

International Baccalaureate Diploma Graduates at Okayama University

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Japanese Universities began admitting International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB) students since 1979. Okayama University was the first national university to accept IB students in 4 faculties and 1 special Matching Program (MP) course without entrance exams in 2012. From 2015, all 11 faculties and the MP course welcomed IB Diploma (IBDP) students. This presentation summarizes the efforts and initiatives taken by Okayama University to encourage and increase the number of IB admissions and how it plans to construct a solid student support system to sustain and improve campus life of present and future IB students, in addition to spreading the IB ideology among non-IB students and faculty staff for better global understanding. Presently there are 13 IBDP students enrolled in 11 different faculties and the MP course. Admission into the 11 faculties is in April but the MP course admits IB students in April and October. Eight out of 13 students belong to the MP course, which is a four-year bachelor course, designed by Okayama University to meet individual student needs. Students in the MP course, with the help of an academic advisor, are able to choose subjects freely from most major faculties (except pharmaceutical, medical and dental faculties) and design a unique and tailor made course suited to their ambitions. MP course students are given plenty of academic freedom and are not required to follow the standard set curriculum of each faculty. They also have greater opportunities to go abroad for short-term study programs or internships. Five out of 8 MP course students were October admissions. The remaining 5 IB students belong to the medical faculty (medicine and nursing; 3 students) and Engineering and Environmental Engineering (2 students). IBDP students intending to apply for the 4-year bachelor course at Okayama University, are required to have a minimum full diploma score of 24 for all faculties and the MP course except for the 6 year medical school, which requires a minimum score of 39 to apply. From October 2017, the MP course will merge into the Global Discovery Program course, which is also a specially structured, student-oriented Bachelors program. Since the IB education system is completely different from Japanese high school education, IBDP students require ample support both academically and otherwise following admission, for effective and smooth transition into academic and campus life. To meet such demands, Okayama University has appointed IBDP student counsellors, who provide continuous support to IBDP students through one-on-one counselling and by keeping the IBDP student community in touch through the SNS “IBDP LINE GROUP”. Updates on latest university developments and seminars are shared on LINE. IB students interested in doing some extracurricular activity are free to contact the IB counselor at all times and share ideas and opinions. Presently, IB students at the medical school have formed and joined two clubs “Nursing English” and “English Progressed Based Learning”, where IB students take the initiative to interact with non-IB students in subject based extra-curricular activities. There are future plans of publishing a quarterly IB newsletter by the IB students with the help of their IB coordinator, where they will talk about their IB experiences and how it has shaped them and also help to spread knowledge about the IB philosophy among their friends and teachers on campus. In order to create an exclusive international environment where IBDP students can heighten their linguistic and communication skills, the university has also set up the “L-café” or Language café. This international space welcomes anyone who has an interest in foreign languages and/or wants to interact in a relaxed environment. Most IB student’s at Okayama University work part-time at the L-Café. Okayama University is also training faculty members and increasing IB awareness across the educational arena by arranging regular IB forums for teachers and students, inviting IB experts to lecture on IB education and sharing the experiences of ex-IB students from other parts of Japan. With effective planning, proper student support and understanding, Okayama University aims at providing and developing a positive academic and social experience for present and future IB students enrolling into the various faculties and special programs.