

International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme Subject Brief

Individuals and societies: History—higher level

First assessments 2017—last assessments 2025

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) 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 six courses from six distinct groups: 1) studies in language and literature; 2) language acquisition; 3) individuals and societies; 4) sciences; 5) mathematics; 6) the arts. Students may choose to replace the arts course with a second course from one of the other five groups. 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, activity, service—are compulsory and central to the philosophy of the programme.



These 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 DP history course is a world history course based on a comparative and multi-perspective approach to history. It involves the study of a variety of types of history, including political, economic, social and cultural, and provides a balance of structure and flexibility.

The course emphasizes the importance of encouraging students to think historically and to develop historical skills as well as gaining factual knowledge. It puts a premium on developing the skills of critical thinking, and on developing an understanding of multiple interpretations of history. In this way, the course involves a challenging and demanding critical exploration of the past. Teachers explicitly teach thinking and research skills such as comprehension, text analysis, transfer, and use of primary sources.

There are six key concepts that have particular prominence throughout the DP history course: change, continuity, causation, consequence, significance and perspectives.

The aims of the DP history course are to enable students to:

- develop an understanding of, and continuing interest in, the past
- encourage students to engage with multiple perspectives and to appreciate the complex nature of historical concepts, issues, events and developments
- promote international-mindedness through the study of history from more than one region of the world

- develop an understanding of history as a discipline and to develop historical consciousness including a sense of chronology and context, and an understanding of different historical perspectives
- develop key historical skills, including engaging effectively with sources
- increase students' understanding of themselves and of contemporary society by encouraging reflection on the past.

II. Curriculum model overview

Component	Recommended teaching hours
Prescribed subjects One of the following, using two case studies, each taken from a different region of the world: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Military leaders 2. Conquest and its impact 3. The move to global war 4. Rights and protest 5. Conflict and intervention 	40

World history topics Two of the following, using topic examples from more than one region of the world: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Society and economy (750–1400) 2. Causes and effects of medieval wars (750–1500) 3. Dynasties and rulers (750–1500) 4. Societies in transition (1400–1700) 5. Early Modern states (1450–1789) 6. Causes and effects of Early Modern wars (1500–1750) 7. Origins, development and impact of industrialization (1750–2005) 8. Independence movements (1800–2000) 9. Evolution and development of democratic states (1848–2000) 10. Authoritarian states (20th century) 11. Causes and effects of 20th-century wars 12. The Cold War: Superpower tensions and rivalries (20th century) 	90
HL options: Depth studies One of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. History of Africa and the Middle East 2. History of the Americas 3. History of Asia and Oceania 4. History of Europe 	90
Internal assessment Historical investigation	20

Assessment objective 4: Use and application of appropriate skills

- Structure and develop focused essays that respond effectively to the demands of a question.
- Reflect on the methods used by, and challenges facing, the historian.
- Formulate an appropriate, focused question to guide a historical inquiry.
- Demonstrate evidence of research skills, organization, reference and selection of appropriate sources.

Assessment at a glance

Type of assessment	Format of assessment	Time (hours)	Weighting of final grade (%)
External		5	80
Paper 1	Source-based paper based on the five prescribed subjects	1	20
Paper 2	Essay paper based on the 12 world history topics	1.5	25
Paper 3	Essay paper based on one of the four regional options	2.5	35
Internal			
Historical investigation	A historical investigation into a topic of the student's choice.	20	20

III. Assessment model

There are four assessment objectives for the DP history course. Having followed the course at higher level (HL), students will be expected to meet the following objectives.

Assessment objective 1: Knowledge and understanding

- Demonstrate detailed, relevant and accurate historical knowledge.
- Demonstrate understanding of historical concepts and context.
- Demonstrate understanding of historical sources.

Assessment objective 2: Application and analysis

- Formulate clear and coherent arguments.
- Use relevant historical knowledge to effectively support analysis.
- Analyse and interpret a variety of sources.

Assessment objective 3: Synthesis and evaluation

- Integrate evidence and analysis to produce a coherent response.
- Evaluate different perspectives on historical issues and events, and integrate this evaluation effectively into a response.
- Evaluate sources as historical evidence, recognizing their value and limitations.
- Synthesize information from a selection of relevant sources.

IV. Sample questions

Paper 1

When presented with five sources related to the enforcements of the provisions of the treaties, disarmament and London Naval Conference (1930), students will:

- explain the significance of the Conference
- compare and contrast the views of the Conference presented in different sources
- assess the value and limitations of sources
- use the sources and their own knowledge to discuss the extent to which they agree with the view that the London Naval Conference was unsuccessful.

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For further information on the IB Diploma Programme, visit: www.ibo.org/en/programmes/diploma-programme/.

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/en/university-admission or email: recognition@ibo.org.