



AKADEMEIA  
HIGH SCHOOL

# IB and A Level Which system is better?

# The history of the IB

- In 1948 Marie Therese Maurette published "Educational Techniques for Peace. Do they exist?"
- This was the starting point for the IB which was a response to the aftermath of WW2.
- The IB Mission Statement reflects this:  
"The IB aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help create a better and more peaceful world."

# A better and more peaceful world

- The IB is an aspiration towards a global community, to create and bring together members of the International Family of the Baccalaureate with shared values and a common purpose.
- The IB is an ideology, a programme for social engineering.
- Unlike A levels, it was not created as an intellectual or academic programme, but as a programme for world peace.

# Geneva

- The Headquarters of the IB was established in Geneva in 1968
- Teachers at the International School of Geneva (Ecolint). created the framework for the curriculum and the examinations for the two year diploma for students aged 16-19.
- Geneva remains the spiritual and legal home of the IB though there are regional bases in America, the UK and The Netherlands.
- The IB is a Swiss invention designed to foster "international mindedness".

# The development of the IB

- In 1975 the IB Diploma was adopted by some schools in North America.
- Today American schools make up more than half of the schools offering the IB.
- Demand in the USA led to the extension of the programme downwards through the years leading to the introduction of:
  - The IB Middle Years Programme (1994),
  - The IB Primary Years Programme (1996).
- In 2012 the IB added the Career Related Programme for technical and professional qualifications.

# The IB

- The IB is offered in three languages, English, French and Spanish.
- Some schools offer the whole programme from Primary to Diploma but more schools choose to offer one or more components, with the IB Diploma still the most popular.
- The IB is not widely available in the UK, where only 100 of 2700 secondary schools offer the IB. Numbers are falling because the IB is expensive and logistically difficult to operate alongside A levels.
- The IB Diploma is offered by just over 3000 schools globally.

# The IB Diploma

- There is a compulsory core of Theory of Knowledge (TOK), Creativity, Activity and Service (CAS), and the Extended Essay.
- In addition students take 6 subjects, not less than 3 at Higher Level and 3 at Standard Level. It is sometimes possible to take four at Higher Level.
- It is important to note that there is a broad range of subjects many of which are compulsory.

# The Six Subject Areas

- Studies in language and literature (native tongue)
- Language acquisition (second language)
- Individuals and Societies
- Sciences
- Maths
- Arts or Additional Sciences/Maths/Language

Note: Science, Maths and a language are compulsory but Arts is NOT.



# The IB and University

- The IB is the main qualification for entry to university in many European countries but not the UK where A levels are the main entry qualification.
- The IB is accepted by US universities as a scheme of study but the entry requirement is, for all candidates, SATS and Personal Statement.
- SATS are the requirement for the USA.
- A levels are the best route to a UK university.
- The IB is the best route to a European university.
- Warsaw University accepts A level, IB and Polish Matura.

# A Levels

- Were introduced in the UK in 1951.
- The examining boards were all universities since A levels were designed to determine university selection in the UK.
- The most famous board is the Oxford and Cambridge Board (now known as OCR).
- A levels were and are designed specifically to select the best candidates for the best universities.
- A levels are academic, unlike the IB with its emphasis on global citizenship, and accepted at all universities in the UK, USA and Europe.

# Why do students study only 3 or 4 A levels?

- Nearly all undergraduate courses in the UK are single subject courses requiring specialism and depth (rather than breadth) of knowledge.
- In the UK students specialise much earlier than in the USA or Europe.
- Students choose three or four related subjects within subject areas such as Maths/Science, Humanities, Languages or Arts, beginning the process of specialisation that continues at University. So a student might study Maths, Further Maths and Physics; or Fine Art, History of Art and Design; or French, Spanish and Latin, in line with their preferences and abilities.

## So which is better?

- The IB offers a wide range of subjects many of which are compulsory.
- Many students benefit from the breadth of study which is seen as the main advantage of the IB but other students dislike the compulsory core elements, especially TOK and CAS.
- The Arts are not compulsory in the IB but students have to study Maths, Sciences and languages, which are all compulsory, along with the core component. This does not suit all students.
- IB allows access to European and US universities and is accepted in the UK too.

## So which is better?

- A levels offer access to UK universities.
- They are also accepted in the USA and Europe.
- A levels allow students to specialise in the subjects they enjoy and in which they are more able, allowing them to play to their strengths.
- There are no compulsory elements at A level; students choose only those subjects in which they can succeed.
- There is no ideological programme behind A levels which are purely about the subjects themselves.

# Why does Akademeia High School teach A levels?

- Akademeia's unique and rigorous diagnostics programme means that we can identify where a student's real talents and abilities lie allowing them to choose the subjects and the curriculum that is right for them.
- Most students know by the age of 16 whether they are scientists, mathematicians, historians, linguists or social scientists and the diagnostic process makes an objective assessment of that.

# Why does Akademeia High School teach A levels?

- A levels allow gifted and talented students to develop their interests and specialism making them strong candidates for further education.
- Many of our students are aiming for the best UK and US universities and/or specialist Art/Music/Film/Drama schools.



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