

Academic Skills

What is the course about?

This course of instruction is designed to help IB1 students smoothly make the transition from IGCSE to IB and beyond. In successfully making this transition, students will develop the study strategies and become the independent learners they need to be to achieve at the Further and Higher education levels. In particular, the course aims to prepare students for their Extended Essay (EE), for which they will have to independently read and research a topic of their choice, and critically analyse and evaluate that research in a logical, coherent, and cohesive 4000-word text.

How is the course structured?

Participants meet for one period once a week for the first year of their IB studies. Broadly, the course will be structured around the language skills – academic reading, listening, and writing – and study skills needed for independent study at the IB level and beyond.

What distinguishes this course from others?

This course aims to complement and support the other courses students will pursue for their IB certificate. It aims to help students develop the skills, knowledge, and abilities beyond disciplinary content knowledge, which are applicable to a range of academic contexts. It seeks to inculcate a sense of 'research-mindedness', an openness to learning, and positive orientation to new ideas and ways of thinking.

Are there any requirements?

There are no requirements for this course.

What materials will I need?

All materials will be made available to students through Schoology, the school's Virtual Learning Environment.

What will I learn?

This course will cover the following main areas of academic study, although the instructor will endeavour to remain responsive to the developing needs of the participants.

(i) Critical Reading:

Skimming and scanning; Academic Reading Circle; critical thinking.

(ii) Listening to and taking notes on lectures:

Common symbols and abbreviations; note-taking styles, incl. Cornell, linear and non-linear styles.

(iii) Academic Writing:

Finding and evaluating sources; using other people's ideas: quoting, paraphrasing, summarising, synthesizing; referencing and citations (incl. integral and non-integral); structuring texts: academic genres (reports and essays) and paragraphing by rhetorical function and logical style.

(iv) Academic Language development:

Hedging language; avoiding informal language; stance: separating writer's ideas from the authors' ideas; noun phrases; metadiscourse

(v) Study skills:

Note-taking and note-making; proof-reading and copyediting; writing a detailed essay plan; mind-mapping; planning and time-management.

What are the Learning Outcomes?

On successful completion of the course, participants will be able to:

Reading

- Analyse typical features of scientific essays and texts
- Use a clear purpose for reading a text
- Critically evaluate academic texts
- Understand the structure of textbooks and journals in finding relevant and useful information
- Read independently, adapting style of reading to different texts and purposes

Writing

- Find and evaluate sources of evidence including tables and figures

- Synthesise notes for academic writing
- Avoiding plagiarism, incorporate others' work into a given piece of writing using summarising, paraphrasing, quotation and referencing
- Synthesize and evaluate information and arguments from a number of sources.
- Structure academic writing logically and clearly according to rhetorical function and needs
- Give coherence and cohesion to written academic texts

Listening and note-taking

- Listen to and taking notes on academic lectures

Study skills

- Find and select relevant sources with which to engage with the literature in the students' chosen field.
- Critically evaluate published sources as evidence to support claims
- Understand what the research process involves and how to approach research design
- Utilise good exam practice

How is the course assessed?

This course is not assessed

In what ways does the Academic Skills syllabus promote the attributes of the IB learner profile?

1. The *curiosity* attribute is developed through the various roles performed in the Academic Reading Circle component of the course, especially the roles of Connector and Contextualiser, in which students research different aspects of the source reading texts.
2. The *balanced* attribute will be practiced in students' writing as they practice, using various methods, 'hedging' their claims.
3. The *reflective* attribute is central to this course and is practiced on a lesson by lesson basis as we reflect on best practice in writing, reading, listening, and studying.
4. The *principled* attribute is developed in discussions on and practice in avoiding plagiarism and collusion in their writing

5. The *communicative* attribute is developed as we practice writing different genres appropriate to different academic communities.

Where can I find more information about the course?

Please feel free to email the Academic Skills teacher at s.dale@bisc.krakow.pl

Autumn Term

Week	Learning objectives	Activities (in brief)
1	Note-taking I: listening to a lecture	Students should take notes in their classes and when they read and listen to lectures. Here students practice taking notes while listening to a lecture.
2	Note-taking II: using symbols and organising the page when note-taking when reading	Students learn common symbols and abbreviations and develop their own for their own studies. They consider different ways of organising their notes (linear and non-linear). They practice reading and taking notes
3	Note-taking III: listening to a lecture	Students try it out again with their new techniques

4	Synthesizing I	<p>The main point in this lesson is that synthesis involves developing a 'line of argument'. The lesson is supposed to be essentially discursive, however: It's a chance to reflect on their own writing practices.</p> <p>The lesson presents an analogy between what their partners report (as their 'perfect holiday') and what researchers report in academic texts; i.e., 'the literature'. The task for the lesson is to produce a 'line of argument' synthesis based on the discussions they have in class.</p>
5	Synthesizing II	<p>Students practice 'synthesizing'. In this lesson students are given abstracts from academic journals which they classify according to topic and purpose.</p>
6	Synthesizing III creating an architecture	<p>Following from the previous lesson, students are given a different set of Abstracts to read and classify. This time less scaffolding is provided. Students must themselves notice consensus and dissensus in 'the literature' provided.</p>
7	Synthesizing IV	<p>Like the previous two lessons this lesson practices developing an architecture for a review of the literature. The focus is on achieving a 'high pass', which we visualize as an eagle flying high above the land, from which vantage point it can see the peaks and troughs, confluences and divergences, rivers and tributaries.</p>

8	Analyzing arguments I	This lesson is a crash course in 'analytical' reading. They distinguish between arguments and explanations
9	Analyzing arguments II	Students distinguish inductive and deductive reasoning and look at a range of 'argument indicators'.
10	Analyzing arguments III	Students distinguish between various types of argument (which turn on the different relationships between intermediate conclusions and ultimate conclusions).
11	Evaluating arguments I	This lesson focuses on 'evaluating' (and beginning to produce) causal explanations. This is a very 'high level' skill, which, as IB students, they should be beginning to develop.
12	Evaluating arguments II	Students continue to evaluate different types of argument looking at evidence (and sources of evidence)
13	The power of words: presentation making I: rhetorical techniques	Three rhetorical techniques used to give power to your words: tripling, contrast, and list of three
14	The power of words: presentation making II	Students analyze and evaluate an example: Gettysburg Address
15	The power of words: presentation making I	Students analyze and evaluate an example: Pink's Tedtalk: science of motivation

Winter Term

1	Plagiarism I defining it ethically	In this lesson students are introduced to the notion of 'plagiarism'. Students are encouraged to reflect on the ethical dimensions of the practice, to see it is both dishonest and unfair.
2	Plagiarism II: an overview of how to use other people's ideas	Techniques of using other's ideas: paraphrasing, summarising, and quoting; in-text citations and references
3	Plagiarism III: cite it right (referencing)	Referencing of different types of texts (Harvard APA) and in-text citations (including secondary citations)
4	Plagiarism IV: detecting it	Students read through a series of student texts and compare them to the original texts from which they were developed to identify whether the student text is a product of plagiarism.
5	Plagiarism V: creating voice	Students look at the problem of correct placement of in-text citations to accurately distinguish 'voices' (writer and author(s))
6	Using other people's ideas I: Presenting stance	Students look at the use of reporting verbs to convey 'stance' towards works cited
7	Using other people's ideas II: Paraphrasing practice: an overview	Students look at the different linguistic strategies for accurately paraphrasing other people's ideas
8	Using other people's ideas III: summarizing with a purpose	Students analyse and evaluate example summaries in terms of accuracy, possible poor scholarship or plagiarism as well as style and purpose

9	Using other people's ideas IV: Summarising practice	Students practice summarizing with a purpose
10	Writing an Introduction to the EE 1:	Students are introduced to the CARS model of an introduction. Students reflect on the purposes of an Introduction
11	Writing an Introduction to the EE II:	Using the CARS model students 'introduce' the research they have collected for their EE. This is followed by Q and A.

Summer Term

Week	Learning objectives	Activities (in brief)
1	Writing paragraphs with coherence and cohesion I: Paragraph structure_ inductive and deductive style	Students consider the two logical ways of presenting a line of thought - top-down and bottom up.
2	Writing paragraphs with coherence and cohesion II: Paragraph unity and writing topic sentences	Students read model texts to see how paragraphs develop the 'controlling idea' in the topic sentence.
3	Writing paragraphs with coherence and cohesion III: Paragraph coherence and cohesion 1	Students consider the importance of logical sequencing of ideas and how to make clear, effective transitioning in texts
4	Writing paragraphs and essays and reports I: Rhetorical functions 1	Paragraph structure: an overview of the rhetorical functions by which paragraphs are organized.
5	Writing paragraphs and essays and reports II: Rhetorical functions 2	Student look at how to organize a paragraph around the rhetorical functions of: Comparison and contrast

6	Writing paragraphs and essays and reports III: Rhetorical functions 3	Students look at how to organize a paragraph around the rhetorical functions of: Cause and effect
7	Hedging language and metadiscourse	Students look at different linguistic strategies to express degrees of caution
8	Copy-editing and proofreading	Students practice different approach to proofreading and copyediting their own work in exam conditions
9	Good exam practice	Students reflect on good exam practice in their subjects