

## How does IB compare to AP?

IB and AP are very similar in that both provide motivated high school students access to college credit classes that are recognized by universities as being academically rigorous. The differences between these two accelerated coursework options, however, are significant.

IB offers two levels of course work: Higher Level (HL) and Standard Level (SL). Higher Level courses require two years, or 240 hours of instruction, while Standard Level courses require 150 hours, roughly equivalent to one school year.

AP courses are completed in one year, much like the IB SL courses. AP courses, however, tend to be an overview or survey of the required material, while both SL and HL IB courses focus on covering less material, but in more depth.

The examination process for each varies, too. Advanced Placement exams are taken at the end of a year of course work, based on a syllabus developed by an AP teacher and submitted to the AP Program for certification.

The International Baccalaureate Organization provides a syllabus with specific concepts and topics that must be covered by the IB teacher, and the IB Assessment Office in Cardiff, Wales, oversees the international standardization of all IB Assessments.

Both programs provide the assessment. Passing an AP exam depends upon sitting for a 3 – 4 hour exam at a specified date and hour in May of the examination year.

The IB examination process is much more involved and requires more of a portfolio assessment. IB examinations require assessments that also involve end-of-year exams, but unlike AP, where the exam is a one-step process, in IB it is multi-level and occurs throughout the program. For example, students must complete a historical investigation in history, psychological research in psychology, laboratory reports in experimental sciences, analytical essays in English and applied projects in mathematics courses. Both English and the additional world language in IB require oral and written examinations.

The AP program depends upon individual exams, and students may select exams in areas in which they already have some familiarity or knowledge.

The IB Diploma Program is not only a series of rigorous courses but also an integrated curriculum, which demands that students take a well-rounded, and demanding, six-course curriculum. That curriculum includes English, an additional world language, a social science, an experimental science, mathematics and an elective choice such as art, film, music, a second social science, a second experimental science, or a third language.

In addition, IB students complete three other requirements to gain the prestigious International Baccalaureate Diploma that they earn if their work is completed at a satisfactory level. Those requirements include a 4000-word research paper in an area of the student's choice, called the Extended Essay, and approximately 150 hours of voluntary work in a service learning program labeled Creativity, Activity, Service, or CAS. This part of the program demands that students move outside the school climate and become involved in a variety of community service projects, creative activity, and action-oriented activities, such as school sports, with the goal of meeting seven learning outcomes that demonstrate the student's understanding of the importance of extending the learning process beyond the classroom. Finally, IB students take courses called Theory of Knowledge that emphasize concurrency, requiring students to turn a reflective and critical eye on their knowledge base and seek to understand the relationships that exist between all forms of knowledge, knowledge acquisition and knowledge application.

In order to measure the effectiveness of completion of an Extended Essay as preparation for college-level research, the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education at the University of Virginia (UVA) conducted a mixed methods study, completed in 2013, that used student records, surveys and semi-structured interviews to understand better the research experience of former International Baccalaureate (IB) students, describe student perceptions of the value of the extended essay (EE) experience and determine if any correlations exist between EE grades and university academic success. For the survey, former IB students (n=1,045) and a comparison sample of former Advanced Placement (AP) students (n=1,046) were selected for participation. The total number of respondents was 953. Respondents generally felt academically prepared for college-level courses. Former IB students felt strongly that their EE experience prepared them to conduct the various facets of the research process. **When compared with former AP students, IB students were significantly more likely to indicate that they: felt prepared for college-level coursework involving research; had executed a research project at UVA; were proud of their research; intended to conduct future research; and found their research skills to be important to future success.**

Recently, the College Board has created an additional program in an attempt to improve research skills for especially motivated AP students. This program is called the AP Capstone Program, and it involves taking two courses, an AP Seminar and AP Research, that focus on developing the research and presentation skills of the students who take these courses. Successful completion of both of these courses and scoring a 3-out-of-5 or higher on the AP Assessments for these courses, and the AP Exams for four additional AP courses of the student's choosing, results in the award of an AP Capstone Diploma. While this new program does represent an admirable attempt to make AP students better prepared for college and to provide a less comprehensive and less rigorous alternative to the full IB Diploma, the AP Capstone Program does not include a service learning component, an emphasis on concurrency, and an insurance of completion of college-level coursework in at least five different curriculum areas like the IB Diploma does.