

IB MYTHS...BUSTED

THE ENGLISH SCHOOL OF KYRENIA

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme is often surrounded by myths that can mislead students and parents. These myths can prevent families from exploring the IB programme as a preferred educational path. The IB offers a rigorous curriculum that prepares students for university and beyond, with a focus on critical thinking, global awareness, strong skills development and lifelong learning.

Here are some common myths which we have busted.



MYTH : THE IB IS ONLY FOR SUPER-SMART STUDENTS.

The IB is built for motivated learners, not just top scorers. With the flexibility to choose Higher and Standard Level subjects based on individual strengths and interests, students can create a pathway that suits them. Even students who see themselves as "in the middle" can thrive and succeed in the IB with the right subject combination.

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MYTH : THE IB IS TOO DIFFICULT.

The IB is designed to be challenging but manageable, with support from trained teachers, a structured assessment process, and a sound balance between coursework and exams.



MYTH : THE IB IS PRIMARILY LOVED BY AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES.

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The IB is globally respected as making students university-ready. UK universities have recognised and valued the IB for over 50 years, and universities worldwide actively seek IB graduates for their academic calibre and proven ability to think critically and apply knowledge in real-world contexts. European universities particularly value the IB's broad subject range, as it allows students to develop across disciplines rather than being narrowly defined as "science" or "humanities" students. However, it is worth noting that in the USA, many universities go even further — offering substantial scholarships to IB students and, in some cases, credit or advanced standing that allows them to skip introductory courses.

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MYTH : STUDENTS WON'T HAVE AS MUCH FREE TIME IN THE IB.

IB Students will have as much common room time as A Level students. A Level students love their study periods, but sometimes don't quite realise the level of motivation, discipline and well-developed study skills needed to make good use of these hours. The IB is **TRANSPARENT** from day 1 in what it wants students to do and how they should do it.



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MYTH : A LEVELS ARE EASIER THAN THE IB.

In terms of academic challenge, IB and A Levels are equally rigorous — the key difference is how students learn and are assessed. A Levels tend to suit students who enjoy focusing deeply on a small number of subjects and performing under timed exam conditions. The IB, on the other hand, is designed for students who benefit from a broader education. IB students study a range of subjects, helping them keep options open and understand how different areas of learning connect to each other and the real world. Assessment in the IB is spread across coursework and exams, supporting different learning styles.

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MYTH : THE IB DEMANDS THE STUDY OF 6 SUBJECTS, WHICH IS TOO MUCH FOR MANY STUDENTS.

3 subjects are at Higher Level and 3 are at Standard Level. SL subjects can be considered as a bit higher than IGCSE and HL subjects are broad, not in as much depth as A Levels.

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MYTH : STUDENTS WHO DON'T LIKE MATHS CAN'T DO THE IB.

The IB has a range of 2 Higher Level maths courses and 2 Standard Level maths courses. The courses differ not just in terms of difficulty, but in terms of the type of maths studied. For example, one IB maths course is more suitable for humanities subjects (e.g. business, economics, psychology) and another is more suitable for engineering courses. On the other hand, the A Level maths course is 100% pure maths... there is no other pathway.

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MYTH : A LEVELS PREPARE STUDENTS FOR UNIVERSITY AS WELL AS THE IB.



Strong A Level results can certainly prepare students academically for university. However, the IB offers additional, often "hidden," advantages that help students stand out once they arrive. Universities expect students to think critically, write extended essays and reports, and reference sources accurately — skills that are not always explicitly taught in A Levels. The IB deliberately builds these skills into the programme, ensuring students are confident critical thinkers, strong academic writers, and well prepared for the demands of university study, regardless of the course they choose.

MYTH : CAS (150 HOURS OF CREATIVITY, ACTIVITY AND SERVICE) IS AN UNNECESSARY DEMAND ON MY TIME.

At ESK, A Levels have an equivalent to CAS. It is called SECA and the same number of hours of the same types of activities are required. Both CAS & SECA show that students are useful members of their communities and can go beyond their studies and participate in extra-curricular and super-curricular activities.

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MYTH : I WON'T HAVE AS MUCH FREE TIME ON MY TIMETABLE AS A LEVEL STUDENTS.

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Both A Level and IB students have the same number of common room periods. While A Level students have more timetabled study periods and must manage this time very independently, the IB includes more structured lesson time and clearer guidance on what is expected and how students should approach their learning. This structure supports students in developing strong study habits and staying on track. As a result, the idea that A Levels are "easier" because students have more free time is a myth — both pathways require commitment and discipline, just in different ways.

