

University Recognition of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma in North America

The recognition of the IB Diploma by Canadian universities continues to improve dramatically. There are several reasons for this. The major reason is that universities believe IB Diploma graduates will perform better at university than students graduating from regular programs. The combination of critical thinking, research, and writing skills learned in the IB program enables students to succeed in the university learning environment. Because of the skills they have learned, IB students also provide leadership in classroom discussion and group learning.

IB Student Performance—University

Statistics reflect this performance: IB students who registered directly into second-year courses scored an average of 7% to 12% higher than their classmates (from the University of British Columbia website, <http://www.welcome.ubc.ca/admission.cfm?page=ib>). This is remarkable when you consider that those IB students are competing against students a year older with a full year of university experience. In a recent study the University of Florida showed that as IB students took more advanced and more difficult university courses, the performance gap widens further.

A Model of Consistency

Another factor in university recognition is that, faced with rampant mark inflation on high school transcripts across North America, universities know the IB graduation transcript is a model of consistency with world IB averages, varying by only fractions over the past 20 years. In addition, Canadian universities now have a shrinking market of high school graduates. As a result, competition for the best graduates has become intense. Because universities now believe that IB Diploma graduates are a sound investment, they are shifting their financial awards to the growing number of IB graduates in North America. Thus, IB graduates are snapping up more and more of the traditional scholarships, as well as benefiting from a vast array of financial incentives reserved exclusively for them.

A Variety of Incentives

Here in Nova Scotia universities offer a variety of incentives for IB Diploma graduates based on their anticipated IB grades submitted before March 15 of their final year. Acadia and St. Mary's give IB graduates with 30 points or better, 30 credits which is equal to one year's tuition. St. Francis Xavier and Dalhousie universities give IB graduates individual course credits for Higher Level courses with a score of 5 or better. Dalhousie gives a 2nd year philosophy credit for a Theory of Knowledge course. Cape Breton University (CBU) offers IB graduates a credit for any Higher Level or Standard Level IB course with a score of 5 or better. Dalhousie, Saint Mary's, Acadia, and CBU now have dedicated major renewable IB scholarships. All Nova Scotia universities consider IB graduates with a score of 35 points or better for all major scholarships. At the same time many of the nation's top entrance scholarships such as Mount Allison's Bell scholarship, the Loran Scholarships, and Saint Mary's Presidential scholarship have leadership and citizenship criteria that mirror those emphases in the IB Diploma.

2010 Financial Awards

Last year, of the 294 IB Diploma candidates in Nova Scotia, 266 accepted scholarships and financial aid amounting to \$3,746,300 to attend North American universities and colleges in September 2010. Our own Nova Scotia universities provided 75% of these awards demonstrating their strong commitment to the program. This total does not include the value of the advanced credits all IB graduates are given by all Canadian universities. The two \$75,000.00 Loran Scholarships awarded in Nova Scotia 2010 both went to IB Students.

Maintaining the Awards

It is one thing to earn a substantial renewable entrance award; keeping it requires a stellar performance in first and subsequent university years. One major Ontario university recently reported that only 27% of first year scholarship recipients maintain their scholarships, whereas all of the recipients who were IB Diploma graduates retained their scholarships through to graduation. In addition, most Canadian universities have internal scholarships awarded to students on the basis of their first year university results. Many IB graduates who miss out on university entrance scholarships are earning substantial awards once at university because they are so well equipped to do so.

Looking Ahead

The trend toward even better incentives provided by universities will increase as universities track both the success of IB graduates in their programs, and the suspected higher incidence of IB graduates pursuing post-graduate degrees. This trend is perhaps best evidenced by the recent words of Dalhousie's Registrar, Asa Kachan: "We view IB students as well prepared to succeed at university, and like many of our counterparts across Canada, we want to position ourselves as the university of choice for IB Diploma graduates."

For more information, please contact

Ann Blackwood
Executive Director
English Program Services
Department of Education
PO Box 578
Halifax NS B3J 2S9

Phone: (902) 424-5745
E-mail: blackwaa@gov.ns.ca

John Messenger
Head, International Baccalaureate Programs
English Program Services
Department of Education
PO Box 578
Halifax NS B3J 2S9

Phone: (902) 424-0743
E-mail: messenjo@gov.ns.ca