He has also worked in adult education as a guest lecturer for the IBEC programme in Korea, where he trained future IBO educators. Mr. Slosek has led the accreditation process for both WASC and the IBO while serving at other international schools in the region.



GUIDING STATEMENTS

At Stamford American School Hong Kong we will:

- Continue to develop a caring community that engages and supports happy and passionate staff, students and parents.
- Ensure strong safeguarding policies and procedures are in place to promote health, safety and wellness, so all students feel safe, happy and are eager to learn.
- Be a reflective and thoughtful community that listens to feedback and seeks input from a variety of resources to successfully guide our progress.
- Foster curiosity and a passion for learning through an inquiry-based approach.
- Support the holistic development of students by providing a broad and balanced curriculum and diverse CCA programs.
- Personalize learning so all students achieve growth to become confident and capable independent lifelong learners.
- Develop a global mindset in all students as part of the IB Learner profile which includes: inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, risk-takers, balanced, caring and reflective.
- Cultivate compassion, intercultural understanding and respect among students through service learning and initiatives that contribute to a better world.
- Maintain high standards of academic progress, achievement and performance including preparation for admission to competitive universities in the U.S. and worldwide.
- Support multiple career pathways by offering the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, IBDP Course Candidate option and the Stamford American High School Diploma to all students.
- Cultivate students as future leaders in science, technology, engineering, math and innovation.
- Support students to achieve the highest possible proficiency in the world languages of Chinese or Spanish as well as in English, the language of instruction.
- Support a variety of learning needs including English as an additional language, native language support, special needs support, enrichment and counseling so that each individual can achieve success.
- Recruit, retain and professionally develop experienced globally-minded educators who are experts in their area.

THE DNA OF A STAMFORD EDUCATION



INNOVATIVE

- Cornerstones Program (multiple projects with industry expert mentors see pg 20)
- Innovative STEMinn program (science, technology, engineering, math and innovation)
- Embedded well-being focus
- Revolutionary data-driven teaching and learning



IB CENTRIC

- IBO accredited and authorized for IBDP
- All students complete IBDP CAS requirement
- Grade 10 culminating sophomore project
- Inquiry-based approach



INDIVIDUALIZED

- Three graduating diploma pathways
- Small cohorts with 25+ course options
- Dedicated faculty advisor + University counseling
- Leveled daily modern language



INTERNATIONAL

- Globally accredited curriculum and diplomas (CIS, IBO)
- Students from 31 countries
- Faculty from 15 countries with average 12 years of experience
- Member of international Cognita Schools group



OVERVIEW OF GRADUATION PATHWAYS FOR GRADES 11-12

Stamford focuses on the whole-child by providing three diploma options to suit each child’s unique career aspirations. Our diploma pathways are inclusive in nature, non-selective and focus on the best fit for each child as the primary consideration.



High School Diploma

All students who satisfactorily complete their courses while at Stamford earn a ‘Stamford American School Hong Kong – High School Diploma.’ All courses in Grades 9-12 count toward the high school diploma. Semester grades earned beginning in Grade 9 appear on the official high school transcript. This transcript will be submitted to universities during the college application process that happens in Grades 11 and 12 (along with several other things).

Graduation Requirements

Subject	Credits to Graduate
English	4 credits
Modern Languages	2 credits
Humanities	3 credits
Sciences	3 credits
Mathematics	3 credits
Arts	2 credits
Physical and Health Ed.	2 credits
STEMinn/Electives	6 credits

Stamford HS Diploma

- Accredited by the CIS and grants access to universities globally
- Students may choose DP courses (typically at Standard Level) and non-DP courses.
- Students document and reflect on creative, active and service learning involvement

This diploma option affords the most flexibility and allows students to pursue admission to universities worldwide (CIS accreditation) without the pressure of IB exams, to achieve their highest potential graduation outcome.

Stamford HS Diploma + IB Courses Option

- Flexible HL and SL IB course combinations
- May take DP external exams in only certain subjects (flexible)
- Not required to complete the Extended Essay or Theory of Knowledge course.
- Eligible for university credits for IB exam courses

This diploma option allows students to pursue admission to universities worldwide (CIS accreditation). The IB courses provide students with advanced standing at many universities and additional admissions consideration.

Stamford HS Diploma + IB Diploma Programme

- Three subjects at Higher Level (HL) and Standard Level (SL)
- Complete Theory of Knowledge, Extended Essay, and Creativity-Activity-Service (CAS)
- Sit IB exams in all subjects
- Eligible for university credits for IB exam courses

This diploma option allows students to pursue admission to universities worldwide (CIS accreditation). The full IBDP provides students with possible multiple credits towards an undergraduate degree at many universities and access to top Ivy League schools. Admissions officers give preference to full IBDP candidates due to the rigorous nature of the program and additional demonstrated aptitudes and skills.

COMPARISON OF PATHWAYS

Period	IB Diploma Programme	IB Courses Option	Stamford HS Diploma
Grading	7-point scale. Must score a total 24 or higher on six exams, with some additional requirements	7-point scale	7-point scale
External exams	Required for overall program credential	Required only for credential for specific chosen courses	None
Other program elements	Three additional “Core” elements: Theory of Knowledge, Extended Essay and Creativity-Activity-Service (CAS)	Creativity-Activity-Service (CAS) and other electives	Creativity-Activity-Service (CAS) and other electives
University credit	Available for final exam scores of 5 or higher, but varies by university	Available for final exam scores of 5 or higher, but varies by university	None



What Diploma Option is the Best?

With all options leading to notable universities globally, the best diploma option is the one that allows a child to pursue their aspirations and achieve successful results without sacrificing well-being. At Stamford, we take a non-selective approach and support all students to follow their best-fit pathway. Starting from Grade 8, our team of caring faculty work in partnership with students and parents to guide them through the process of planning and choosing the best possible pathway for them.

What is the benefit of CIS accreditation?

CIS accreditation shows that the school has achieved high standards of professional performance in international education and has a commitment to continuous improvement. The quality and rigor of the CIS International Accreditation is recognized by ministries and education departments around the world.

What is the IBO and the IBDP?

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) and the Diploma Programme (DP) were established in 1968 to help students become more geographically mobile with an international standard for curriculum and university entry. The aim was to form a common curriculum and university entry credential that crossed disciplinary, cultural, national, and geographical boundaries. The IBDP opens a world of possibilities for your child with over 5,000 post-secondary options globally. Students graduate with academic rigor, a global mindset, and skills developed by the IB learner profile, to succeed beyond the classroom.

IB LEARNER PROFILE

Central to the IB framework is the IB Learner Profile, to help students become flexible, collaborative, goal-seeking, compassionate, and confident, among other qualities.



INQUIRERS

- Nurture curiosity
- Learn independently and with others
- Learn with enthusiasm all our life



KNOWLEDGEABLE

- Develop and use conceptual understanding to explore knowledge
- Engage with issues and ideas that are important in lives and for the whole world



THINKERS

- Use critical and creative thinking skills to analyze and take action on complex problems
- Show initiative In making reasoned and ethical decisions



COMMUNICATORS

- Express confidently and creatively in more than one language
- Collaborate effectively by listening carefully to the perspectives of others
- Share ideas respectfully



PRINCIPLED

- Act with integrity, honesty and a strong sense of fairness and justice for all
- Take responsibility for actions and their consequences



OPEN-MINDED

- Appreciate cultures and personal histories, as well as the traditions and values of others
- Seek and evaluate a range of points of view
- Grow from experiences



CARING

- Show empathy, compassion and respect
- Commit to service learning
- Act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world



RISK-TAKERS

- Work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas
- Develop innovative strategies
- Be resourceful and resilient in the face of challenge, change and uncertainty



BALANCED

- Balance different aspects of life - intellectual, physical, and emotional
- Create well-being for ourselves and others
- Recognize interdependence with other people and the world in which we all live



REFLECTIVE

- Consider the world, ideas and experiences thoughtfully
- Understand strengths and weaknesses in order to support learning and personal development

WHY THE IBDP?

The IBDP is broad and balanced in nature, which means students complete courses from several subject areas. This allows them to build a diverse high school profile, giving them access to unlimited career opportunities. Students have opportunities to specialize in subject areas through course selections and choose which courses they would like to pursue at either Standard and Higher Level. Each course has a rigorous IB-provided syllabus, from which instructors design a comprehensive and cohesive curriculum that best fits the context of Stamford American School.

What makes the IBDP unique from all other programs however, are the three ‘Core’ elements that round out the student experience. The Extended Essay is a 4,000 word structured formal essay about a particular subject area in which the student is interested. The unique Theory of Knowledge course teaches students how to question and critique sources of knowledge and indeed, their own values about the nature of knowledge. And finally, Creativity-Activity-Service asks students to engage with, reflect on and document a range of outside-of-school experiences meant to challenge them and help them stay mentally balanced.

Overall, the IBDP is the ideal balance of academic rigor infused with elements that develop a young person’s personality and character. No other program does this so well.

PREPARING FOR THE IBDP

How should students in Grades 8-10 prepare for the IB Diploma Programme?

- Have perfect or near-perfect school attendance
- Demonstrate academic honesty and respectful, safe behavior
- Maintain good working relationships with teachers
- Develop good note-taking and study habits
- Devote time almost every day to your studies, be constantly reviewing
- Follow the advice of your teachers
- Take personal responsibility for your learning
- Work hard to develop ‘academic literacy’ with the assistance of your teachers
- Good student habits (attitude, assignments, effort, revision)
- Obtain a “4” or higher on the Sophomore Project (14 pts on a 28 pt. scale)

Student requirements for consideration of application to the IBDP:

- Demonstrates safe and respective behavior in social settings (no online bullying, fights, etc.)
- Demonstrate academic honesty and integrity (no plagiarizing, collusion, cheating, etc.)
- At least 90% attendance record during the most recent 12 months of school
- No more than one ‘2’ mark during the most recent 12 months of school
- Overall satisfactory report from two current teachers related to 14 categories having to do with general attitude toward learning, interactions in class, etc.
- For the Sophomore Project, obtain a “4” or higher (14 pts on a 28 pt. scale).

OVERVIEW OF ALL DP COURSES



The American-based AERO Common Core Plus standards that are used to design courses up through Grade 10 provide an excellent foundation for students about to undertake DP courses in Grade 11. A careful comparison of the types of things we want students to know and be able to do required by both AERO and DP standards shows a close correlation. Furthermore, the approaches to learning (for example, knowledge and understanding, application and analysis, synthesis and evaluation, and the selection and use of appropriate tools) also align well between AERO and the DP.

Non-Diploma Programme Courses

- Sport for Life

Diploma Programme courses offered at Stamford American School:

Group 1

- English A: Language and literature SL/HL
- Chinese A: Language and literature SL/HL
- Spanish A: Language and literature SL/HL
- Language A: Self-taught literature SL

Group 2

- Chinese B SL/HL
- Mandarin ab initio SL
- Spanish ab initio SL
- English B HL

Group 3

- History SL/HL
- Economics SL/HL
- Business management SL/HL
- Psychology SL/HL

Group 4

- Biology SL/HL
- Chemistry SL/HL
- Design Technology SL/HL
- Physics SL/HL
- Computer Science SL/HL

Group 5

- Mathematics: Analysis and approaches SL/HL
- Mathematics: Applications and interpretation SL/HL

Group 6

- Theatre SL/HL
- Visual Arts SL/HL
- Music SL/HL

Core

- Theory of Knowledge

SL – Standard Level, HL – Higher Level, ab initio – beginning level



COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

STAMFORD ELECTIVE COURSES

Arts Beyond the Classroom

Arts Beyond the Classroom is a one-year theme-based course designed to explore the mediums and relationships of Drama, Music and Visual Art. Semester 1 focuses on knowing your audience and seeing how this can greatly influence the strategies used for engaging, presenting and responding. Semester 2 asks learners to prepare something multidisciplinary to present or lead with another organization, outside of school. There is opportunity for increasing confidence in presentation skills, communicating and interaction with the local community. Throughout the course, students will focus on a variety of contexts and perspectives, from our school, the local community and globally, to create pieces of meaningful art. The UN Sustainable Goals will be a focus as well as cultural links. International mindedness will be fostered through the use of folk and multicultural materials. Students will be expected to create activities that can be shared with Stamford students and outside student groups. Students will take ownership of their learning and design of the course, and practice communication, creative thinking and social skills. They will become knowledgeable and effective creators of art, and learn how to transfer and apply the skills used to other areas. And finally, students will build on the values of compassion, innovation and courage.

Sport for Life

Sport for Life is a valuable extension of Stamford’s physical education and health courses, a way for learners to take their understanding of personal health and well-being to the next level. The course will help prepare learners for an active and healthy life, outside of the school environment. Students learn by experiencing outdoor pursuits, individual performance activities, aquatics, net/wall and target sports. Team participation sports will not be included as these are not well suited for lifelong participation. Students will identify the benefits of a physically active lifestyle, evaluate activities that can be pursued in their local environment and evaluate the risk and safety factors that might affect activity preferences. The course is divided into theory and practical work with an emphasis on the use of information and communication technology to enhance the learning of both components. Comprehension of exercise science plays a prominent role in offering solutions to increasing levels of physical inactivity and global obesity. Topics covered in the theory lessons include skills in sports, human performance and anatomy and movement analysis.

Computer Science

Computer Science enables students to gain a practical understanding of computer systems including software development, program design, and hardware assembly. This course covers broad topics in the industry of computer science such as programming fundamentals, physical hardware, networks, user-interface design, and data manipulation. Students will be asked to build their own websites, apps, games, and more. Students will be expected to become familiar with the basic principles of modern computing, and eventually be able to assemble a personal computer and utilize command line interface. Given the fluid nature of technology, no primary textbook will be used, but rather a compilation of various resources curated by the teacher, to keep materials current. Students will be upskilled in Python and then apply that to emerging fields of technology. They will practice computational thinking through programming, and apply programming skills and knowledge of computer systems towards practical uses. Finally, learners will build skills for life, further study, a career in computers, or even a career not in computers!

What types of assessment are used in the IB Diploma Programme?

Students are required to complete both Internal and External Assessments. Internal Assessments (IAs), worth approximately 20 percent of a student’s total grade, are completed during the course of learning and are submitted separately approximately in March of Grade 12. External Assessments are conducted in May of a student’s Grade 12 (senior) year, and are worth approximately 80 percent of their final total grade for the course. Both Internal and External assessments use an established grading criteria and a variety of skills are tested across disciplines.

There is a balance between independent tasks and teacher supervised tasks. There are multiple methods of assessment for each course, including:

- Oral examinations in languages
- Projects
- Student portfolios
- Class presentation
- Practical lab work
- Mathematical investigation
- Artistic performances



ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Outdoor Education Program

All students in Grade 6-12 participate in the Outdoor Education Program. The Outdoor Education Program provides holistic, field-based learning in the effort to develop leaders who are ecologically literate, compassionate and engaged global citizens.

Co-Curricular Activities and Clubs

As part of the holistic program, Stamford students are encouraged to try, explore and learn new skills in the arts, sports, service and other co-curricular activities.

Action and Service

All students in Grades 6-10 are encouraged to participate in service based activities where the students have to take action. In the High School (Grades 9-12) students tend to take on more of a personal responsibility and will initiate projects themselves or more purposefully take on leadership roles within clubs.

Award for Young People

All students in Grade 9 complete the ‘Award for Young People’ (AYP) Bronze award, which is an experiential learning program that encourages students to participate in a broad range of activities (creative, service oriented and physically active), in addition to taking on more leadership. They have the option to continue the AYP into Grades 10, 11 and 12 if they so choose. All students in Grades 11 and 12 complete the IB’s requirements for its ‘CAS’ program (creativity , activity, service). It is an excellent way for students to stay engaged in non-academic things, which helps them stay more balanced and well-rounded.

The Sophomore Project

All Grade 10 students complete the ‘Sophomore Project,’ which is a culminating project and a chance for students to consolidate and demonstrate all they have learned in their most recent high school years. The whole project takes about eight months to complete and students work with a teacher who serves as a mentor and helps guide the student through the process. In the end, students produce a product and a report that addresses specific criteria. This project provides excellent preparation for the challenges of grades 11 and 12.

Cornerstones Program

Stamford Cornerstones is an intensive project-based learning program for Grades 9 and 10 High School students. Students choose from several options and each experience in a semester in length (so they have four opportunities). Students engage directly with industry experts to ignite their passions while building a project portfolio that stands out to university admissions. Students develop new skills, gain industry insights and build networks, giving them invaluable experience as they prepare for the final years of High School and ultimately, their career paths.

Unlike an internship or an organizational affiliation, the program is fully integrated as part of high school course credit for Grades 9 and 10 students. Each collaboration results in a culminating project that is showcased and reflected in quarterly progress reports.

In 2022/23 Stamford proudly presents 10 projects with distinct focuses that reflect students' ambitions and strengths: architecture, future-focused design thinking, e-commerce entrepreneurship, game design, finance industry, film making, biotechnology, food and beverage industry, engineering and visual art.



Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Stamford offers a comprehensive social-emotional learning program for secondary students. The Advisory Program and School Connect provide students both 1:1 bespoke pathway guidance and opportunities to develop various life skills as part of their classes.

Topics include:

- Creating a supportive learning community
- Developing self-awareness and self-management
- Building relationships and resolving conflicts
- Preparing for college and the workforce

Stamford's advisory program and 'School-Connect' curriculum helps develop students' academic and personal growth by developing healthy habits and healthy relationships. Students graduate both academically and with the skills and habits to be successful in university and beyond.

Pre-University Test Preparation

Stamford American School is a test center for both main U.S.-based standardized external university entrance exams—the ACT and the SAT. Both are equally regarded and widely accepted by universities across the world as accurate assessments of a student's current standing in core subjects. All students in Grade 10 will sit the Pre-SAT (PSAT) in Semester 2. In Grade 11, students will typically sit one or two sessions of either the ACT or the SAT, in preparation for receiving results in time for submission of university applications in Semester 1 of Grade 12.

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING SERVICES



Helen Fung
University Counselor

Comprehensive University Counseling Program for Grade 9-12 Students:

- Year-round university visits from higher education institutions around the world.
- Weekly updates on university visits to the school, summer program information, fairs, and events happening in Hong Kong.
- Scheduled college sessions throughout the year focusing on topics related to the application process and writing the college essay/ personal statement.
- Cialfo access - a dedicated online program for university research.
- ACT and SAT testing center.

Additional Services for Grade 11 and 12 Students:

- Course selection and guidance on academic pathways
- College Essay and Personal Statement writing
- University application support includes writing teacher and counselor recommendations and references, liaising with university admission officers, and generating high school transcripts.
- Individualized college counseling
- Small group sessions
- A college counseling library that contains college guidebooks, essay guides, university brochures, and contact information for university representatives
- Parent/guardian information sessions at various times of the year



RESULTS

University Acceptances 2023

Stamford is non-selective in determining eligibility for graduating pathways, if a student has a dream and the drive we won't limit diploma options to boost IB ranking scores. Under the guidance from our Secondary Principal, University Guidance Counselor, IB Coordinator, Academic Director and IB expert faculty with an average of 14 years of experience, our students achieve acceptance to their best-fit schools to achieve their unique aspirations.

Stamford American Class of 2023

We are beyond excited to share the news of the amazing accomplishments of our inaugural graduating cohort of fifteen students this year as they reach another milestone, their IB exam results. Our 15 graduates received 47 offers from UK, Canada, Australia, USA and Hong Kong including the prestigious King's College London, University of Birmingham, University of Toronto, Michigan State University, Purdue University and The University of Hong Kong (HKU) with diverse career aspirations in accounting & finance, art management & curation, biology, business management, computer science, economics, education, engineering and psychology, and move forward to their preferred universities to begin to realize their dreams.

"I am delighted to see the success of our students today in their IB Diploma results. Our first cohort of Graduates has lived up to and beyond the promise they showed when joining Stamford American. These results are due to their hard work and the attention and care given to their progress by our excellent faculty. We wish them well as they travel the world in the next steps in their education, and we look forward to supporting our ever-growing students in our High School to succeed in reaching their destinations of choice in the years ahead. Congratulations to everyone."

Message from Head of School, Marco Longmore



"100% IB DP pass rate is remarkable and an outstanding achievement for a first cohort of IB DP students. The fact that students are matriculating via different yet effective academic pathways demonstrates Stamford's outstanding care and thought in supporting students' educational choices. At Cognita, we take seriously our responsibility to educate and nurture each student, preparing them for the next stage of their education and a fulfilling life. We want our students to thrive in a rapidly evolving world. It is clear to me, as a member of the school's governing board, that the students at Stamford Hong Kong are in safe hands, and the school is delivering on Cognita's promise."

Message from Cognita Education Director, Asia, Andy Hancock



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How do colleges and universities view the IB Diploma Programme?

A: The IBDP is internationally recognized as one of the highest standards in university preparatory education. Universities across North America, Europe, Asia, and Oceania highly respect the DP as an academically challenging qualification. Many universities will also consider students for advanced credit standing. A list of colleges and universities that grant credit, scholarships, and/or advanced placement for DP diplomas and individual courses is available at www.ibo.org.

Q: If I take the IBDP, can I apply to UK universities?

A: Yes, DP students were significantly more likely than their A-level peers to attend a top 20 higher education institution (HEI) in the UK (based on a report by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). Students only need to ensure their subject selection meets a university's entry requirements and courses that the university counselor will help guide.

Q: Which Stamford diploma pathway am I eligible for?

A: Stamford is non-selective and aims to accept as many interested and qualified students to the IBDP possible. Access to one of the three pathways is largely determined by academic record and attitude toward learning demonstrated beginning in Grade 8 until course selection in Grade 10. Through these critical years, the school and families will work closely to ensure students are on-track to pursue the best-fit pathway for their career aspirations. All graduates receive the Stamford American High School diploma, which grants global access to universities.



Q: How do Stamford’s Americans standards (AERO) prepare students for the DP?

A: All Stamford courses in Pre-primary to Grade 10 are designed with American standards to ensure readiness for all diploma pathways. The curriculum is developed around the skills needed for Grade 11 and 12 and then planned at age-appropriate levels for each grade. The American standards provide clear benchmarks at each grade level to ensure students continue to extend their knowledge and possess the academic rigor for any of the three graduating pathways.

Q: When do I get to choose my courses?

A: In Grade 9, students must carefully consider their university aspirations to determine whether they would like to take ‘Pure Math’ or ‘Applied Math.’ Both math classes are two-year courses (Grade 9-10), the Pure Math class leads directly to DP Math AA, and the Applied Math class leads directly to DP Math AI course (beginning in Grade 11). Secondly, students select two of the three art courses: art, drama, or music. Art selections can be changed at the beginning of Grade 10. During Grade 10, all students go through a much more involved ‘Course Selection Process,’ which determines their pathway and courses for Grades 11 and 12.

Q: How does the IBDP differ from other university-preparatory programs such as Cambridge A-levels or Advanced Placement (AP)?

A: The IBDP is a two-year comprehensive curriculum with a culminating set of externally graded final exams. IB, Advanced Placement (AP), and other college-preparatory curriculums like Cambridge A-Levels are university preparatory, academically rigorous programs. There are essential differences, however, in the content and exams. The DP is a cohesive and comprehensive program, not a collection of individual courses, as with Advanced Placement. The IBDP and AP both allow students advanced standing at universities. The most important distinguishing factor is the core of the Diploma Programme (CAS, TOK, and Extended Essay).

Q: Are there any special considerations when choosing DP courses?

A: Yes. If applying to universities in the United States, course selection for any pathway is relatively open as long as students meet Stamford High School graduation requirements. When applying to specific majors in the UK, Australia, Canada, or European countries, students need to be mindful of each university’s requirements. Stamford’s university guidance counselor works with students to ensure course selection is appropriate to meet entrance requirements as they vary by school and country.

Q. For the DP, should I not take an Art course and instead “double-up” on either the Sciences or Humanities for my Group 6 subject?

A: Preferably not. Taking Arts as your Group 6 subject provides enormous balance to your IBDP experience and gives students a subject that does not have a formal written exam (except for music) during May of your senior year. In some cases, you may need to take two sciences or two humanities for your group 6 subject, and if that is the case, then that is fine. If you do not need it for university and enjoy taking the arts, we recommend that you select a Group 6 Arts subject.

Q: Can you give a specific example of how the DP prepares students for college/university?

A: In addition to a broad academic foundation, students learn skills to succeed in college. The Extended Essay develops university-level research, writing, and time-management skills. The Theory of Knowledge (TOK) develops higher-level critical thinking skills students typically develop in university. By focusing on core skills versus exams, students enter university ready for the rigors of coursework supported by solid self-management skills.

Q. Do DP students take exams?

A: Yes, full DP students will take exams for all their subjects. Students pursuing the IB Courses Option will take exams in their selected subjects.

Q. I speak a second language at a native or Language A level. How do I decide between mother tongue at Language A or English at Language A? How does this work?

A: The great thing about the IB is that it truly is an international qualification that recognizes students’ other mother-tongue languages. If you speak another language

other than English at Language A, there are several things you can think about doing:

- Pursue a bilingual diploma - take English A and Other Language A (say Mandarin A). The challenge is that the demands on your language are high, given that you are taking them at the highest level offered.
- We offer three languages in the IBDP at Language A at Stamford: English, Spanish, and Mandarin. If you have a second language at language A other than those, you can take Language A: Self-Taught Literature SL.
- Take your mother-tongue language as Language A and take English B HL - Language A subject would be your mother-tongue (for example, Mandarin A: Language and Literature), and your Language B would be English B HL. Recommended only for students who have been studying in an English-language environment for less than three years.

Q. Can a student earn advanced standing or college credit for DP courses?

A: Yes, it’s possible, but all universities have different policies. Depending on the student’s score on the end-of-year external exam, they may be eligible to earn credit and, therefore, automatic advancement in their studies. Generally, although this varies, a DP score of ‘5’ (on a 7-point scale) would qualify. Students should check with specific universities about what they will or will not recognize.

Q. How are teachers trained for the DP?

A: In addition to being certified subject experts, faculty attend a variety of IB and professional development training workshops both internally and externally. All faculty are supported by on-site IB experts such as the IB Diploma Coordinator and Secondary Principal, who ensure an ongoing high standard of IB course delivery.

Q. What are SAT and ACTs? Does my child need to take them?

A: SAT and ACTs are required by many universities in the United States. Although not a requirement in other countries, they are often recommended for international students to help boost their application profile. Typically, an 11th-grade student will sit one assessment in Semester 1 and another in Semester 2. Rarely, but sometimes, a student may wish to sit one more test session in Semester 1 of their 12th-grade year. The university guidance counselor can provide insight regarding the preference for ACT vs. SAT at a specific institution.



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