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A Desk-Based Review of Global Admissions Qualifications and The EiM International Diploma Value Proposition

Report Subtitle

(Other details)

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A. Qualification Features

1) A Levels (UK & International)

Key Features:

Two-year programme typically covering 3-4 subjects in-depth. Graded from A* to E (pass grades). Modular or linear assessment structure (now primarily linear), Subject-specific focus allowing specialisation. Independent subjects with no core requirements.

Typical University Requirements:

Top universities (Russell Group): AAA-ABB (3 A levels) Mid-tier universities: BBB-CCC Foundation courses: CDD-DDE

Sources:

- UCAS Qualification Information: https://www.ucas.com/further-education/post-16-qualifications/qualifications-you-can-take/levels
- UCAS Tariff Points: https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/entry-requirements/ucas-tariff-points
- Russell Group Informed Choices Guide: https://www.informedchoices.ac.uk/
- Ofqual - Official Regulator: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual
- WhatUni A-Level Guide: https://www.whatuni.com/advice/guides/the-ultimate-guide-to-choosing-your-a-levels/57528/

2) International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB)

Key Features:

Two-year programme with six subject groups. Core components: Theory of Knowledge, Extended Essay, CAS (Creativity, Activity, Service). Subjects graded 1-7, core components up to 3 points. Maximum total score of 45 points. Emphasis on breadth of knowledge and international perspective. Mandatory second language requirement.

Typical University Requirements:

Top-tier universities: 38-42+ points total Mid-tier universities: 32-36 points Minimum pass requirement: 24 points

Sources:

- International Baccalaureate Organisation: https://www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/
- About the International Baccalaureate (IB): https://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/
  IB University Recognition Directory: https://www.ibo.org/university-admission/
- IB Annual Review: https://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/facts-and-figures/
- IB Global Annual Review: https://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/facts-and-figures/ib-annual-review/

3) BTec (UK)

Key Features:

Vocational qualification with practical, skills-based learning. Available at different levels (Level 3 equivalent to A Levels). Continuous assessment through assignments, projects, and practical tasks. Less emphasis on final exams compared to A Levels. Often sector-specific (e.g., business, engineering, health).

Typical University Requirements:

BTec Extended Diploma: Distinction, Distinction, Distinction (DDD) for competitive courses. Merit-level achievement for less competitive courses. Often combined with A Levels for mixed qualifications.

Sources:

- Pearson BTec Information: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/about-us/qualification-brands/btec.html
- What Uni? BTec Guide: https://www.whatuni.com/advice/applying-to-uni/are-btecs-as-valuable-as-a-levels/48605/
- UCAS BTec Information: https://www.ucas.com/further-education/post-16-qualifications/qualifications-you-can-take/btec-diplomas
- The Student Room BTec University Guide: https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/btec/
- Pearson BTec Recognition Database: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/understanding-our-qualifications/comparing-btec-to-other-qualifications.html

4) Advanced Placement (AP) - USA

Key Features:

University-level courses taken in high school. Scored on a 5-point scale (5 is highest). Individual subject exams rather than a comprehensive programme. Students typically take multiple AP courses over their high school years. Flexible selection based on strengths and interests.

Typical University Requirements:

No specific overall requirement, as it supplements the high school diploma. Competitive universities look for scores of 4-5 in relevant subjects. Credits are often granted for scores of 3+ (varies by university). Typically combined with SAT/ACT scores and GPA for admissions.
Sources:

- College Board AP Program: https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/what-is-ap
  AP Score Distribution Report: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-course-audit/about
- Big Future – What to Know About AP Credit: https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/explore-careers/get-started/ap-credit-and-placement-and-ap-score-sends
- AP Student Research on College Outcomes: https://research.collegeboard.org/programs/ap/data

5) Abitur (Germany)

Key Features:

Final qualification from German secondary school (Gymnasium). Graded on a 1-6 scale (1 is highest) with total score converted to a 1.0-4.0 scale. A combination of continuous assessment and final examinations. Requires a mix of humanities, sciences, languages, and arts. Heavy emphasis on written and oral examinations.

Typical University Requirements:

Score requirements vary by programme. Highly competitive programmes (medicine, law): 1.0-1.3 Average programmes: 1.7-2.5 Less competitive programmes: 2.5-3.5

Sources:

- DAAD German Education System: https://www.daad.de/en/study-and-research-in-germany/plan-your-studies/requirements/
- Studying in Germany- German Abitur: Structure, Scores, & International Equivalents: https://www.studying-in-germany.org/german-abitur/
- European Commission - German Education Guide: https://education.ec.europa.eu/study-in-europe/countries/german
- Kultusminister The Education System in the Federal Republic of Germany: https://www.kmk.org/kmk/information-in-english.html

6) French Baccalauréat

Key Features:

Three main streams: General, Technological, and Professional General track now has specialisations rather than streams (since 2021 reform) Graded on a 20-point scale with 10 as passing mark Mention system: Très Bien (16+), Bien (14-15.9), Assez Bien (12-13.9) Continuous assessment (40%) and final exams (60%)

Typical University Requirements:

Selective programmes (Grandes Écoles): 14+ with excellent scores in relevant subjects.
Standard university entry: Passing mark of 10+. Competitive programmes: 12+ often required.

Sources:

- Global Educate – The French Baccalauréat: https://www.globeducate.com/teaching-and-learning/respected-international
- curricula/the-french-baccal Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale- Réussir au Lycée (in French): https://www.education.gouv.fr/reussir-au-lycee/le-lycee-41642
- The Good School Guide- The French Bac Explained: https://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/international/advice/the-french-international-baccalaureate-bfi-explained
- France Education International – Upper Secondary Education: - https://www.france-education-international.fr/en/article/le-systeme-educatif-francais

7) Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR)

Key Features:

Not a qualification, but a percentile rank of a student's performance. Ranges from 0.00 to 99.95 (in increments of 0.05. Based on performance in the Higher School Certificate (HSC) or equivalent. Calculated slightly differently across Australian states. Students typically study 5-6 subjects in their final years

Typical University Requirements:

Elite universities/programmes: 95+ ATAR. Competitive programmes: 85-95 ATAR Standard entry programmes: 70-85 ATAR. Less competitive programmes: 60-70 ATAR

Sources:

- Universities Admissions Centre (UAC): https://www.uac.edu.au/future-applicants/atar
- University of Sydney – ATAR Explained: https://www.sydney.edu.au/study/help/advice/atar-explained.html
- Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre: https://www.qtac.edu.au/atar/
- Study Australia – How to Apply to Study: https://www.studyaustralia.gov.au/en/plan-your-studies/how-to-apply-to-study
- ATAR Notes National ATAR Data: https://atarnotes.com/atar-data/

8) Indian Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC)

Key Features:

Two-year programme (grades 11-12) following the Secondary School Certificate Multiple streams: Science, Commerce, Arts/Humanities. Percentile scoring system (out of 100%). Board examinations at the end of grade 12. Multiple examination boards (CBSE, ICSE, State Boards).

Typical University Requirements:

Top universities: 90%+ aggregate. Engineering/Medical colleges: 85%+ with higher requirements in specific subjects. General degree programmes: 60-75%. Specific entrance exams are often required in addition to HSC (JEE, NEET, CLAT).

Sources:

- Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE): https://www.cbse.gov.in/
- British Council- Education System in India: https://www.britishcouncil.in/sites/default/files/school_education_system_in_india_report_2019_final_web.pdf
- Edvoy-Indian Education System vs Foreign Education System: https://edvoy.com/articles/indian-education-vs-foreign-education/
- Ministry of Education - National Education Policy: https://www.education.gov.in/nep/about-nep

9) China's National College Entrance Examination (Gaokao)

Key Features:

High-stakes exam taken at the end of high school. Scored out of 750 points (varies by province). Tests Chinese, mathematics, foreign language, plus comprehensive subject tests. Provincial quotas affect university admission chances. A single exam determines university placement for most students.

Typical University Requirements:

Top-tier (985 Project) universities: Top 2-3% of scores (varies by province). Second-tier (211 Project) universities: Top 10-15% of scores for remaining universities: Varies widely by province

and university. Specific score requirements are published annually based on the test administered that year.

Sources:

- EBSCO - National College Entrance Examination (Gaokao) https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/education/national-college-entrance-examination-gaokao
- Ministry of Education of the PRC: http://en.moe.gov.cn/features/gaokao2021/
- China Admissions - University Requirements: https://www.china-admissions.com/chinese-universities/
- China Education Review - Gaokao Analysis: https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cedr20/current

B. Analysis of EiM's International Diploma Compared to Global Qualifications

After reviewing the document on EiM's International Diploma and the features of the range of other level 3 qualifications reviewed, the following areas identify the EiM ID's alignment:

1. Assessment Method Mix

Strong Alignment: The ID combines traditional academic qualifications (A-Levels) with project-based learning (EPQ), partnership-based experiences, and competency assessments.

2. Breadth vs. Depth

Strong Alignment: The credential architecture shows a balance between deep subject knowledge (3 A-Levels) and broader interdisciplinary skills (Worldwise Future Skills Profile with multiple pathways).

3. Core Components

Moderate Alignment (Scope for Strong Alignment): While the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) serves as a core component similar to IB's Extended Essay, there doesn't appear to be direct equivalents to Theory of Knowledge or CAS experiences explicitly defined. Through discussions linked to the research brief for this project it is noted that EiM is currently exploring a core focus on Systems Literacy and Digital Metaphysics. This would allow exploration of

future skills with consideration of morality and ethics of digitisation and could constitute a unique and distinctive alternative to the theory of knowledge component in IB.

4. Digital Literacy Integration

Strong Alignment: The qualification emphasises digital credentials, technology-focused pathways, and future-focused digital skills across multiple areas, appearing to go beyond what other qualifications typically offer.

5. Global Competency Framework

Strong Alignment: The Future Skills alignment gives scope to incorporate this component, but a more explicit reference is advisable given the international nature of EiM and its qualifications. This also aligns with the findings in the Future Skills Desk-based review report.

6. University Preparation Elements

Strong Alignment: The document highlights pathways like Yale STEM, Stanford AI, and other university partnerships that provide pre-university experiences. It is also clear that EiM is in the process of investigations to identify other pathways and that information from the focus groups in this research project may support this activity.

7. Industry Connections

Very Strong Alignment: Multiple industry partnerships are featured (AmplifyME, DEC, etc.) with industry-validated credentials built into the qualification.

8. Microcredentials

Very Strong Alignment: The digital wallet concept and credential architecture fully embrace the microcredential approach, allowing for personalised learning paths and learning credentials which are completed with the qualification but also have the facility to be unbundled.

9. Project-Based Assessment

Strong Alignment: The EPQ component (120 hours) and various pathway experiences incorporate project-based learning.

C. Potential Gaps for EiM to Consider Addressing:

1. Assessment Transparency: Could more information be shared with regard to the range of assessment methods for the competencies and microcredentials. Other qualifications have very clear assessment structures. This could also reference authentic assessment approaches and assessment which takes into account the role played by AI.
2. Philosophical/Ethical Component: As noted above, it would be good to continue exploring the possible incorporation of an equivalent but distinctive alternative to Theory of Knowledge. This was noted earlier, with reference to the Systems Literacy component.
3. Service Learning and Community engagement: While the EiM ID STEM student example references engagement with peers, opportunities for community-based or service learning could be strengthened or more clearly emphasised.
4. Standardisation Across Schools: The document shows different versions for different schools (Dulwich, Sherfield, HIF, Dehong). This flexibility is good, but could create challenges for consistent recognition. Has this already been given consideration? Or maybe EiM has relevant transferable experience in this area which could be emphasised more. Could you articulate how quality assurance will be implemented in this context?
5. Language Requirements: Could the role of language learning within ID be further emphasis as a core component.
6. Mathematical/Numeracy Requirements: Is there a way to more clearly emphasise the range of opportunities for numeracy development even in pathways which are less STEM focused, so that numeracy is identified as core, irrespective of the pathway that students take?

Conclusion:

Overall, EiM's International Diploma represents a highly innovative approach that successfully integrates traditional academic rigour with future-focused skills and experiences. It aligns well with the unique features of many of the different qualification options and goes beyond in key areas, particularly in industry partnerships and digital credentialing. The few gaps identified represent opportunities for further enhancement rather than significant weaknesses.

D. Appendix: Evidence Sources Table

Qualification	Typical University Requirements	Evidence Sources
A Levels (UK & Int'l)	Top: AAA–ABB Mid-tier: BBB–CCC Foundation: CDD–DDE	UCAS Tariff Guide: https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/entry-requirements/ucas-tariff-points UCAS A-Level Overview: https://www.ucas.com/further-education/post-16-qualifications/qualifications-you-can-take/levels Russell Group Informed Choices: https://www.informedchoices.ac.uk/ Ofqual Regulator: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual WhatUni A-Level Guide: https://www.whatuni.com/advice/guides/the-ultimate-guide-to-choosing-your-a-levels/57528/
IB Diploma	Top: 38–42+ Mid-tier: 32–36 Pass: 24	IB Diploma Overview: https://www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/ IB University Recognition: https://www.ibo.org/university-admission/ IB Annual Review: https://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/facts-and-figures/ib-annual-review/
BTEC Level 3	Top: DDD–DMM Mid-tier: MMM–MPP	Pearson BTEC Overview: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/about-us/qualification-brands/btec.html UCAS BTEC Info: https://www.ucas.com/further-education/post-16-qualifications/qualifications-you-can-take/btec-diplomas Student Room BTEC Guide: https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/btec/ WhatUni BTEC Guide: https://www.whatuni.com/advice/applying-to-uni/are-btecs-as-valuable-as-a-levels/48605/
APs (USA)	Competitive: 4–5 in subject General Credit: 3+	AP Overview - College Board: https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/what-is-ap AP Credit & Placement: https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/explore-careers/get-started/ap-credit-and-placement-and-ap-score-sends AP Score Reports: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-course-audit/about
Abitur (Germany)	Top: 1.0–1.3 Mid-tier: 1.7–2.5 Lower: 2.5–3.5	DAAD Entry Requirements: https://www.daad.de/en/study-and-research-in-germany/plan-your-studies/requirements/ KMK German Education System: https://www.kmk.org/kmk/information-in-english.html Studying in Germany: https://www.studying-in-germany.org/german-abitur/

French Baccalauréat	Selective: 14+ Competitive: 12+ Pass: 10	Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale: https://www.education.gouv.fr/reussir-au-lycee/le-lycee-41642 Good Schools Guide – French Bac: https://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/international/advice/the-french-international-baccalaureate-bfi-explained France Éducation International: https://www.france-education-international.fr/en/article/le-systeme-educatif-francais
ATAR (Australia)	Top: 95+ Competitive: 85–95 Standard: 70–85 Lower: 60–70	UAC – ATAR Explained: https://www.uac.edu.au/future-applicants/atar Study Australia Guide: https://www.studyaustralia.gov.au/en/plan-your-studies/how-to-apply-to-study ATAR Notes National Data: https://atarnotes.com/atar-data/
Indian HSC	Top: 90%+ Engineering/Med: 85%+ General: 60–75%	CBSE Official: https://www.cbse.gov.in/ British Council India Report (PDF): https://www.britishcouncil.in/sites/default/files/school_education_system_in_india_report_2019_final_web.pdf Edvoy Indian Education Overview: https://edvoy.com/articles/indian-education-vs-foreign-education/
Gaokao (China)	985 Universities: Top 2–3% 211 Universities: Top 10–15% Others: Varies	EBSCO Gaokao Overview: https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/education/national-college-entrance-examination-gaokao China Admissions: https://www.china-admissions.com/study-in-china-guide-for-international-students/ MOE China: http://en.moe.gov.cn/features/gaokao2021/

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