

# Developing a successful programme

## Introduction

This section outlines the key factors schools need to consider in implementing and developing the Diploma Programme. Effective leadership and management of the change process, starting with a willingness and preparedness for change to occur, are essential prerequisites. The scale and the scope of the change, and the time needed to embed these changes, must not be underestimated. Schools must recognize that the change process does not stop once a programme has been fully implemented. Evaluation and development must continue as schools' experience with the programme allows for improvement in an ongoing cycle of evaluation, review and development.

Schools should be aware that there is no "one formula fits all" approach to developing the Diploma Programme. Each school is unique and needs to consider its own context and the community it serves before deciding on the best way forward. However, change management, organizational learning and building the capacity for change in schools have been well researched (see, for example, Fullan 2001, Senge 2000, and Argyris and Schön 1995, for three perspectives). Useful case studies and academic research directly related to the Diploma Programme can be found on the International Education Research Database (<http://research.ibo.org>) on the IB website. One very useful source of practical information is the Diploma Programme coordinators' forum on the OCC.

## Making the decision to introduce the Diploma Programme

Choosing to introduce the Diploma Programme is a decision that needs to be thoroughly researched and must be made in the light of a balanced appraisal of its suitability for a particular school. The commitment required is to a philosophy and an approach to education that must be consistent with the school's mission or, at least, with a vision of what the school aspires to become. One misconception is that the IB is an examinations board that requires only limited subject-specific professional development for programme implementation. Experienced IB World Schools offering the Diploma Programme understand and support the IB's mission statement and the learner profile, and this understanding and commitment is shared by the whole school community, not just the leadership of the school.

Some schools are concerned that they might lose their traditions and identity by embarking on the Diploma Programme. The diverse range of schools that currently offer the Diploma Programme shows that there is no requirement to adopt a standardized approach. Indeed, the challenge in implementing a programme is to ensure the programme fits the unique school context, preserving the school's identity and characteristics.

Some schools choose to introduce the Diploma Programme as one educational pathway for students while preserving local, national or other international programmes and qualifications. This can work well but it is important that the school examines the relationship between the Diploma Programme and its other educational programmes in order to ensure consistency. The school as a whole (as opposed to a section within a school) should ensure that its own philosophy and practices are consistent with the IB's mission statement and the IB learner profile.

Implementing the Diploma Programme takes time, and schools need to complete all the essential processes. Schools go through a consideration phase, which includes a feasibility study, before deciding to implement the programme. The candidate phase then follows, leading to the authorization visit. During the

authorization visit, the IB team's primary concern is that the essential elements of the programme standards and practices are in place and that the school is committed to ongoing programme development. The process is described in the document *Diploma Programme: School guide to the authorization visit*. Beyond authorization, schools can typically expect to go through two examination cycles (three years) before beginning to feel comfortable with their systems and procedures. The work continues, refining the schedule and developing policies and systems as the programme grows.

## Developmental phases

Three phases in the development of the Diploma Programme within schools can be identified. All three share the need for systematic planning that considers Diploma Programme development as part of the school's own strategic plan, taking into account the school's unique circumstances and other priorities. Diploma Programme development must be integrated into the whole-school development plan. With experience, the emphasis and priorities will change, but Diploma Programme development represents a journey, rather than a destination, and is ongoing.

The three phases can be considered as:

- preparation and candidate phase (pre-authorization)
- consolidation phase (post-authorization)
- continuous improvement (ongoing).

### Preparation and candidate phase

Establishing an organizational structure that can effectively lead and manage the implementation and development of the Diploma Programme is essential. Many schools have a hierarchical management structure with divisional principals, faculty chairs/heads of department, curriculum leaders, deans/academic heads all playing prominent roles. The Diploma Programme coordinator has a key pedagogical leadership role that the existing management structure must support and promote. This is highlighted in the IB publication *Programme standards and practices* (September 2005) and is considered in detail in "The role of the Diploma Programme coordinator" later in this section.

The expectations for the preparation and candidate phase are considered in the document *Diploma Programme: School guide to the authorization visit*. The strategic priority at this stage will be to ensure the best possible fit between the emerging Diploma Programme and existing school policies and practices, which may or may not need to be modified.

A number of detailed decisions will be required, including:

- the selection of subjects to be offered
- creating a schedule that respects the Diploma Programme regulations and guidelines (see "Building an accessible programme" and "Curriculum design and scheduling")
- the delivery of the core (TOK, extended essay and CAS)
- preparing for assessment.

Support can be sought from the IB and from regional associations. It is also advisable to contact and visit established IB World Schools. Extensive support materials are available on the OCC and for purchase at the IB store (<http://store.ibo.org>).

Continued emphasis must be placed on regular and clear communications with parents and students to reinforce community-wide understanding and general support. Adoption of exemplar materials such as

policies, reading lists and curriculum planning documents borrowed from other schools or taken from postings on the OCC is unacceptable. Schools must exercise professional creativity and develop their own materials to suit their particular circumstances, and to engender ownership.

In cases where a school is establishing the Diploma Programme as one optional pathway for students, it is important to monitor and manage the impacts of the change on perceptions, attitudes and practices in the school as a whole. There are bound to be crossover issues relating to staffing, scheduling and resourcing. Many schools comment that introducing the Diploma Programme provides a positive external benefit on teaching and learning in other programmes in the school. This cannot be assumed, and has to be carefully managed, as it is also possible that non-IB teachers might view the Diploma Programme as receiving preferential treatment. It is important to involve the whole school in the development process and to build in capacity for curriculum review and change beyond the confines of the Diploma Programme, reaching out to the school as a whole.

There are a number of philosophical as well as practical scheduling issues that schools need to address from the outset. These are:

- optimizing student access
- building a broad and balanced curriculum
- concurrency of learning
- scheduling and supporting the core.

During the authorization process, schools will need to review or develop their policies relating to academic honesty, assessment, language, special educational needs, and information and communication technology (ICT).

### **Academic honesty**

(See also *Academic honesty*.)

Diploma Programme assessment involves a significant element of internal assessment of student work in all subjects. This is required because of the value attached to authentic assessment, recognizing that many of the most important educational aims of the programme need to be assessed in the first instance by teachers in real learning contexts. A consequence of this is that schools need to have established policies and practices for ensuring that work submitted is the student's own and has been produced according to the expectations detailed in the subject guide. It is important that the school takes a proactive approach to academic honesty, as part of a school climate that is supportive of the learner profile (see "Developing the IB learner profile"). Most schools and teachers will have formulated some response to plagiarism and academic malpractice but it is essential that the high expectations of the Diploma Programme are supported with a robust and coherent policy that focuses on educating students about what constitutes malpractice and imposes strict sanctions when necessary.

Schools also need to monitor that policies are being applied uniformly in each classroom. Each subject area needs to develop systems to monitor and check for authenticity, and these systems need to be integrated into the school's overall policy. If the school has other curriculums running alongside the Diploma Programme, the question arises as to whether all students are to be held to the same standards. This provides one illustration of the need for a whole-school approach to programme development.

## Assessment policy

The IB publication *Diploma Programme assessment: Principles and practice* explains the rationale behind assessment in the programme. Some assessment practices in the Diploma Programme may well be very different from current school practice, so it is essential that schools fully understand the IB's expectations and apply these to the school context through their assessment policies. Some key features of Diploma Programme assessment include:

- the emphasis on criterion-related, as opposed to norm-referenced, assessment (this method of assessment judges students' work in relation to identified levels of attainment, and not in relation to the work of other students)
- the distinction between formal IB assessment (summative assessment that is used by the IB to judge student performance) and the supporting formative assessment processes schools need to develop for themselves
- valuing the most accurate demonstration of student performance, not just averaging attainment grades over a reporting period.

Reporting will have an impact on assessment practices in a school and on the relationship with both parents and students. Reporting can also have an impact on teaching and learning and, therefore, it is important that school reporting practices reflect Diploma Programme assessment principles. Unless there is a requirement to assess and report based on Diploma Programme assessment principles, it is likely that teachers will fall back on familiar practices, with a detrimental effect on the development of the programme.

## Language policy

(See also *Guidelines for developing a school language policy*.)

Language and mother-tongue maintenance policies are central to providing access to the Diploma Programme. Students who do not have the school language of instruction as a first language might need language support (see the IB publication *Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes*). The IB offers students the opportunity to study their best language through the school supported self-taught option. If a Diploma Programme student requires a language A1 that is not automatically available, a special request may be submitted to the IB (see the *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme* for details). Schools need to look to the years leading up to the Diploma Programme to ensure that students are maintaining their mother tongue and developing proficiency in the school's language of instruction.

## Special educational needs

(See also *Candidates with special assessment needs*.)

The IB supports inclusive practices and believes that all students should be allowed to demonstrate their ability under assessment conditions that are as fair as possible. Where standard assessment conditions could put a student with special educational needs at a disadvantage, special arrangements may be authorized. This information is available in the *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme* and on the OCC.

## Information and communication technology (ICT)

The document *Programme standards and practices* (September 2005) refers to schools allocating "appropriate electronic resources to support the teaching of the programme. Because the amount of ICT infrastructure a school can afford is a significant financial issue, expectations for authorization and evaluation are not defined in absolute terms. The following points, however, should be considered.

- Information literacy, in the broadest sense, is a competence that students need to develop as part of learning how to learn.
- ICT provides a rich environment for learning beyond the classroom. Therefore, the development of virtual learning environments should be encouraged as a means to enhance access to course materials and to extend collaborative learning.

- ICT provides unique opportunities for creative learning through student collaboration and the use of digital media products.
- ICT can be effectively used in supporting the school's assessment policy, particularly in formative and peer-evaluation activities.
- ICT plays a critical role in accessing IB networks and communities of practice. Increasing access will support programme implementation, creative teacher professionalism and student learning.

### Consolidation phase

Implementation needs to be followed by ongoing evaluation, with follow-up policy modifications and action plans to correct practices that are not working well. This evaluation, and the consequent development, needs to start immediately after authorization; it must not wait until the official IB evaluation process that occurs every five years after initial authorization. The authorization team will have made recommendations that will provide an immediate agenda for action.

Particular attention needs to be given at this stage to ensure that teachers are correctly understanding and interpreting IB subject guides and assessment practices. A high priority should be given to creative teacher professionalism (see "Professional development") designed to reinforce and develop understanding. As students complete formal IB assessments, it is possible for the school to gather detailed feedback on student performance by means of subject reports, feedback on internal assessment and any enquiry upon results (see the *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme* for further details).

There needs to be a regular review of the curriculum and course structure, unit plans and other curriculum documentation. Disaggregating the data from examinations results, reflecting on unit plans, collaboratively planning the curriculum, and the setting of specific teaching goals are all useful curriculum development strategies.

Some schools use a curriculum council to decide all changes to the curriculum framework and the subjects offered. These councils often involve student and parent participation, in addition to teachers and school administrators, and provide a forum for open consideration of the strengths and limitations of the school's educational programme. The curriculum review process should also be used as one forum to discuss how to further develop the IB learner profile and to enhance the educational experience of students (see "Developing the IB learner profile" and "Teaching, learning and assessment").

It is a useful practice to maintain a file for each of the programme standards and practices, collecting evidence from various sources over time. This will help the school to make a critical assessment of its progress against each standard in the run-up to the next five-year programme review.

### Continuous improvement

This phase, after several years of running the programme and having dealt with many of the initial challenges and barriers, is perhaps the most challenging. Gone is the sense of urgency and impetus for change that came with the original implementation of the programme. Schools need to build a long-term capacity for cyclical review and programme development. Systems are needed to monitor four key areas:

1. ongoing community-wide understanding and commitment to the aims and philosophy of the Diploma Programme
2. the school's commitment to teaching the curriculum to the best of its ability
3. access to the curriculum (see "Building an accessible programme")
4. ongoing professional development.

Communication remains as important as ever, but now the needs of the school's community are more diverse. New teachers and parents will still need to learn about Diploma Programme basics but there is the

opportunity for experienced teachers and others to be involved directly in evaluative and developmental work. The following points should be considered.

- Induction of new teachers – some new teachers will be joining experienced departments while others will be working on their own. Schools will need to identify experienced teachers and ask them to help new teachers who will be working on their own. Many schools write introductory handbooks or sections in the school's teacher handbook to support this process.
- Communication with parents and students who are new to the Diploma Programme – induction will be required for parents and students who are considering entering the programme, as well as for those who have just started the Diploma Programme. How will the school meet the needs of different groups of parents? How will the school balance the needs of those who are new to the programme and those who think they are already well informed?

Schools should plan to involve students and parents in dialogue, gathering feedback about the Diploma Programme to inform the school's curriculum review cycle. Focus groups and surveys are useful strategies. Regular community involvement also helps to foster support for the programme and its place in the school community.

An ongoing concern for schools is keeping up to date with information on new developments and changes in the Diploma Programme. While the Diploma Programme coordinator has a key role to play, all teachers should regularly visit the OCC, which has posted resources and discussion forums to support every subject teacher.

Schools should periodically review their own philosophy and mission statement to ensure that these agree with the IB's mission statement and philosophy, and reflect what is actually taking place in the school as a whole. Specifically, the school leadership team needs to consider how the core elements of the Diploma Programme, the IB learner profile and the fostering of lifelong learning relate to other curriculums being offered in the school.

Developing and maintaining the school as a professional learning community becomes the highest priority (see "Professional development"). While this will not be new, the opportunity for reflection, innovative professional development and practice might grow because less time needs to be spent on basic implementation. Teachers should be encouraged to become directly involved in IB work as examiners and participants in curriculum review and other meetings. They can train to become workshop leaders and/or team members for authorization and evaluation visits. This provides significant benefits to the school as teachers learn to better understand IB processes and practices and can use this experience to train others in the school and to take a leading role in improving the delivery of the programme.

The need for teachers to continue to work closely and collaboratively on sharing good practice, discussing student progress and highlighting opportunities for interdisciplinary learning (in the TOK course in particular – see "Teaching, learning and assessment") will always be a priority.

## Induction of students: Providing students with a smooth transition into the Diploma Programme

Students follow numerous educational pathways leading to the Diploma Programme as the IB stipulates no formal entrance requirement. The IB continuum of education, as one option, is designed to facilitate a smooth progression. Whether or not the school offers the IB Primary Years Programme and IB Middle Years Programme, vertical planning between Diploma Programme teachers and those in earlier years is essential. The curriculum continuum needs to be mapped and written so that it represents a consistent and coherent progression.

Schools need to ensure that students are adequately prepared. Each Diploma Programme subject guide specifies any prior learning that is presumed before starting the course. This should be considered together with syllabus and assessment details (also contained in each subject guide) for a comprehensive understanding of course expectations. In addition to subject-specific knowledge and skills, students will need to develop and display a number of linguistic and transdisciplinary competencies, skills, strategies and attitudes that are consistent with the learner profile in order to be successful. While these form the core competencies of “learning how to learn”, and will be reinforced and developed over the course of the two years, some students might need specific support early in the programme in order to develop these. The core competencies include:

- independent study skills
- the ability to work collaboratively in groups
- good reading comprehension and written production in the student’s best language (this might be different from the language of instruction of the school)
- reasonable language skills in the language of instruction and examination (the guidelines provided in *Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes* must be respected)
- research skills – the ability to engage in authentic research by finding, evaluating and appropriately using a wide range of different source material
- the writing process – an ability to write independent, critical essays, presenting drafts while maintaining academic honesty by consistent use of an appropriate method of citation and referencing
- investigative science practical skills – the ability to generate a hypothesis, design and carry out experiments and analyse data
- literary skills – close reading of texts with a focus on analysing literary technique
- information literacy skills – the ability to effectively use a variety of electronic and other media in support of learning and the production of assignments
- presentation skills – the ability to make an oral presentation to others
- the ability to work independently on portfolios and projects in a number of subjects
- reflective practice – an ability to show initiative, critically evaluate one’s own work and the work of others, reflect on progress and set goals.

The Diploma Programme is demanding in terms of time commitment and it is important that students develop effective time-management skills from the start. This can be facilitated by ensuring students understand the expectations before the course starts. Time management needs to be supported by teachers who understand that their subject is one of six (plus the core) and collaborate on setting assignments in a manageable way (see the timeline example provided in “Curriculum design and scheduling”).

## The role of the Diploma Programme coordinator

A key leadership role in the implementation and development of the programme is provided by the Diploma Programme coordinator. It is important that the job description of the coordinator includes recognition of this leadership function, in addition to the management roles of general programme administration and communication. Diploma Programme implementation requires significant expertise in change management and a detailed understanding of the principles and practices of the Diploma Programme. The coordinator, acting together with other school leaders, needs to have the authority to plan and manage the processes of change necessary for developing the programme. They also need to have a good knowledge of the regulations and procedures described in the *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme* and the *General regulations: Diploma Programme*. The coordinator needs sufficient time allocation to do the job properly, reflecting the extensive demands of the role, and needs to be part of the school leadership team, in order to raise the profile of the Diploma Programme at the highest level. Many schools also recognize the seniority of the post-holder with a title such as “Director of year 11 and 12 studies and Diploma Programme coordinator”.



The coordinator has responsibility for communicating information to all members of the school community, administering all internal and external assessment and acting as the primary point of contact between the school and the IB. The following illustrate some of the additional aspects of this role that should be taken into consideration.

## **1. Guiding the school community**

Guidance must ensure that the school community (students, parents and teachers) understand the course selection choices available, which can involve complex decision-making. Implicit in this is the need not only for clear knowledge of the IB regulations for course selection but also an understanding of the consequences for individual students in terms of appropriate balance, course load, stress and suitability for entry into higher education. In many schools, this process of guidance in course selection must begin well before the first year of the Diploma Programme. The coordinator may be involved in the publication of documentation for the school community to support such guidance. This role is often fulfilled in collaboration with the counselling services department.

## **2. Determining admission to the Diploma Programme**

The coordinator needs to be closely involved in developing and administering the processes for student admission into the Diploma Programme; this may take the form of student interviews, testing or evaluation of teacher recommendations.

## **3. Working with Diploma Programme teachers**

A significant aspect of the coordinator's role is to ensure that Diploma Programme teachers gain a full understanding of the programme as a whole. In the implementation stage of the Diploma Programme, the coordinator may well be involved in working with teachers to ensure that they fully understand their own subject's requirements and have a broader awareness of the whole of the programme and its requirements. This is often achieved through routine meetings with teachers and serves to provide them with a good understanding of the demands that the programme places on the student and the forms those demands take, thereby putting their own subject into perspective. These meetings can also be critical in providing time for teachers to work together to develop effective timelines for assessment, thereby ensuring that students are not unduly taxed by multiple assignments being due at any one time. In addition, these meetings allow teachers to share methodologies for ensuring academic honesty. Encouraging teachers to actively use the OCC and to participate in its forums is another important consideration.

## **4. Scheduling Diploma Programme courses and the school calendar**

The coordinator will have a role to play in creating, or working closely with the creator of, the school schedule and calendar to ensure that all courses meet Diploma Programme requirements and that students gain the maximum benefit of concurrency of learning whenever possible. Scheduling can be a complex issue, particularly when other state, provincial or national courses have to be incorporated, and it is frequently connected with a detailed analysis of timelines for internal and external assessment completion and submission. Linked to this, the coordinator has a role to play in supporting the head of the school in ensuring that school policies support the ongoing development of the Diploma Programme and that excellent teachers are recruited and retained.

## **5. Supporting the core**

In some schools, the Diploma Programme coordinator has the additional responsibilities of organizing the structure of CAS and the supervision of the extended essay in the school. This is not the ideal situation, and it is preferable that these tasks be assigned to other staff.



The CAS coordinator function includes developing opportunities for students to engage in authentic experiential learning and to reflect on their experiences in meaningful ways. This is time-consuming and requires close cooperation with many other school colleagues, who need to be involved in supporting CAS. The coordinator has a leadership function, if not a specific management responsibility, in ensuring that CAS is properly supported and valued in the school.

Many coordinators are also responsible for overseeing the extended essay, ensuring that students fully understand the nature of the essay, training potential teacher supervisors, and working to develop an appropriate timeline for production of the essay. Depending on the number of students involved, this can also be an extensive task.

The coordinator should ensure that the TOK teacher and the individual subject teachers collaborate in developing an understanding of the requirements of TOK across the Diploma Programme.

## **6. Articulating curricular expectations leading to the Diploma Programme**

In some schools, the coordinator may be involved in reviewing the curriculum in the school years preceding the Diploma Programme. In such cases, the coordinator may work with heads of departments or curricular specialists to try to ensure that the curriculum provides adequate preparation in course content and assessment procedures, and potentially gives the maximum number of students the opportunity to enter the Diploma Programme. In the case of schools with a Middle Years Programme (MYP), the coordinator would naturally be in regular contact with the MYP coordinator to ensure coherent programme articulation.

## **7. General administration**

The Diploma Programme coordinator is responsible for managing a large number of essential administrative tasks, detailed in the *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme*. These include, but are not limited to:

- registering students as examination candidates
- entering data on the IB information system (IBIS), including provisional grades
- student mark entry
- supporting students with special assessment needs.

Coordinators usually also play a role in organizing and managing the examinations and must ensure that all teachers are following the correct procedures and practices in monitoring assessment tasks and sampling work to be forwarded to the IB.

## **8. Designing a database for the IB community**

For many schools, it is important to maintain contact with alumni of the Diploma Programme and to develop a database of examination results, higher education experience and contact information. This type of longitudinal data analysis may be the responsibility of the coordinator.

## **9. Administering the IB Diploma Programme budget and teacher professional development**

The coordinator is frequently responsible for administering the budget allocated to the Diploma Programme. This might include postage and courier costs, the purchase of publications, and annual and examination fee payments. In addition, the coordinator will wish to ensure that teachers have received appropriate IB-authorized training, frequently a very significant annual budget item for IB World Schools.

## 10. Organizing and completing the five-year programme evaluation

The coordinator will have the prime responsibility for ensuring that all stakeholders have access to, and comprehend the expectations explicit in, the document *Programme standards and practices* (September 2005). This understanding will be the basis of an effective review process, which the coordinator will spearhead, ensuring completion by the due date for submission to the IB.

## 11. Student progression to further education

The coordinator will have a role in facilitating student progression to further education, communicating with universities and explaining to students and parents the processes and policies involved. One important element of this is ensuring that students and parents are aware of specific university admissions requirements and any impact these may have on subject selection (see the article on “University recognition” in *Rules for IB World Schools: Diploma Programme*). This role may go beyond communication of existing opportunities to a proactive engagement with universities, and provincial and national authorities in order to improve recognition of the diploma. The coordinator will need to ensure that all requests for results to universities and legalization of diplomas are processed.

The role of the coordinator in Diploma Programme implementation and development is extensive. The most intangible, but also probably the most significant, aspect of this role is the part played in ensuring that the school embraces the IB’s mission statement and its learner profile, ensuring that the school is able to demonstrate in an explicit way how the structure of the Diploma Programme and its implementation are furthering both (see “Developing the IB learner profile”). In this way, the coordinator fosters the spirit of an international education in the school, one that will hopefully engender in graduating students the skills, wisdom and cultural understanding necessary to engage with the significant global issues we face now and in the future.