

<p>18. Study on the Positioning of and Assessment Methods for Non-Subject Elements of the International Baccalaureate Programme Leader: KAWAI Hisashi, Senior Researcher, Department for Curriculum Research, Curriculum Research Center</p>
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(1) Purpose and Aim of Study

The International Baccalaureate (IB) consists of three programs (the Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme, and Diploma Programme). This study focuses on how non-subject specific elements are positioned and assessed within the Diploma Programme (DP). A curriculum for students in the final two years of upper secondary school, the DP was offered at 1,233 schools across 116 countries as of February 2005 (schools must be authorized by the International Baccalaureate organization in order to offer the DP).

The DP includes the following non-subject-specific units as part of the requirements for award of the Diploma: Theory of Knowledge, Creativity, Action, Service (CAS), and Extended Essay. This study set out to shed light on the details of these distinctive non-subject units through examination of materials offered by the International Baccalaureate organization and general-use research publications, as well as field surveys.

(2) Outline of Research Results

- The Extended Essay requires students to write up to 4,000 words (up to 8,000 characters if in Japanese) on a theme connected to their studies in specific subject areas. It is subject to both internal and external assessment, and assessed on the basis of general assessment criteria and subject-specific criteria. These criteria are disclosed to students.
  
- For Theory of Knowledge, students must select from among ten designated topics and write a paper of between 1,200 and 1,600 words. It is subject to both internal and external assessment. For the purpose of internal assessment within the school, students conduct presentations on what they have learned and are assessed by their teachers.

- Assessment in the Extended Essay and Theory of Knowledge is conducted using a grading scale from A through E. Students who gain “A” grades in both are awarded three points. A matrix is applied to determine how points are awarded for different grade combinations. Overall assessment for award of the Diploma comprises subject grades (six subjects, each graded on a seven-point scale) and a grade combining performance in the Extended Essay and Theory of Knowledge (a maximum of three points). The maximum score is 45 points.

- CAS comprises 50 hours of activity in each of the three areas of Creativity, Action and Service (making a total of 150 hours) over two years. It is not assessed externally. Assessment is conducted on a pass/fail basis by a supervisor authorized by the student’s school. The school then sends the student’s results to the IB regional office (for Japanese IB schools, this is IBAP in Singapore). Regional offices have principal supervisory responsibility for CAS activities and assessment.

- Although it is an upper secondary program, many universities award credit for completion of DP subjects. They are treated as dual credit subjects. In the U.S., public schools introducing and implementing IB programs receive financial support from federal and state governments, and the number of IB-authorized schools is on the rise. The challenge is to secure high-quality teachers on an ongoing basis in the face of this rapid growth.