

Diploma Programme courses online

An overview for schools

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Overview

IB World Schools have the opportunity to enroll students in Diploma Programme courses online. The courses are developed and delivered by IB-approved online course providers. Approved course providers comply with the IB standards and practices for course development and course delivery.

A1 The purpose of Diploma Programme courses online

The IB recognizes that Diploma Programme (DP) courses online can:

- extend subject choice for students in IB World Schools
- create the potential for different ways to experience international and intercultural classrooms
- enable students to develop essential learning skills.

A2 Considerations for schools

Students, especially those new to online learning, can find the initial experience challenging. An online course will require as much, if not more, of a student's time as the equivalent face-to-face course. Consequently, it is recommended that time devoted to online courses is scheduled as a regular part of a student's school day, with the expectation that a student will need additional time to study and complete assignments. The time allotted for this by the school may also be used for meetings between the student and site-based coordinator to discuss grades, progress and to resolve technical or other issues. As courses can be accessed at any time during the day or night, students may sometimes wish to start an assignment during the day and finish it away from school.

Success for students also relies on their access to appropriate hardware, software and to the internet. A pre-start technical check by the site-based coordinator to ensure that the student is able to operate all necessary systems can pre-empt a loss of time at the beginning of the course. School access may also be interrupted by firewalls and other protective software. It should be assumed that students will require off-school time to complete course work; therefore, the site-based coordinator should ensure that students have the necessary devices and systems for offsite access.

Effective time management skills and self discipline are necessary for students to succeed in online courses. Online students should have frequent interaction with teachers and classmates synchronously via web conferencing, phone calls, online chats or other technologies, as well as asynchronously via discussion boards, forums, wikis, feedback on assignments and other means. Students taking a Diploma Programme course online will study the same material and take the same exams as face-to-face students.

A3 IB approved online course providers

DP courses online are developed and delivered by IB-approved course providers. All approved providers must develop courses that are aligned to the appropriate subject guide and adhere to the IB standards and practices for online course development.

A3.1 Online courses

Courses have the following general characteristics.

- They are aligned to the appropriate IB subject guide.
- They adhere to all requirements for internal assessments and other IB requirements.
- They are developed in consultation with IB subject matter experts.
- They are designed as student-centred, inquiry-based learning environments.

- They provide opportunities for interaction between students and teachers.
- They are hosted in a learning management system.
- There is a clear communication of course requirements and timetables.

A3.2 Online delivery of courses

Online course providers are also required to meet specific IB standards and practices for online course delivery, including provisions for online teachers and other required supports for students and IB World Schools.

A3.3 Online teachers

DP courses online are taught by experienced Diploma Programme teachers who are also specially trained in online pedagogy. Online teachers complete the same tasks as face-to-face teachers, which may include uploading internal assessments and predicted grades to IBIS. All courses require regular interactions between students and teachers, including both group and independent work.

A4 Role of the site-based coordinator

All schools with students enrolled in online courses must appoint a site-based coordinator who is specially trained to support students in online courses. The site-based coordinator's role is integral in providing the necessary pastoral care for online students. Active engagement of the site-based coordinator is an essential component of student success in online learning. Site-based coordinators may have any role within the school, including that of Diploma Programme coordinator. The name of the site-based coordinator must be added to the school's details on IBIS under the **School** tab.

The main administrative role of the site-based coordinator is to act as the liaison and point of contact between the school, the online teacher and course provider, and the students. The duties of the site-based coordinator include but are not limited to:

- scheduling weekly meetings with online students
- coordinating with the online course provider on internal assessment and predicted grade procedures and responsibilities
- completing the training provided by the IB or online course provider
- monitoring, supporting and encouraging timely, relevant and appropriate student engagement in online courses
- informing the online teacher and course provider of potential challenges for student success (extra-curricular obligations; school calendar differentials; technical issues; personal, social or health issues; etc)
- delivering relevant reports of academic progress and achievement to appropriate individuals in a timely manner
- facilitating communication between the online teacher, the DP coordinator, the student and (when necessary) the student's parents or guardian
- collaborating with the online teacher to support students
- ensuring the timely resolution of any on-site technical access issues.

A5 DP coordinators

DP coordinators are the main point of contact between the school and the IB, while site-based coordinators are the main point of contact between the school, the online course provider, and the online teacher.

In relation to online courses, the responsibilities of the DP coordinator include, but are not limited to:

- registering their school with the online course provider
- ensuring that students are registered in IBIS for online courses
- registering candidates for examination sessions according to deadlines
- ensuring that a site-based coordinator is appointed and has completed the appropriate training
- working collaboratively with the site-based coordinator to support candidates
- confirming that the procedures for reporting internal assessment and predicted grades are completed by their deadlines.

A6 Registration of students in online courses

It is important to note enrollment and add/drop deadlines for online courses may not align with the school calendar. Schools are encouraged to check with the course provider for up-to-date deadlines.

- Schools interested in offering Diploma Programme courses online must first register with the IB-approved online course provider.
- Once the school has been registered with the course provider, it may enroll students in online courses.
- The school will register students in IBIS and indicate they are taking an online course.
- Payment for online courses is the responsibility of the IB World School.

A7 Frequently asked questions

Who can enroll in courses online?

Students, primarily aged 16–19, may enroll in an online course offered by an IB-approved course provider if students meet the Diploma Programme requirements.

What courses are available and how are students enrolled for DP courses online?

A list of the subjects currently on offer is available on the IB public website along with contact information for the course providers. The DP coordinator or designee enrolls students for online courses. In addition, the DP coordinator will also register candidates for exams in IBIS under a separate tab for online students. Prior to enrolling a student for an online course, the school should ensure that the student meets the course prerequisites and has the personal and technical resources necessary to succeed in an online learning environment.

What is a site-based coordinator?

All schools offering DP courses online must have a site-based coordinator. This role is integral to student success. The main administrative role of the site-based coordinator is to act as the liaison and point of

contact between the IB World School, the course provider and the online teacher, but he or she also provides support and encouragement to the online student.

What is the difference between the roles of the DP coordinator and the site-based coordinator?

DP coordinator	Site-based coordinator
Main point of contact between the IB World School community and the IB	Main point of contact between the school community and the online course provider and online teacher
Registers schools with the IB-approved course provider	Completes necessary training provided by the IB or approved course provider
Registers students for online courses and final examinations in IBIS	Ensures students have adequate access to enter courses online and receive appropriate support and guidance in order to complete online courses
Collaborates with the site-based coordinator and online teachers to ensure students receive appropriate support and guidance in their online courses	Works with the DP coordinator and online teachers to ensure students receive appropriate support and guidance in their online courses

What is the role of the IB in DP courses online?

The IB provides oversight and quality assurance for DP courses online. The IB develops and maintains standards and practices for the development and delivery of DP courses online; in conjunction with IB staff and subject matter experts, it also reviews, evaluates and approves course content to ensure that DP courses online align with the IB philosophy and follow the most current standards and practices, policies and rules for the Diploma Programme.

Who are IB-approved course providers?

Currently, Pamoja Education, Ltd (www.pamojaeducation.com) is the only IB-approved online course provider for the Diploma Programme.

What costs are associated with online courses?

Online course providers set and charge a fee for online courses. IB World Schools pay the course provider directly for student enrollments.

The IB World School pays the candidate registration fee for examination sessions to the IB. The fee is published in the latest edition of the *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme*.

Will students who take their courses online also take the IB exams online?

Although the courses will be conducted over the internet, students will register and sit the IB examinations in the same fashion as those students who have studied in the traditional classroom setting. Students' internal assessments and other coursework will be submitted to their online teachers electronically.

What are the qualifications of the online teachers?

Online teachers must hold qualifications, demonstrate successful experience as DP face-to-face teachers, and meet IB professional development requirements. In addition, DP online teachers receive training in online teaching conducted by the online course provider.

Can students complete the entire IB diploma online?

Currently this is not possible and only a limited range of courses are available.

How does a school know that an online student is actually attending the class? Do the school, parents and students get regular progress reports?

All course providers are required to provide student progress reports, which include predicted grades. Attendance can be reported more frequently through alerts to the student and the site-based coordinator if the student fails to log in for a set number of days. A school's site-based coordinator will be the main point of contact with the course provider and will receive information from the course provider on how to administer the courses, including registering students, retrieving grade reports, communicating with the online teacher, and so on.

I have heard that online classes are easier, is that true?

The amount of work required in an online class is no different to the amount of work required in a face-to-face class. All Diploma Programme online courses follow the IB subject guide and requirements. Coursework must be completed by certain dates on a weekly basis; however, students who require more time to complete an assignment can spend as much time as necessary as long as the submission dates are observed. Students are expected to attend their online class regularly by logging in and participating. They must plan sufficient time to complete all assignments and activities by the due dates, must work collaboratively with classmates on small-group projects and in class discussions, and must interact frequently with the teacher and fellow students. Online learning is not for everyone. Students who succeed in an online class tend to be well organized and demonstrate good time management, do not require constant teacher direction or support, enjoy new challenges and are not easily frustrated by temporary technical issues.

What if a student starts an online course and wants to drop out?

Upon enrollment, the school will be apprised of the online course provider's policy for withdrawal from a course and associated fees. As with any course, schedule changes should occur as early as possible to ensure student success in coursework.

Does the online course calendar align with my school calendar?

Online courses follow an established calendar that may or may not precisely align with the local school calendar, but is designed to maximize synchronous and other learning opportunities. Check with the online course provider for exact calendar dates.

In what languages are DP courses online offered?

Currently DP courses online are only offered in English.

Is there a limit to the number of online courses a DP student can take?

The subjects offered are expanding, but are still limited compared to the wider choices on offer for face-to-face DP courses, so this will likely limit the potential maximum number of courses students could consider. Currently, most students are opting for one or two DP courses online, but in very exceptional cases students have taken three. This is part of the advice the school must give directly to the student; the IB advises schools to proceed cautiously if this is a new school initiative for them. Every student is different—ultimately, the combination of online and traditional courses will vary from school to school and student to student. Therefore, there is no rule on a maximum number of online DP courses per student, but careful consideration of the nature of the student and the experience of the school with online courses should be factors in the decision. Another important factor to consider is the impact on the planned concurrency of learning where the challenge of collaborative planning across the DP increases with the number of courses a student takes with external online teachers.

Can a school only offer online courses for one particular DP group at authorization and going forward?

Generally, DP courses online supplement the face-to-face offerings of a school to create greater choice and diversity for students. Schools should plan for a sustainable programme, and that is more likely with a healthy combination of traditional and online courses rather than relying on one course type. However, some schools that were challenged by low group 6 course cohort numbers have turned to the IB film course to add a group 6 option, for example. Equally, some remote schools in areas where qualified second language teachers are more difficult to recruit can rely on online language B and ab initio courses for group 2. Overall, however, we encourage schools at authorization and evaluation to have a strong set of subjects for all circumstances to ensure long term programme sustainability. The IB views a reliance only on online courses in a group as exceptional but not against any programme requirement. Schools need an action plan with contingency face-to-face options should students withdraw from an online course for any reason. Online courses were a contingency option for some schools that suddenly lost a teacher of a face-to-face course.