

Choosing Courses for Years 12 and 13 at Island School

What are the broad aims for all students in these two years?

We aim for students to have a balance of depth, in subjects they choose to study intensively, and breadth, of understanding a wide range of learning areas. During these two years students should discover their strengths and build on them. They should find out what their passions and interests are and find paths to pursue them. Students should develop the skills they have begun to acquire in all subjects in the early years. They should be able to take some subjects through to a significant level of depth of understanding. They should be able to try a wide range of different areas of study. By the end of the middle school, students should be well placed to make informed choices for the next phase of their education based on their strengths, skills, interests, passions and learning styles. We aim for students to enjoy the experience of school for its own sake and because students perform better in a climate of enjoyment. We also aim to blend the academic curriculum with co-curricular life.

How and when are choices made?

Final choices for Year 11 are made in January of Year 11. Students however will be immersed in an established programme of guidance and support throughout their Year 11. The student is at the centre of the process which is overseen by the tutor/house staff. There is a careers based pastoral programme in Year's 10 and 11 that includes Naviance self-assessments carried out in conjunction with the Higher Education Department. In the winter term of Year 11 there is a dedicated Options Afternoon for students and parents. As well as providing an overview of the Options process there is a chance to speak to subject teachers about individual subject choices. The Higher Education department also provide a general talk to the students before the Preliminary Round choices are made in December of Year 11.

Preliminary Round options are the basis of further consultation with the student, parents, tutors, HE councilors and subject teachers. Each student will have an individual appointment with the Higher Education department as well as a Tutor for Learning session before the Final Round of options takes place.

Please note: Preliminary round options are not final. They do inform timetabling and staffing therefore a lack of interest in a certain course could lead to it not running. Any change requests made after the final round in January will be subject to availability.

What is the difference between the IB Diploma and the Applied Learning Pathway?

Students following the IB Diploma must choose 6 subjects. Please follow the [link](#) for more details on the IB Diploma at Island School. Those following the Applied Learning Pathway chose the equivalent of three BTEC qualifications as well as one or two IB subjects. For more details on the ALP please follow this [link](#). It is possible to study different combinations of BTEC and IB subjects but these will need to be discussed on an individual basis.

Both the IB Diploma and the ALP have a compulsory core element to them. The IB students complete an Extended Essay, study the Theory of Knowledge and complete CAS commitments (Creativity, Action, Service). ALP students complete an Extended Project, Work Experience as well as the same CAS as all other Year 12 and 13 students.

The IB Diploma and the Applied Learning Pathway both have clear routes into Higher Education. The key is choosing the pathway that is most appropriate for the individual student. It is important to research carefully during the Options process to ensure students have full knowledge of the options available to them.

How will the choices made impact upon the future choices at Higher Education?

The IB Diploma has gained extensive recognition and respect from leading universities across the world. The BTEC courses on the ALP are also widely recognized and accepted across the world. If you follow our pages on the IB and ALP as well as the Higher Education website you will find detailed information on where IB and ALP students are progressing.

Different universities in different countries will have a range of requirements in terms. For ALP students BTEC subjects are a UK based qualification so naturally routes into UK universities are more

established. We are however finding students increasingly progressing from the ALP to universities in a range of different countries. Some of the highest performing universities may also be unwilling to offer students taking BTEC courses. It is however worth noting that those universities are also likely to only offer places to IB students with significantly high predicted grades.

In terms of IB subject choices there may well be certain requirements to access specific courses at certain universities. For example, typically to study medicine students should be taking two sciences at IB and at least one of them at Higher Level. The Island School Higher Education department will provide further advice and information on this area.