Academic Courses Currently Offered in Grades 11 & 12

Below are short descriptions of the courses offered in the Diploma Program, (adapted from the IB course guides), along with the contact teacher’s name and information.

Group 1: Studies in Language and Literature

**English A Language and Literature**
Ms. Amy Templer - atempler@isl.edu.lv

The Language and Literature course consists of four parts—two relate to the study of language and two to the study of literature.

A study of language and culture is vital to how we see and understand the world in which we live. A key aim of this course is to question the meaning generated by language and texts, which, it can be argued, is rarely straightforward and unambiguous. The course also aims to develop skills of textual analysis and the understanding that texts, both literary and non-literary, can be seen as autonomous yet simultaneously related to culturally determined reading practices.

The Language and Literature course does not limit the study of texts to the products of one culture or of the cultures covered by any one language. The study of literature in translation from other cultures is especially important to IB Diploma Programme students because it contributes to a global perspective, thereby promoting an insight into, and understanding of, the different ways in which cultures influence and shape the experiences of life common to all humanity.

**School-Supported Self-Taught Language A Literature SL**
Ms. Sarah Bevel - sbevel@isl.edu.lv

This is a literature course that is studied in a native language other than English. 11 works of literature are studied in the native language, with IB assessments such as essays, recorded oral presentations and the final exams. The student who chooses this course will need to secure a private tutor to work in their native language (at the family’s own expense), and the school will provide time in the schedule and the opportunity to sit the IB exams at school. The course is taught and graded by the private tutor, but the final assessments are sent to the IB.
Group 2: Language Acquisition (Foreign Language)

French/German HL/SL, English B HL
Mr. Reid Pierce (English) - rpierce@isl.edu.lv
Ms. Erin Leonka (French) - eleonka@isl.edu.lv
Ms. Ulrike Haefner (German) - uhaefner@isl.edu.lv
Language B is for those who have some experience already with the language. The main focus of Language B is on development of reading, writing, listening and speaking. These language skills are developed through the study and use of a range of written and spoken material. Such material will extend from everyday oral exchanges to literary texts, and should be related to the culture(s) of countries where the language is spoken. Material is chosen to enable students to develop mastery of language skills and intercultural understanding.

Russian Ab initio SL
Ms. Jekaterina Pavlova (Russian) - jpavlova@isl.edu.lv
The language ab initio course is meant for beginners learning the language, and organized into three themes.

- Individual and society
- Leisure and work
- Urban and rural environment

Each theme has a list of topics that provide the students with opportunities to practise and explore the language as well as to develop intercultural understanding. Through the development of receptive, productive and interactive skills, students should be able to respond and interact appropriately in a defined range of everyday situations. Language ab initio is offered at Standard Level only.

Group 3: Individuals and Societies

History HL/SL
Mr. Greer Bevel - gbevel@isl.edu.lv

History is more than the study of the past. It is the process of recording, reconstructing and interpreting the past through the investigation of a variety of sources. It is a discipline that gives people an understanding of themselves and others in relation to the world, both past and present.

Students of history should learn how the discipline works. It is an exploratory subject that poses questions without providing definitive answers. In order to understand the past, students must engage with it both through exposure to primary historical sources and through the work of historians. Historical study involves both selection and interpretation of data and critical evaluation of it. Students of history should appreciate the relative nature of historical knowledge and understanding, as each generation reflects its own world and preoccupations and as more evidence emerges. A study of history both requires and develops an individual's understanding of, and empathy for, people living in other periods and contexts.
**Economics HL/SL**
Mr. Rob Pustis - rpu@isl.edu.lv

Economics is a dynamic social science. The study of economics is essentially about dealing with scarcity, resource allocation and the methods and processes by which choices are made in the satisfaction of human wants. As a social science, economics uses scientific methodologies that include quantitative and qualitative elements. The IB Diploma Programme economics course emphasizes both the economic theories of microeconomics, which deal with economic variables affecting individuals, firms and markets, and the economic theories of macroeconomics, which deal with economic variables affecting countries, governments and societies. These are applied to real-world issues.

The ethical dimensions involved in the application of economic theories and policies permeate throughout the economics course as students are required to consider and reflect on human end-goals and values. The economics course encourages students to develop international perspectives, fosters a concern for global issues, and raises students' awareness of their own responsibilities at a local, national and international level.

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**Group 4: Sciences**

**Biology HL/SL**
Mr. Lucas Templer - ltempler@isl.edu.lv

Biology is the study of life. The first organisms appeared on the planet over 3 billion years ago and, through reproduction and natural selection, have given rise to the 8 million or so different species alive today. This diversity makes biology both an endless source of fascination and a considerable challenge.

An interest in life is natural for humans; not only are we living organisms ourselves, but we depend on many species for our survival, are threatened by some and co-exist with many more. Biologists attempt to understand the living world at all levels using many different approaches and techniques. At one end of the scale is the cell, its molecular construction and complex metabolic reactions. At the other end of the scale biologists investigate the interactions that make whole ecosystems function.

**Chemistry HL/SL**
Mr. Lucas Templer - ltempler@isl.edu.lv

Chemistry is an experimental science that combines academic study with the acquisition of practical and investigational skills. It is often called the central science, as chemical principles underpin both the physical environment in which we live and all biological systems. Apart from being a subject worthy of study in its own right, chemistry is a prerequisite for many other courses in higher education, such as medicine, biological science and environmental science, and serves as useful preparation for
employment.

The Diploma Programme chemistry course allows students to develop traditional practical skills and techniques and to increase facility in the use of mathematics, which is the language of science. It also allows students to develop interpersonal skills, and digital technology skills, which are essential in 21st century scientific endeavour and are important life-enhancing, transferable skills in their own right.

**Physics HL/SL**
Mr. Daniel Doucette - ddoucette@isl.edu.lv

Physics is the most fundamental of the experimental sciences, as it seeks to explain the universe itself from the very smallest particles—currently accepted as quarks, which may be truly fundamental—to the vast distances between galaxies.

Despite the exciting and extraordinary development of ideas throughout the history of physics, certain aspects have remained unchanged. Observations remain essential to the very core of physics, sometimes requiring a leap of imagination to decide what to look for. Models are developed to try to understand observations, and these themselves can become theories that attempt to explain the observations. Theories are not always directly derived from observations but often need to be created. At the school level both theory and experiments should be undertaken by all students. They should complement one another naturally, as they do in the wider scientific community.

**Group 5: Mathematics**

**Mathematics Higher Level**
Mr. Daniel Doucette - ddoucette@isl.edu.lv

IB Mathematics HL is a course for students with a very strong background in mathematics and strong analytical and technical skills. This is for students who will be including mathematics in their university studies, either as a subject in its own right or within courses such as physics, engineering and technology. The course is also for students who have a strong interest in mathematics and enjoy meeting its challenges.

**Mathematics Standard Level**
Mrs. Leigh Simon - lsimon@isl.edu.lv

This course caters for students who already possess knowledge of basic mathematical concepts, and who are equipped with the skills needed to apply simple mathematical techniques correctly. The majority of these students will expect to need a sound mathematical background as they prepare for future studies in subjects such as chemistry, economics, psychology and business administration.
Mathematical Studies Standard Level
Mr. Rob Pustis - rpustis@isl.edu.lv

This course has an emphasis on applications of mathematics, and the largest section is on statistical techniques. It is designed for students with varied mathematical backgrounds and abilities. It offers students opportunities to learn important concepts and techniques and to gain an understanding of a wide variety of mathematical topics. It prepares students to be able to solve problems in a variety of settings, to develop more sophisticated mathematical reasoning and to enhance their critical thinking. The individual project is an extended piece of work based on personal research involving the collection, analysis and evaluation of data. Students taking this course are well prepared for a career in social sciences, humanities, languages or arts. These students may need to utilize the statistics and logical reasoning that they have learned as part of the mathematical studies SL course in their future studies.

Group 6: The Arts

Visual Arts HL/SL
Ms. Inga Malta - imalta@isl.edu.lv

The visual arts are an integral part of everyday life, permeating all levels of human creativity, expression, communication and understanding. They range from traditional forms embedded in local and wider communities, societies and cultures, to the varied and divergent practices associated with new, emerging and contemporary forms of visual language. They may have sociopolitical impact as well as ritual, spiritual, decorative and functional value; they can be persuasive and subversive in some instances, enlightening and uplifting in others. We celebrate the visual arts not only in the way we create images and objects, but also in the way we appreciate, enjoy, respect and respond to the practices of art-making by others from around the world. Theories and practices in visual arts are dynamic and ever-changing, and connect many areas of knowledge and human experience through individual and collaborative exploration, creative production and critical interpretation.

The IB Diploma Programme visual arts course encourages students to challenge their own creative and cultural expectations and boundaries. It is a thought-provoking course in which students develop analytical skills in problem-solving and divergent thinking, while working towards technical proficiency and confidence as art-makers. In addition to exploring and comparing visual arts from different perspectives and in different contexts, students are expected to engage in, experiment with and critically reflect upon a wide range of contemporary practices and media. The course is designed for students who want to go on to study visual arts in higher education as well as for those who are seeking lifelong enrichment through visual arts.
CORE: Theory of Knowledge
Mr. Greer Bevel - gbevel@isl.edu.lv
Mr. Rob Pustis - rpustis@isl.edu.lv

TOK is a course about critical thinking and inquiring into the process of knowing, rather than about learning a specific body of knowledge. It is a core element which all Diploma Programme students undertake. It is taught during two 40-minute blocks per week.

TOK and the Diploma Programme subjects should support each other in the sense that they reference each other and share some common goals. The TOK course examines how we know what we claim to know. It does this by encouraging students to analyse knowledge claims and explore knowledge questions. A knowledge claim is the assertion that “I/we know X” or “I/we know how to Y”, or a statement about knowledge; a knowledge question is an open question about knowledge. A distinction between shared knowledge and personal knowledge is made in the TOK guide. This distinction is intended as a device to help teachers construct their TOK course and to help students explore the nature of knowledge.

CORE: Creativity Action Service
Ms. Ieva Smits - ismits@isl.edu.lv

CAS complements a challenging academic programme in a holistic way, providing opportunities for: self-determination, collaboration, accomplishment, and enjoyment.

Creativity encourages students to engage in the arts and creative thinking. Action seeks to develop a healthy lifestyle through physical activity. Service with the community offers students a chance to understand their capacity to make a meaningful contribution.

CAS expectations: Students should aim to be involved in at least 2 activities per component. They should plan to be involved an average of one afternoon (3-4 hours) a week in CAS activities from grade 11 to 12. They should take part in a range of activities, including at least one project.

CORE: Extended Essay
Mr. Luke Templer - ltempler@isl.edu.lv

The Extended Essay is a 4,000-word research essay that the student completes based on a subject that they are interested in. The project is independent, but the student is guided by a supervisor with the required expertise and background knowledge.

Students begin their Extended Essay halfway through Grade 11, and finish it by the end of the first Semester in Grade 12. The Essay is sent to the IB and graded by external examiners.
Online Courses
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