

## Aiming higher

### How does the new International Baccalaureate diploma measure up against traditional A levels?

*With A-levels being subjected to more and more criticism, 18 schools across London are now offering the alternative International Baccalaureate diploma. The North London Collegiate School is one of them.* ...the course suits me as an individual...but sometimes I feel I'm drowning in work.

*The school believes the diploma will extend choices to students and provide them with a different route into Higher Education, giving access to the most competitive universities and degree courses in the UK and overseas.*

But how do the young people who have taken part of the first year of the IB at the school feel? Children's Express reporters Rachel Schon, 17 and Natasha Reddy, 17, talk to student Dimple Shah, 16:

#### What does the diploma involve?

You take six subjects, three to higher level and three at standard level and you're examined after two years. You get a mark out of seven in each subject. Maths and English are compulsory, and in addition to this you need to study a language (French), a humanity (Philosophy) and a science.

The sixth subject can either be an art such as music or drama, or an extra from any field, so I take two sciences, Biology and Chemistry. There's also a 'theory of knowledge' course, a four thousand word extended essay and a compulsory 150 hours of 'creativity, action and service' over the two years. Together these give three points, so the final score is out of 45.

#### Why did you want to do the IB?

My school offers both IB and A levels and it took ages to decide. But I knew that I wanted to study medicine at university and as that's a really focused course I wanted as broad an education as possible.

#### How do you find life as an IB student differs to those at your school who are doing their A levels?

It's definitely a lot more work and you need to make sure you've chosen subjects that interest you if you're going to stay motivated and not get overloaded. I really like that I get to study different aspects of a subject, and I've enjoyed studying world literature in English which I couldn't have done as part of the A level course.

#### What do you enjoy the most about the IB and what do you enjoy least?

I like the freedom of the IB. We can construct our own titles when writing English coursework and it's nice to be able to write on themes that you're genuinely interested in. The worst bit is probably the workload, which is added to by all the compulsory extras like the extended essay.

#### Are you glad you took the IB?

I am because I think the course suits me as an individual. But sometimes I feel I'm drowning in work. But the organisation and determination the IB requires will be good for me in the long run.

#### Would you recommend that the government introduces the IB or an English diploma as an alternative education pathway if the A levels are scrapped?

I certainly don't think everyone should be made to do it. A-levels are great if you want to specialise in one area, like languages, and the IB would be really tough if you hated maths or science. But there are lots of benefits, and I'd definitely recommend it for people who enjoy lots of subjects, are organised and aren't afraid of hard work.

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## About the team

This story was produced by Rachel Schon, 17 and Natasha Reddy, 17. It was published by BBC London website.

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