

# International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme Subject Brief

## Individuals and societies: Philosophy—Higher level

First assessments 2016 – Last assessments 2022

The IB Diploma Programme (DP) is a rigorous, academically challenging and balanced programme of education designed to prepare students aged 16 to 19 for success at university and life beyond. The DP aims to encourage students to be knowledgeable, inquiring, caring and compassionate, and to develop intercultural understanding, open-mindedness and the attitudes necessary to respect and evaluate a range of viewpoints. Approaches to teaching and learning (ATL) within the DP are deliberate strategies, skills and attitudes that permeate the teaching and learning environment. In the DP students develop skills from five ATL categories: thinking, research, social, self-management and communication.

To ensure both breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding, students must choose at least one subject from five groups: 1) their best language, 2) additional language(s), 3) social sciences, 4) experimental sciences, and 5) mathematics. Students may choose either an arts subject from group 6, or a second subject from groups 1 to 5. At least three and not more than four subjects are taken at higher level (240 recommended teaching hours), while the remaining are taken at standard level (150 recommended teaching hours). In addition, three core elements—the extended essay, theory of knowledge and creativity, action, service—are compulsory and central to the philosophy of the programme.

These IB DP subject briefs illustrate four key course components.

- I. Course description and aims
- II. Curriculum model overview



- III. Assessment model
- IV. Sample questions

### I. Course description and aims

The philosophy course provides an opportunity for students to engage with some of the world's most interesting and influential thinkers. It also develops highly transferable skills such as the ability to formulate arguments clearly, to make reasoned judgments and to evaluate highly complex and multifaceted issues. The emphasis of the DP philosophy course is on "doing philosophy", that is, on actively engaging students in philosophical activity. The course is focused on stimulating students' intellectual curiosity and encouraging them to examine both their own perspectives and those of others.

Students are challenged to develop their own philosophical voice and to grow into independent thinkers. They develop their skills through the study of philosophical themes and the close reading of a philosophical text. They also learn to apply their philosophical knowledge and skills to real-life situations and to explore how non-philosophical material can be treated in a philosophical way. HL students also engage in a deeper exploration of the nature of philosophy itself. Teachers explicitly teach thinking and research skills such as comprehension, text analysis, transfer, and use of primary sources.

The aim of the philosophy course is to engage students in philosophical activity, enabling them to:

1. develop an inquiring and intellectually curious way of thinking
2. formulate arguments in a sound and purposeful way
3. examine critically their own experiences and their ideological and cultural perspectives

4. appreciate the diversity of approaches within philosophical thinking
5. apply their philosophical knowledge and skills to the world around them.

### II. Curriculum model overview

Component	Recommended teaching hours
<b>Core theme</b> The core theme "Being human" is compulsory for all students.	<b>50</b>
<b>Optional themes</b> HL students are required to study two themes from the following list. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Aesthetics</li> <li>2. Epistemology</li> <li>3. Ethics</li> <li>4. Philosophy and contemporary society</li> <li>5. Philosophy of religion</li> <li>6. Philosophy of science</li> <li>7. Political philosophy</li> </ol>	<b>80</b>
<b>Prescribed text</b> Students are required to study one text from the "IB list of prescribed philosophical texts"	<b>40</b>

<b>HL extension: Exploring philosophical activity</b> HL students are required to explore the nature of philosophical activity.	<b>50</b>
<b>Internal assessment</b> SL and HL students are required to produce a philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus.	<b>20</b>

### III. Assessment model

There are four assessment objectives for the DP philosophy course. Having followed the course, students will be expected to demonstrate the following:

1. Knowledge and understanding
  - Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of philosophical concepts, issues and arguments.
  - Identify the philosophical issues present in both philosophical and non-philosophical stimuli.
  - Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophical activity.
2. Application and analysis
  - Analyse philosophical concepts, issues and arguments.
  - Analyse the philosophical issues present in both philosophical and non-philosophical stimuli.
  - Explain and analyse different approaches to philosophical issues, making use of relevant supporting evidence/examples.
  - Analyse the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophical activity.
3. Synthesis and evaluation
  - Evaluate philosophical concepts, issues and arguments.
  - Construct and develop relevant, balanced and focused arguments.
  - Discuss and evaluate different interpretations or points of view.
  - Evaluate the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophical activity.
  - Compare and contrast their personal experience of philosophical activity with the issues regarding philosophical activity raised in an unseen text.
4. Selection, use and application of appropriate skills and techniques
  - Demonstrate the ability to produce clear and well-structured written responses.
  - Demonstrate appropriate and precise use of philosophical vocabulary.
  - In the internal assessment task, demonstrate evidence of research skills, organization and referencing.

### Assessment at a glance

Type of assessment	Format of assessment	Time (hours)	Weighting of final grade (%)
External		4.75	80
Paper 1	Stimulus-based questions on core theme and essay questions on optional themes.	2.5	40
Paper 2	Questions on prescribed philosophical texts.	1	20
Paper 3	Written response to a previously unseen text. Students compare and contrast their experience of philosophical activity with the view(s) of philosophical activity found in the text.	1.25	20
Internal		20	20
Analysis	Students are required to complete a philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus.	20	20

### IV. Sample questions

To what extent does the beauty of an object depend on how we see it, rather than the way that it really is? (Paper 1)

Evaluate the claim that it is unfair to hold scientists responsible for the consequences of their scientific discoveries. (Paper 1)

Part a.) Explain Mill's view of the relationship between liberty and utility.  
Part b.) To what extent are liberty and utility fundamentally conflicting concepts?  
(Paper 2)

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Complete subject guides can be accessed through the IB online curriculum centre (OCC) or purchased through the IB store: <http://store.ibo.org>.

For more on how the DP prepares students for success at university, visit: [www.ibo.org/recognition](http://www.ibo.org/recognition) or email: [recognition@ibo.org](mailto:recognition@ibo.org).