

International School of Bremen



IGCSE Handbook

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Introduction

The International School of Bremen (ISB) offers a selection of subjects at International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) level. From June 2019 subjects will be examined by two different examining boards: Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) and Pearson Qualifications (sometimes referred to as Edexcel). Please see the table below which shows by which board each subject will be examined:

Cambridge International Examinations (CIE)

Biology (0610)
Chemistry (0620)
English First Language (0500)
English as a Second Language (0511)
English Literature (0486)
French (Foreign Language) (0520)
Geography (0460)
German (First Language) (0505)
German (Foreign Language) (0525)
Physical Education (0413)
Physics (0625)
Spanish (Foreign Language) (0530)

Pearson Qualifications (Edexcel)

Art and Design (4FA1)
Business Studies (4BS1)
History (4HI1)
Mathematics (4MA1)

The purpose of this handbook is to provide all the information you need to be fully informed of the nature of the programmes of study that are offered and taught at ISB throughout Grades 8, 9 and 10. The General Information section contains an overview of the curriculum, and of the (IGCSE) programmes. Our IGCSE Coordinator and IGCSE subject teachers will be able to answer specific questions about the programmes, but the following information will give you a good working knowledge of the IGCSE.

General Information

At the International School of Bremen, the IGCSE is a three-year educational programme that is set and externally examined in the United Kingdom by the University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) and, from 2019, Pearson Qualifications. Its standards are derived from the UK standards set in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), but the programme is driven by curriculum content specifically tailored to the needs of students studying in international schools around the world. The programme is designed to stand alone and so no previous knowledge is required to be a part of the programme. However, students need to be at a functional level of English to have reasonable expectations of success from enrolment in the

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IGCSE programme. Students who have followed courses designed to prepare them with the skills and attitudes that are an integral part of the IGCSE programme, such as the ISB International Middle Years Curriculum, have a considerable advantage. At the end of Grade 10, most students will sit individual IGCSE examinations in at least eight of the following subjects: Art and Design, Biology, Business Studies, Chemistry, English First Language, English as a Second Language, English Literature, French Foreign Language, Geography, German First Language, German Foreign Language, History, Mathematics, Physical Education, Physics and Spanish Foreign Language. Additionally, we offer the opportunity and strongly encourage native speakers of other languages such as Arabic, Chinese and Russian, for example, to sit for an additional IGCSE language qualification.

The Cambridge (IGCSE) is a rigorous and specialised English language curriculum that fosters high academic standards, together with an ability to put knowledge into practice. Similarly, Edexcel International GCSEs were developed by subject specialists to include specific international content to make them relevant to students worldwide. Subjects offered by both examination boards provide a sound basis for entry to higher-level study in the school's International Baccalaureate (IB) programme.

The pages that follow contain specific course outlines for each of the courses that are on offer within the programmes, including those that are compulsory. In addition to the examination subjects, students are required to take part in Drama, Music and (non-examined) Physical Education. Although Drama, Music and are not offered for examination at IGCSE, they are internally assessed and are essential parts of a balanced curriculum. These important subjects allow students to develop fundamental skills and qualities such as teamwork, creativity and leadership and offer opportunities for risk-taking that lead to personal growth and increased self-esteem. These are both assets to the whole process of learning, as well as useful life skills.

Students are also encouraged to take an active part in the many extra-curricular opportunities that are on offer at ISB. Such opportunities provide important preparation for Community, Action, Service (CAS), which is a mandatory requirement of the IB Diploma.

Subject Choices

During Grade 7, students will choose some of the subjects to study to IGCSE level and these will be added to the French/Spanish subject choice that is made in Grade 5 and to the other subjects they will take for IGCSE exams at the end of Grade 10.

The school will give students information about their IGCSE choices, but it would be helpful if parents were also to discuss their choices with them. It is important to choose subjects they find enjoyable, but it is also important to keep a good balance.

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Compulsory Subjects

Some subjects are **compulsory** at IGCSE level. These are:

English
German
Maths
Science

Optional Subjects

Optional subjects are in two groups and students choose one subject from each group. These are:

Group 1

Art
Business Studies
Physical Education

Group 2

History
Geography

General Assessment

Each subject within the Cambridge IGCSE programme is currently assessed on an eight-point scale of grades from A* to G. A student failing to reach a grade G is awarded a grade U (Unclassified). An A* is an exceptional grade, given to approximately the top 7 % of students within each subject.

In some subjects (notably English, Mathematics and Sciences) there is a choice between Core (Foundation) and Extended (Higher) examination papers, allowing teachers to use their professional judgement in deciding on the most appropriate level of testing for each candidate. (However, this is to be phased out by 2020.) The Core or Foundation paper in each subject is within the ability range of all students. It provides a full overview of the subject and targets students expected to achieve between grades C and G. The Extended or Higher curriculum comprises the Core/Foundation curriculum, plus additional and more challenging material. This has been designed for the more academically able student who is expected to achieve a grade between A* and E. The majority of students at ISB are expected to sit their examinations at the Extended/Higher levels. In subjects where there is no entry level option, the full range of grades – A*-G – is available.

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Pearson qualifications are subject to the new 9-1 grading system introduced in the United Kingdom in the summer of 2017. According to The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), which is the British government department that regulates qualifications and exams accredited by Cambridge and Pearson, the new grades are being brought in to signal that GCSEs have been reformed and to better differentiate among students of different abilities. The infographic below shows what you need to know and reveals that there is no direct correlation between the old and the new grades.

Ofqual
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Grading new GCSEs from 2017

New grading structure	Current grading structure
9	A*
8	
7	
6	B
5	
4	
3	C
2	
1	
U	U

GOOD PASS (DfE)
5 and above = top of C and above

AWARDING
4 and above = bottom of C and above

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Methods of Assessment

The precise method of assessment varies from subject to subject and from board to board. In all subjects, however, a significant percentage of the final grade will be based on the examination results taken at the end of Grade 10 (16 years old). In some subjects there is a coursework or practical component.

(Cambridge) Biology (0610)

With an emphasis on human biology, the Cambridge IGCSE Biology syllabus helps learners to understand the technological world in which they live, and take an informed interest in science and scientific developments. Learners gain an understanding of the basic principles of biology through a mix of theoretical and practical studies. They also develop an understanding of the scientific skills essential for further study and which are useful in everyday life.

As they progress, learners understand how science is studied and practised, and become aware that the results of scientific research can have both good and bad effects on individuals, communities and the environment.

(Cambridge) Chemistry (0620)

The Cambridge IGCSE Chemistry syllabus enables learners to understand the technological world in which they live, and take an informed interest in science and scientific developments. Learners gain an understanding of the basic principles of Chemistry through a mix of theoretical and practical studies. They also develop an understanding of the scientific skills essential for further study and which are useful in everyday life.

As they progress, learners understand how science is studied and practised, and become aware that the results of scientific research can have both good and bad effects on individuals, communities and the environment.

(Cambridge) English First Language (0500)

Cambridge IGCSE First Language English is designed for learners whose first language is English. Cambridge IGCSE First Language English learners develop the ability to communicate clearly, accurately and effectively in both speech and writing. They learn how to employ a wide-ranging vocabulary, use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation, and develop a personal style and an awareness of the audience being addressed.

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Learners are also encouraged to read widely, both for their own enjoyment and to further their awareness of the ways in which English can be used. Cambridge IGCSE First Language English also develops more general analysis and communication skills such as synthesis, inference, and the ability to order facts and present opinions effectively.

(Cambridge) English as a Second Language (0511)

Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language is designed for learners who already have a working knowledge of the language and who want to consolidate their understanding in order to progress in their education or career. Through their studies, learners will improve their ability to understand and use English in a range of situations.

The aim is to achieve a level of practical communication ideal for everyday use, which can also form the basis for further, more in-depth language study. In Syllabus 0511, the marks for the speaking component contribute to the overall grade.

(Cambridge) English Literature (0486)

The syllabus enables learners to read, interpret and evaluate texts through the study of literature in English. Learners develop an understanding of literal meaning, relevant contexts and of the deeper themes or attitudes that may be expressed. Through their studies, they learn to recognise and appreciate the ways in which writers use English to achieve a range of effects, and will be able to present an informed, personal response to the material they have studied.

The syllabus also encourages the exploration of wider and universal issues, promoting learners' better understanding of themselves and of the world around them.

(Cambridge) French Foreign Language (0520)

This syllabus is designed for learners who are learning French as a foreign language. The aim is to develop an ability to use the language effectively for purposes of practical communication. The course is based on the linked language skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing, and these are built on as learners progress through their studies.

The syllabus also aims to offer insights into the culture and civilisation of countries where French is spoken, thus encouraging positive attitudes towards language learning and towards speakers of foreign languages.

The syllabus content is organised around five broad Topic areas which provide contexts for the acquisition of vocabulary and the study of grammar and structures. Through the study of these

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Topic areas, candidates gain insight into target language countries and communities. The Topic areas are:

- Everyday activities
- Personal and social life
- The world around us
- The world of work
- The international world.

(Cambridge) Geography (0460)

Through the Cambridge IGCSE Geography syllabus, learners will develop a 'sense of place' by looking at the world around them on a local, regional and global scale. Learners will examine a range of natural and man-made environments, and study some of the processes which affected their development. They will also look at the ways in which people interact with their environment, and the opportunities and challenges an environment can present, thereby gaining a deeper insight into the different communities and cultures that exist around the world.

(Cambridge) German First Language (0505)

Cambridge IGCSE First Language German is designed for learners whose first language is German. This First Language syllabus develops learners' ability to communicate clearly, accurately and effectively. They learn how to employ a wide-ranging vocabulary, use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation, and develop a personal style and an awareness of the audience being addressed.

Learners are also encouraged to read widely, both for their own enjoyment and in order to develop an appreciation of how writers achieve their effects. The syllabus also complements other areas of study by encouraging skills of more general application.

(Cambridge) German Foreign Language (0525)

This syllabus is designed for learners who are learning German as a foreign language. The aim is to develop an ability to use the language effectively for purposes of practical communication. The course is based on the linked language skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing, and these are built on as learners progress through their studies.

The syllabus also aims to offer insights into the culture and civilisation of countries where German is spoken, thus encouraging positive attitudes towards language learning and towards speakers of foreign languages.

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The syllabus content is organised around five broad Topic areas which provide contexts for the acquisition of vocabulary and the study of grammar and structures. Through the study of these Topic areas, candidates gain insight into target language countries and communities. The Topic areas are:

- Everyday activities
- Personal and social life
- The world around us
- The world of work
- The international world.

(Cambridge) Physical Education (0413)

The syllabus provides learners with an opportunity to study both the practical and theoretical aspects of physical education. It is designed to encourage enjoyment in physical activity by providing learners with an opportunity to take part in a range of physical activities and develop an understanding of effective and safe physical performance. This helps learners to develop an appreciation of the necessity for sound understanding of the principles, practices and training that underpin improved performance, better health and well-being.

(Cambridge) Physics (0625)

The Cambridge IGCSE Physics syllabus helps learners to understand the technological world in which they live, and take an informed interest in science and scientific developments. They learn about the basic principles of Physics through a mix of theoretical and practical studies. Learners also develop an understanding of the scientific skills essential for further study and which are useful in everyday life.

As they progress, learners gain an understanding of how science is studied and practised, and become aware that the results of scientific research can have both good and bad effects on individuals, communities and the environment.

(Cambridge) Spanish Foreign Language (0530)

This syllabus is designed for learners who are learning Spanish as a foreign language. The aim is to develop an ability to use the language effectively for practical communication. The course is based on the linked language skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing, and these are built on as learners progress through their studies.

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The syllabus also aims to offer insights into the culture and civilisation of countries where the language is spoken, thus encouraging positive attitudes towards language learning and towards speakers of foreign languages.

The syllabus content is organised around five broad Topic areas which provide contexts for the acquisition of vocabulary and the study of grammar and structures. Through the study of these Topic areas, candidates gain insight into target language countries and communities. The Topic areas are:

- Everyday activities
- Personal and social life
- The world around us
- The world of work
- The international world.

(Edexcel) Art and Design (4FA1)

The Pearson Edexcel International GCSE in Art and Design is part of a suite of International GCSE qualifications offered by Pearson.

The Art and Design Specification includes the following key features:

- Structure:** the Pearson Edexcel International GCSE in Art and Design is a linear qualification. All components must be taken at the end of the course of study.
- Content:** features a relevant and engaging body of content that has been updated to current standards.
- Assessment:** comprises a personal portfolio and an externally-set assignment, allowing students to demonstrate their creativity and skills through mediums and subjects that inspire them.
- Approach:** building a foundation for students wishing to progress to the n Edexcel Advanced Level in Art and Design, or equivalent qualifications.

(Edexcel) Business Studies (4BS1)

The Pearson Edexcel International GCSE in Business is part of a suite of International GCSE qualifications offered by Pearson.

The Business Studies specification includes the following key features:

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Structure: the Pearson Edexcel International GCSE in Business is a linear qualification. It consists of two examinations that must be taken in the same series at the end of the course of study.

Content: relevant, engaging and up to date.

Assessment: two examinations with questions designed to differentiate students of all abilities.

Approach: independent learning, critical-thinking skills, real-life examples.

(Edexcel) History (4HI1)

The Pearson Edexcel International GCSE in History is part of a suite of International GCSE qualifications offered by Pearson.

The History specification includes the following key features:

Structure: the Pearson Edexcel International GCSE in History is a linear qualification. All units must be taken at the end of the course of study.

Content: features an updated and engaging selection of topics covering a diverse range of significant historical events, periods and geographies.

Assessment: 100% external assessment, covered by two examinations.

Approach: building a foundation for students wishing to progress to higher level qualifications, such as the IB.

(Edexcel) Mathematics [Specification A] (4MA1)

The Pearson Edexcel International GCSE in Mathematics (Specification A) is part of a suite of International GCSE qualifications offered by Pearson.

The Mathematics (Specification A) specification includes the following key features.

Structure: the Pearson Edexcel International GCSE in Mathematics (Specification A) is a linear qualification. It consists of two examinations available at Foundation and Higher Tier. Both examinations must be taken in the same series at the end of the course of study.

Content: relevant, engaging, up to date and of equivalent standard to Pearson's regulated GCSE in Mathematics.

Assessment: consists of tiers of entry (Foundation and Higher) that allow students to be entered for the appropriate level, with questions designed to be accessible to students of all abilities in that tier and papers that are balanced for topics and difficulty.

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Approach: a solid basis for students wishing to progress to Edexcel AS and Advanced GCE Level, or equivalent qualifications.

Statement of Entry

Each candidate will be issued with a Statement of Entry before the start of an IGCSE examination period. The Statement of Entry shows important biodata for the candidate as well as the examinations for which s/he is entered and the combination of papers to be taken. Students and their parents will have an opportunity to check the details recorded on the Statement of Entry before it is submitted to the relevant examination boards. The Statements of Entry also contain the dates and times of the exams and must be kept in a safe place.

The candidate's name, as it appears on the Statement of Entry, is the name that will be printed on Statements of Results and IGCSE certificates. It is important that candidates confirm, at this stage, that names and spellings are correct. If middle names are to appear on an IGCSE certificate, please inform the IGCSE coordinator. Examinations boards typically charge an administrative fee for making amendments to certificates after they are published.

Please note that if characters within candidate names are not supported by either Cambridge or Pearson systems, they will be replaced by the nearest supported equivalents. For example, the name Sören Müller would appear as Soeren Mueller on his Statement of Results and IGCSE certificate(s).

Special Educational Needs

Different countries have different definitions of, and terms for, special educational needs. Broadly, the term refers to learners who experience learning difficulties that make it harder for them to learn than most children and young people of the same age.

Cambridge and Edexcel are committed to ensuring all schools, teachers and learners around the world are supported during each exam series. They recognise that some learners may require extra accommodations when taking an assessment due to special educational needs. Therefore, centres can request access arrangements.

Access Arrangements

Access arrangements are pre-exam arrangements made on behalf of a candidate with particular needs, for example, the use of a scribe or word processor, modified papers or extra time.

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The primary principle of access arrangements is that they MUST NOT give the candidate an unfair advantage over others. The Exams Officer MUST be able to show an inspector, from either board, that access arrangements are part of a candidate's normal way of working within the centre.

For candidates with a permanent or long-term disability, illness or learning difficulty, the Exams Officer must consider their normal way of working and any previous difficulties they have experienced when taking assessments. Any application for access arrangements based on with a permanent or long-term disability, illness or learning difficulty must be based on firm evidence of the barrier to assessment and evidence of need during the three-year IGCSE course or before and not in the period directly before the IGCSE examinations.

Evidence must be dated within three years of the exam and verified by an appropriate professional. For Bremen, the Regional Advisory and Support Centers (ReBUZ) is our accepted appropriate professional body. However, please note that evidence provided by them must be in English. Any translated evidence must be signed by the original author, a legal representative or by the Head of Centre and one other member of staff.

Some arrangements can be decided upon by the school, but others need to be pre-authorised by CIE and Pearson. Please contact the Exams Officer for further advice for access arrangements, or for more information

Important Note

Examinations cannot be re-scheduled or deferred. If a student is unwell on the day of the exam, for example, the exam needs to be written to the best of the student's ability if at all possible. For any given subject, fifty percent of the papers must be sat in order for a grade to be awarded.

Recognition of IGCSE exams in (Bremen) Germany

The minimum requirements for equality with the *Realschulabschluss* (Secondary School Certificate) and the *Mittlere Schulabschluss* (Middle School Leaving Certificate) in Bremen is as follows:

Five exam passes at Grade C or above which should include:

- Maths
- a science subject (for example, Biology, Chemistry or Physics)
- a social science subject (for example, History or Geography)
- two languages

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The student must also have successfully completed at least 10 years of schooling.

The implications of these requirements mean that students who do not meet them, and want to transfer into the German system, may have to repeat Grade 10 in their new local German school to allow them the possibility of gaining a place in a gymnasium.

Further Education at ISB

Please be advised that all students who wish to continue their studies at ISB do so at the discretion of the Director. Individual IGCSE grades will influence the recommendations made to students about which level and subject they can pursue in Grades 11 and 12.

Since ISB only offers the IB Diploma and Certificate courses, it may be recommended that some students leave to pursue a less academic programme in another institution. For further information please contact either the Director or the IB Coordinator.

IGCSE Survival Guide

Organisation

All notes should be kept in good order. A well-organised book or file will save a lot of time when it comes to revision. A planner should be used every day to record homework. If it is written down students are less likely to forget it.

Having a file for each subject is a good idea. Teachers will give their students numerous handouts and these will need to be filed, together with revision notes, graphic organisers, plans and other important papers.

Show Commitment

If a student is absent from school for any reason, it is the student's responsibility to catch up on any work that has been missed. Teachers are always approachable and are there to assist each student to achieve to the best of his/her ability. However, achievement is the student's responsibility.

Prioritise

Make a list of things you have to do, and the order in which you have to do them. Do not leave things until the last minute. Plan ahead and use your time sensibly.

Meet Deadlines

Get every piece of work in on time. If a habit is developed of doing this with all short pieces of work, it will be easier to do when major pieces of work have to be submitted.

Seek Help

Assistance should always be sought when a student does not understand a particular topic. Teachers will not always know students are having problems unless they are appropriately informed.

Find a Balance

Everyone needs some free time to relax and enjoy themselves. A good balance should be established between work and play and time should be allocated for each.

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Work Ethic

A determined and hard-working attitude towards IGCSEs should be adopted right from the beginning of the courses. Hard work from the outset, will pay off when results are issued. It is too late to wish that more had been done in the week before the exams, or when the results are issued.

Proactive Participation

Students should be active learners. They should listen carefully in class and think about what they are hearing and doing. They should be prepared to offer opinions in class discussions and to value the opinions of others, no matter how different they might be. Students should never be afraid to ask questions if they do not understand something even if the questions seem trivial.

Revision

Good revision techniques are the key to examination success. Everyone has their own particular style of revising – try to find out as early as possible what works best. Revision notes are essential, and can be made in a variety of ways – graphic organisers are a good example. Good revision notes provide a summary of the key points of any topic, and should be made from personal notes, text books, or other sources provided. Remember: producing personal notes increases the input of information to the brain and helps in remembering things better. Working through past papers is an active way of revising, and taking turns with a study partner to ask questions or to discuss topics is also very useful.

Revision Schedule

Revision must be well-planned before any exam sessions. Plan your time carefully, allowing adequate time for all your subjects, and build in regular breaks.

Develop Good Study Habits

It is really important to have a quiet place to work at home where equipment can be organised and things remain where they are left. When working in the school library, help create a good working environment. Some people find that quiet music in the background helps them to concentrate, but avoid loud music with a heavy beat, and do not have the television on while working.

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How Parents Can Help

It is very important that students and their parents or guardians work together to help make the most of the education during these crucial examination years. Ways in which they could help may include:

- providing a good working environment at home;
- acting as a sounding board for ideas about work;
- encouraging their students to complete your work on time;
- being informed about the work being done, the structure of courses, and the deadlines for the submission of important pieces of work;
- facilitating visits to places of educational value during the holidays.