

News

New UK NARIC benchmark: International Arab Baccalaureate

Candidates who have been educated in Lebanon or Saudi Arabia may offer admissions teams and employers the International Arab Baccalaureate (IAB). This qualification has now been benchmarked by UK NARIC and, from the first cohort of graduates for the updated qualification in 2017, it is considered comparable to the overall UK GCE A level standard.

This international diploma, which has been developed by the Educational Research Center (ERC) in Lebanon, runs alongside national upper secondary level qualifications. The three-year IAB Diploma focuses on 4 science subjects (biology, chemistry, physics and maths) plus 2 languages (Arabic and either English or French). With the exception of English language, each STEM subject passed at over 60% is comparable to GCE AS level. This is because of the smaller volume of learning compared to a GCE A level in a single subject.

This qualification has been offered for several years, but development has been ongoing, and UK NARIC has been consulted a number of times to review the progress. This input was crucial to the ERC as they worked towards developing a qualification that is comparable to the UK framework.

As part of the established process of benchmarking a qualification, UK NARIC examined components of the IAB including entry requirements, duration, structure and content, modes of learning and assessment, learning outcomes, and associated outcomes. Quality assurance policies and procedures were also considered, including those in place for developing, administering and marking assessment; and for registering and monitoring IAB schools.

Also as part of benchmarking, the UK NARIC team visited IAB schools, where as well as discussing the aims of the qualification and the curriculum with management teams, they observed lessons and evaluated teaching and learning approaches, course content and assessment materials. Similarities between the IAB Diploma and GCE AS/A levels are evident in terms of key skills that are developed across subject areas, such as a common emphasis on developing knowledge and understanding of scientific skills in the science subjects.

The IAB Diploma aims to equip students with transferable skills as well as academic knowledge, to better prepare them for future study and work. This is a field our International Projects Group understands well, and it has led to the development of the new PHER index, rolling out later in 2018, to gauge the skillsets associated with specific qualifications, and help admissions teams to assess the suitability as well as ability of candidates.

International Arab Baccalaureate (IAB) Diploma at a glance:

- 3-year international qualification
- Upper secondary/ HE entry
- Focused on sciences
- 6 subjects studied – Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Arabic, English or French, and a cross-curricular project with common topics covered in both IAB and GCE AS and A level curricula
- Medium of instruction currently either English or Arabic
- Assessed through a mixture of coursework and final examinations
- Comparable to UK GCE A levels as a complete qualification
- Single STEM subjects passed at 60% or more are comparable to a UK GCE AS level – with the exception of English
- Range and type of cognitive skills assessed in both IAB and GCE AS and A levels are similar
- Develops transferable skills such as team working and time management in preparation for HE or work
- Cross-disciplinary project component develops range of skills – personal, social, problem-solving – in a real-world context.

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