



'The UK Boarding Schools Specialist'

British Boarding School Qualifications

There are several qualifications on offer as part of a British Boarding School education that are recognised worldwide. They are all academic and career-based courses that are designed to stretch a pupil's ability and imagination as well as encourage independent thinking, development of personal study skills and team work through projects and presentations.

GCSEs and IGCSEs

The General Certificate for Secondary Education (GCSE) and/or its international counterpart, the International General Certificate for Secondary Education (IGCSE) are the primary offerings for pupils in Years 10 and 11 at British Boarding Schools. While some schools offer a one year, condensed course, the certificate is generally run over a two year period (Years 10 and 11) and pupils study between eight and twelve subjects. These are made up of core, mandatory subjects (ie. English, mathematics, sciences and IT) that are pre-determined by the school and a list of electives (ie. Art & Design, dance, drama and modern languages).

Assessments are linear and take the form of exams at the end of the two year course. Grading, previously A* to G, has been replaced by 9 to 1 (9 being the highest) in recent years. The IGCSE is the international version of the UK GCSE and is tailored for students studying the qualification in one of the 140 countries around the world where it's offered (including the UK itself). It provides a broad study programme by drawing subjects from more than 70 topics. There is a choice of core and extended papers in most subjects and the curriculum includes a mix of practical experience and theoretical knowledge, making IGCSEs suitable for all students.

A Levels

Advanced Levels, or A Levels for short, are what the majority of pupils will undertake for their final two years of schooling. The choices are much greater at A Levels than GCSE level though pupils tend to hone in on those subjects aligning with their university pathway plans. Specific subjects, such as mathematics, will require a passing grade at GCSE level in order to progress with the same subject while others don't require any prior knowledge at all. In the first year (Year 12), also referred to as AS level, pupils take four subjects on average and then drop to three subjects for the final year. Similar to GCSE assessments, A Levels are linear with pupils taking examinations at the end of the two year study period.

International Baccalaureate (IB)

The International Baccalaureate is an international programme of study for pupils that includes a Middle Years Programme (MYP) for 11-16 year olds as well as a two year diploma for 16-18 year olds.

The MYP focuses on the relationship between the eight traditional subjects of study undertaken and the world today and encourages the development of critical thinking and reflective skills. In Year 11, pupils have to complete a personal project designed to show what they've learnt and skills acquired. Approximately twelve schools currently offer this programme in the UK.

The two-year IB Diploma is broader than A Levels and pupils have more breadth over the six subjects studied across the same timeframe. Three of these subjects are at a higher level (equivalent to the second year of A Levels) and the remaining three are at a standard level. Assessment takes place continuously but



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end of Year 13 examinations make up a significant proportion of a student's final grade. In theory, this means that by taking fewer exams during the year, more 'learning time' can be factored into the school term. More and more schools are offering the IB Diploma, either in conjunction with A Levels, or as the standalone qualification for Years 12 and 13.

*To learn more about the International Baccalaureate, be sure to read our **IB Explained** information sheet*

While the majority of Thai students enrolled in British boarding schools will undertake A levels or the IB Diploma, an increasing number of schools are also offering the following qualifications, all of which are held in high regard.

Cambridge Pre-U

Developed in consultation with universities, the two year Cambridge Pre-U is gaining in popularity due to its focus on self-directed learning. Not only does it provide pupils with a keen grasp of their subject, it also encourages independent thinking. Up to four subjects are selected (from a range of 26) and pupils may study them individually or as an interdisciplinary combination. Each element is equivalent to an A-level and can gain the qualification of a Pre-U Certificate. Pupils successfully studying three principal subjects together with an Independent Research Report and a Global Perspective Portfolio are awarded a Pre-U Diploma. Pupils may also substitute other equivalent qualifications eg. A-levels, for up to two principal subjects and still gain the Diploma.

Extended Project Qualification

The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is a qualification, worth half an A Level, that allows pupils to research a topic related to their current course of study or future career. It is project-based and can take the form of a dissertation (5,000 words on average), musical composition, report or event artefact. Universities view the EPQ favourably due to its focus on the development of planning, preparation, research and independent working skills. Assessment-wise, it is 100% coursework and there no examinations.

Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) Diploma

The Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) Diploma, designed and awarded by Pearson, is for pupils in need of a vocational qualification. The diploma is equivalent to 3 A Levels and assessment is both coursework and examination-based. Popular subjects include business, information technology, art and design, construction, engineering and travel and tourism. All higher institutions recognise and accept the BTEC Diploma though some, depending on the intended course/degree programme, may require that it's combined with one or more A Levels.

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