

Differences between International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP)

Both International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement are excellent preparation for college; however, the two programs differ in the type of student served and the means and methods utilized. The following charts highlight features of each.

Advanced Placement	International Baccalaureate
<i>Gifted</i> students who have excelled in previous courses and are recommended for AP by subject-area teachers.	Academically talented, <i>highly motivated</i> students with conspicuous analytical & critical thinking skills.
<i>National</i> standards of excellence.	<i>International</i> standards of excellence.
College-level <i>courses</i> taken in the student's area(s) of strength only.	Comprehensive <i>curriculum</i> of college-level work; all subjects taken at the IB level, weaknesses as well as strengths.
<i>Breadth</i> of knowledge.	Breadth & <i>depth</i> of knowledge: students study a few key topic areas in depth in each subject.
Courses taught in <i>isolation</i> from one another.	<i>Interdisciplinary</i> approach in course work, the TOK course & Extended Essay.
<i>Content</i> driven: courses represent freshman level college courses requiring assimilation of large quantities of information.	<i>Process</i> driven: students learn "how to learn" & engage in more independent projects.
<i>More memory</i> work required for success on AP examinations.	<i>Less memory</i> work required for success on IB examinations.
Critical thinking is <i>important</i> for success.	Critical thinking is <i>essential</i> : students are evaluated on both the content & process of academic achievement. Exams are based on broad, general understanding of concepts and fundamental themes.
Course assessments emphasize <i>multiple-choice</i> (at least 50% of each exam) and essay-question formats.	Course assessments emphasize <i>essay</i> and <i>oral formats</i> ; multiple-choice format used little.
AP scores are based solely upon <i>external</i> grades determined by qualified national examiners.	IB scores are based upon a combination of <i>internal</i> grading of required assessments by classroom teachers & <i>external</i> grades determined by 3,500 qualified examiners worldwide.
The entire curriculum as laid out must be covered but an indication is given of how much of the examination will be from each topic.	IB curriculum in each subject has a common core that must be covered and optional subject areas out of which a teacher selects 1 or 2 or 3 options depending on subject area and level.
AP suggests that students carry on personal research but does not require that they do (with the exception of Art Studio).	Each student has to do personal investigations in each subject and some of this work done during the course becomes a part of the final IB mark in the subject area.
Most AP examinations have 2 parts, total 2 or 3 hours in length, and are written on the same morning or afternoon.	Most IB exams are written in 2 separate sessions on 2 different days.
AP free responses questions are direct; they call for direct responses. (Student has had to engage in higher level thinking and integration in order to do this.)	Most essays are wide ranging in scope and require integration of material from different topic areas, the citing of specific research, and evaluation of research and theories.

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