

International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme Subject Brief

Individuals and societies: Geography

First assessments 2019



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 at least one subject from five groups: 1) their best language, 2) additional language(s), 3) social sciences, 4) 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, activity, service—are compulsory and central to the philosophy of the programme.

These IB DP subject briefs illustrate the following key course components.

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

- III. Assessment model
- IV. Sample questions



I. Course description and aims

Geography is a dynamic subject firmly grounded in the real world, and focuses on the interactions between individuals, societies and physical processes in both time and space. It seeks to identify trends and patterns in these interactions. It also investigates the way in which people adapt and respond to change, and evaluates actual and possible management strategies associated with such change. Geography describes and helps to explain the similarities and differences between different places, on a variety of scales and from different perspectives.

Geography as a subject is distinctive in its spatial dimension and occupies a middle ground between social or human sciences and natural sciences. The course integrates physical, environmental and human geography, and students acquire elements of both socio-economic and scientific methodologies. Geography takes advantage of its position to examine relevant concepts and ideas from a wide variety of disciplines, helping students develop life skills and have an appreciation of, and a respect for, alternative approaches, viewpoints and ideas.

Students at both SL and HL are presented with a common core and optional geographic themes. HL students also study the HL core extension. Although the skills and activity of studying geography are common to all students, HL students are required to acquire a further body of knowledge, to demonstrate critical evaluation and to further synthesize the concepts in the HL extension.

The aims of the geography course at SL and HL are to enable students to:

- develop an understanding of the dynamic interrelationships between people, places, spaces and the environment at different scales
- develop a critical awareness and consider complexity thinking in the context of the nexus of geographic issues, including:
 - acquiring an in-depth understanding of how geographic issues, or wicked problems, have been shaped by powerful human and physical processes
 - synthesizing diverse geographic knowledge in order to form viewpoints about how these issues could be resolved.

II. Curriculum model overview

Syllabus component	Teaching hours	
	SL	HL
Geographic themes—seven options SL—two options; HL— three options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freshwater • Oceans and coastal margins • Extreme environments • Geophysical hazards • Leisure, tourism and sport • Food and health • Urban environments 	60	90
SL and HL core Geographic perspectives—global change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population distribution—changing population • Global climate—vulnerability and resilience • Global resource consumption and security 	70	70

HL only Geographic perspectives—global interactions • Power, places and networks • Human development and diversity • Global risks and resilience		60
Internal assessment SL and HL Fieldwork Fieldwork, leading to one written report based on a fieldwork question, information collection and analysis with evaluation	20	20
Total teaching hours	150	240

Assessment at a glance

Type of assessment	Format of assessment	Time (hours)		Weighting of final grade (%)	
		SL	HL	SL	HL
External		2.75	4.5	75	80
Paper 1	Each option has a structured question and one extended answer question from a choice of two.	1.5	2.25	35	35
Paper 2	Three structured questions, based on each SL/HL core unit. Infographic or visual stimulus, with structured questions. One extended answer question from a choice of two.	1.25	1.25	40	25
Paper 3	Choice of three extended answer questions, with two parts, based on each HL core extension unit.		1		20
Internal		20	20	25	20
Fieldwork	One written report based on a fieldwork question from any suitable syllabus topic, information collection and analysis with evaluation.	20	20	25	20

III. Assessment model

There are four assessment objectives (AOs) for the SL and HL geography course. Having followed the course at SL or HL, students will be expected to do the following:

1. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of specified content

- the core theme—global change
- two optional themes at SL and three optional themes at HL
- at HL, the HL extension—global interactions
- in internal assessment, a specific geographic research topic.

2. Demonstrate application and analysis of knowledge and understanding

- apply and analyse geographic concepts and theories
- identify and interpret geographic patterns and processes in unfamiliar information, data and cartographic material
- demonstrate the extent to which theories and concepts are recognized and understood in particular contexts.

3. Demonstrate synthesis and evaluation

- examine and evaluate geographic concepts, theories and perceptions
- use geographic concepts and examples to formulate and present an argument
- evaluate materials using methodology appropriate for geographic fieldwork
- at HL only, demonstrate synthesis and evaluation of the HL extension—global interactions.

4. Select, use and apply a variety of appropriate skills and techniques

- select, use and apply:
 - prescribed geographic skills in appropriate contexts
 - techniques and skills appropriate to a geographic research question.
- produce well-structured written material, using appropriate terminology.

IV. Sample questions

- Examine the role of plate margin type in determining the severity of volcanic hazards.
- Evaluate the success of attempts to predict tectonic hazard event and their possible impacts.
- Evaluate the role of agribusiness and new technologies in increasing world food supply.
- Examine the relationship between food security and health.
- Using examples, analyse how technological developments can threaten the security of states.
- To what extent does a global culture exist?

About the IB: For nearly 50 years, the IB has built a reputation for high-quality, challenging programmes of education that develop internationally minded young people who are well prepared for the challenges of life in the 21st century and are able to contribute to creating a better, more peaceful world.

For further information on the IB Diploma Programme, and a complete list of DP subject briefs, visit: <http://www.ibo.org/diploma/>.

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 or email: recognition@ibo.org.