

Every week, education expert Sanjeev Verma will answer your queries on studying abroad. E-mail queries to features@gulf-times.com

My children are reaching high school and I have heard about the IB diploma. Could you give me some more information on this?"

— Charu Shekhar

The IB Diploma programme is designed as an academically challenging and balanced programme of education with final examinations that prepares students, normally aged 16 to 19, for success at university and life beyond. The programme is normally taught over two years and has gained recognition and respect from the world's leading universities. The students will do six courses at higher level or standard level. Students must choose one subject from each of groups one to five, thus ensuring breadth of experience in languages, social studies, the experimental sciences and mathematics. The sixth subject may be an arts subject chosen from group 6, or the student may choose another subject from groups 1 to 5.

Group 1: Language A1 is the study of literature in a student's first language, including the study of selections of world literature.

Group 2: Language A2 courses are designed for students who have a high level of competence in the language they have chosen. They include the study of both language and literature, and are available at higher level and standard level; Language B courses are intended for students who have had some previous experience of learning the language. They may be studied at either higher level or standard level; Language AB initio courses are for beginners (that is, students who have no previous experience of learning the language they have chosen). These courses are only available at standard level — Second Modern Language.

Group 3: Individuals and Societies — Students are required to choose one subject from each of the six academic areas, including one from group 3. They can choose a second from groups 1 - 5 instead of a group 6 subject. The subjects available are — business and management, economics, geography, history, information technology in a global society, philosophy, psychology, social and cultural anthropology.

Group 4: It is a requirement of the programme that students study at least one subject from group 4. Four subjects are available — Biology, Chemistry, Design Technology and Physics.

Group 5: It is a requirement of the programme that students study at least one course in mathematics; computer science is an elective.

Group 6: Four subjects are available relating to Art — Film, Music Theatre, Visual Arts.

The student who satisfies its demands demonstrates a strong commitment to learning both in terms of subject content and the range of skills required in the contemporary world.

In addition, the programme has three core requirements that are included to broaden the educational experience and challenge students to apply their knowledge and understanding.

The extended essay is a requirement for students to engage in independent research through an in-depth study of a question relating to one of the subjects they are studying.

Theory of knowledge is a course designed to encourage each student to reflect on the nature of knowledge by critically examining different ways of knowing (perception, emotion, language and reason) and different kinds of knowledge (scientific, artistic, mathematical and historical).

Creativity, action, service requires that students actively learn from the experience of doing real tasks beyond the classroom. Students can combine all three components or do activities related to each one of them separately.

Students take written examinations at the end of the programme, which are marked by external IB examiners. Students also complete assessment tasks in the school, which are either initially marked by teachers and then moderated by external moderators or sent directly to external examiners.

(Sanjeev Verma began with Ernst & Young and progressed to set up the Gulf operations of IDP Education Pty. He now leads Intelligent Partners, developing a wide range of solutions in areas of international education.)