

# Teaching Academic Honesty and Ethical Standards<sup>1</sup>

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The considerations presented in this paper refer to the idea of developing academic honesty and introducing ethical standards in research among high school students of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. The mission of the International Baccalaureate Organization is to form a better world through education. One of the ways to achieve this is to create international educational programmes that include the development of a respectful, principled and caring attitude among their students. Teaching about academic honesty and ethical standards in research as well as introducing these principles in everyday school life is the best way to put these rules into practice. In the following paper, the regulations of the International Baccalaureate on academic honesty in general and ethical guidance for psychology in particular will be presented, followed by examples of good practice from one of the IB schools, the Międzynarodowe Liceum Paderewski in Lublin, Poland.

**KEYWORDS:** academic honesty, ethical standards in psychology research, International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB DP), Międzynarodowe Liceum Paderewski [Paderewski International High School], scientific reliability.

## Introduction

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Organization is a non-profit foundation established in Geneva in 1968 motivated by its mission to create a better world through education (see: International Baccalaureate, 2014b for the official IB *Mission Statement*). This idea can be introduced into life by establishing a global network of schools, teaching in accordance with the same curriculum, with a focus on developing young individuals not only intellectually but also personally. In addition to offering a wide range of subjects corresponding to a variety of students' interests, the IB aims to develop particular attitudes among its adepts expressed in the IB Learner Profile. The profile consists of a list of features and attributes, such as being inquiring, knowledgeable and caring. Developing such characteristics among

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on the experience of teaching research in the field of psychology in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme and references examples of good practices from the Międzynarodowe Liceum Paderewski [Paderewski International High School] in Lublin, Poland.

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young people should help in creating a better and more peaceful community through intercultural understanding and respect. The IB programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right (International Baccalaureate, 2015a).

The IB Learner Profile “describes a broad range of human capacities and responsibilities that go beyond academic success” (see: International Baccalaureate, 2014a for the *IB Learner Profile*). It includes ten characteristics that an individual will be developing through the curriculum, among which are several directly relevant to scientific reliability and ethicality. These are “principled” and “caring” (International Baccalaureate, 2010). According to the IB Learner Profile, being principled means that students are expected to act with integrity and honesty as well as with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of individuals, groups and communities. It also means that students are obligated to take responsibility for their own actions and the consequences that accompany them (International Baccalaureate, 2010). Such attitudes are linked to behaviours that can be referred to as scientific reliability and academic honesty. Principled students are expected to respect others and their intellectual contribution to science as well as to use sources and scientific data responsibly and honestly.

Another characteristic IB students should develop is to be caring. This means that young people are encouraged to show empathy, compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others (International Baccalaureate, 2010). On the academic level, these attitudes lead to the behaviours of following ethical guidance in research or any other interaction with people that contributes to gathering data.

Emphasising the importance of these features and organising the curriculum in order to develop them in young individuals demonstrate how important academic honesty, reliability and ethicality in conducting research are in International Baccalaureate educational programmes. In the following paper, strategies for developing awareness of the issues relating to academic honesty promoted by IBO and applied by one of the IB World Schools in Poland will be presented. In the second part of this article, the authors discuss the ethical guidance in psychology research recommended by IBO and describe how these principles could be applied in teaching IB psychology in high school. All examples used in the text are from the good practices developed in the Międzynarodowe Liceum Ogólnokształcące Paderewski in Lublin, Poland, which has been one of the IB schools since 1999, the first to be authorised to offer the IB Diploma Programme devoted to high schools. In later years, the school was also authorised to offer the IB Middle Years Programme<sup>2</sup> and Primary Years Programme<sup>3</sup> for lower secondary school and primary school respectively.

### **Teaching Academic Honesty in the IB Diploma Programme**

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB DP) upholds the principles of academic honesty, which are seen as a set of norms, values and skills promoting personal integrity and good practice in teaching, learning and assessment (Garza, 2014). This attitude should be taught by the whole school community and its development should be carefully supported throughout students’ education (International Baccalaureate, 2014c). According to IBO, this should be one of the schools’ priorities and it is expected that each IB School will

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<sup>2</sup> Since 2001

<sup>3</sup> Since 2019

prepare and regularly review internal academic honesty policies following the IB rules and regulations in this area.

Academic honesty in the Diploma Programme is particularly important, as students preparing for university take responsibility for their own behavior in this by studying a course that emphasises independence and self-reliance. This is the time in their educational career where the pressure to perform well in summative assessment tasks, work overload and stress relating to university admissions is reinforced by educational systems that reward the final results. All of this as well as the complexity of educational requirements can raise issues of academic misconduct (Caroll, 2012). Because of this, teaching and learning in the Diploma Programme has to encourage positive behaviours among the students, as they need to demonstrate beyond a doubt that they have completed their work honestly and independently. This requires employing explicit completion requirements with regard to being transparent about the use of ideas and the work of others, such as properly prepared in-text citations and reference lists (bibliography) in all submitted essays, reports, presentations, etc. (Caroll, 2012).

In addition to this very specific argument for implementing academic honesty practice in high school education, IB also formulates a more general justification for such a strong focus on scientific reliability. According to Dr. Celina Garza, who is the IB Academic Honesty Manager in the IB Assessment Centre in Cardiff, it is important to promote academic honesty, as the lack of such integrity undermines the philosophy of any educational programme (Garza, 2014). This is particularly important today, in the age of the Internet, when the boundaries of intellectual property are often blurred and students are unclear about who owns the information available from web sites. Moreover, breaching the regulations of academic work could lead to misconduct in the conventions of other fields. Finally, when students engage in academic misconduct they miss the opportunity to learn and develop new skills or practice those already acquired. This argument is not only logically driven but also supported by replicated empirical data. The results of studies with samples of IB DP students have demonstrated that those who score higher on straightforwardness as a personality feature have significantly higher scores on their final IB exams in comparison to fellow students who score lower on that trait (Błaszczak, in revision). This observation is interpreted as the consequence of the actual development of necessary skills among straightforward students who just work hard on their assignments without looking for other, unfair solutions.

### **The Academic Honesty Policy in the IB Diploma Programme at Międzynarodowe Liceum Paderewski in Lublin, Poland**

The International Baccalaureate expects every authorised IB World School to develop an internal academic honesty policy. Such a document should obviously follow IB regulations (International Baccalaureate, 2014d) but also precisely describe the rights and responsibilities of all members of the school community in regard to academic honesty issues. The Academic Honesty Policy at Międzynarodowe Liceum Paderewski defines all school procedures concerning the authenticity of students' work, using other people's work, referencing or citations, and ensures that these practices are transparent, fair and consistent.

The Academic Honesty Policy at Międzynarodowe Liceum Paderewski (Błaszczak, Bojczuk and Kalbarczyk, 2017) starts with an explanation of the school's philosophy. It emphasises the importance of academic honesty as an integral part of learning and teaching based on inquiry and reflection. Moreover, it is clearly stated that all members of the school community:

students, teachers, administration and parents are expected to respect and follow academic honesty rules. This document also defines the roles and responsibilities of different individuals taking part in the learning process. The school IB DP Coordinator and school leaders are obligated to establish processes and procedures that support academic honesty, such as: recognising the regulations and instructions provided by the IB concerning the examination session, internal and external assessment tasks; informing staff and students through various media how misconduct can be prevented; establishing a school culture that actively encourages academic honesty; supporting both the school community and IB in the detection and investigation of misconduct (Błaszczak et al., 2017). The main role of teachers is to encourage practices and teach relevant research skills as well as to serve as positive role models for academic honesty issues. This responsibility can be fulfilled by providing instructions and guidelines to students in the research and writing process, teaching relevant referencing styles and monitoring the work of groups to support collaboration but prevent collusion (Błaszczak et al., 2017). The main responsibility of the students is to ensure that their work is authentic and that the work or ideas of others are fully and correctly acknowledged by proper referencing (International Baccalaureate, 2014c).

The Academic Honesty Policy at Międzynarodowe Liceum Paderewski (Błaszczak et al., 2017) strictly defines academic honesty and misconduct together with several examples of misconduct: plagiarism, collusion, duplication or any breaches of the examination procedure. This document also establishes the procedures undertaken to ensure academic honesty in the school context, such as using different kinds of software to investigate misconduct, but also gathering students and teacher declarations confirming the authenticity of each work submitted by every diploma candidate. Moreover, the policy describes the procedures of reporting and recording misconduct as well as the consequences of violating academic honesty rules (Błaszczak et al., 2017).

### **Międzynarodowe Liceum Paderewski strategies to support academic honesty and avoid misconduct**

The Międzynarodowe Liceum Paderewski within its Academic Honesty Policy (Błaszczak et al., 2017) provides a list of good practices that should be followed to support desirable and responsible behaviours. In addition to affirming academic honesty as a value, all the rules should be directly communicated to the students, teachers and administration staff via media and posted in classrooms and other prominent areas. Teachers are obliged to stress the importance of academic honesty within the class setting and instruct students on referencing and research reliability. Particular examples of such good practices will be presented below.

#### **Teaching academic honesty rules during classes**

The process of communicating academic honesty rules can occur in multiple ways. First of all, each student of a pre-IB class attends required classes called “Introduction to the IB” as part of the curriculum in Międzynarodowe Liceum Paderewski in addition to traditional subjects. During these classes, students become familiar with IB rules and requirements in order to gain a deeper understanding of what the IB DP is before they enter the programme. Academic honesty rules and responsibilities are carefully presented and explained to students during these lessons. Since the beginning of the very first school year, the Academic Honesty Policy has been available to students and their parents as one of the school’s documents that

they should acknowledge and follow. Some time is devoted to consider past cases that have given rise to doubts about academic honesty in order to assess whether it was misconduct or not. Such exercises are important, as they give students a deeper understanding of the merits of the academic honesty standards but also enable them to become familiar with the procedures and the consequences of each example. Much attention is given to the distinction between collaboration and collusion, as during the diploma programme, students often perform group projects but have to write their own individual reports later on. Additionally, during these classes, students prepare essays on a chosen topic, which is later checked by a plagiarism detection tool. This provides a great opportunity to practise knowledge and skills about reliable research and the writing process.

Similar procedures are used during regular subject classes within the IB DP. Teachers remind students about the importance of academic honesty at the beginning of each school year. Several subject-specific scenarios relating to academic honesty issues are discussed. Once the issues are presented, both students and teachers are responsible for monitoring the authenticity of the work submitted for assessment as well as the proper behaviour during all forms of testing.

### **Teaching the proper use of sources and referencing**

One of the main responsibilities of teachers in developing an honest and reliable academic attitude among its students is to teach them the proper use of sources as well as the referencing style recommended by IBO<sup>4</sup> (International Baccalaureate, 2014e). Despite their recommendation, the IBO has left the decision about the selection of a particular referencing style to the schools (Garza, 2014). The main point is to select the one most commonly used in the subject area and teach its consistent application throughout all of the work. Teachers are then obligated to monitor the development of these skills. This process starts during the pre-DP year and is continuously practised when students enter the Diploma Programme. It is an important skill because referencing and the responsible use of sources is also marked as part of several internal and external assessment assignments, which affects students' final grade (International Baccalaureate, 2014d).

### **Using digital software to monitor the authenticity of students' work and prevent misconduct**

Międzynarodowe Liceum Paderewski uses two main kinds of software to verify the originality of the work submitted for assessment. The first one, ManageBac, works indirectly as a tool for monitoring students' progress. It allows current assessment assignments to be uploaded according to an internal school calendar. In the case of work requiring greater engagement or assignments that are a part of examination components, this process is divided into parts. Let us consider the example of an extended essay, which is a 4000-word research paper developed by the students on an individually chosen topic. Writing the essay is preceded by an independent investigation in which students strive to answer their own research question stated at the beginning of the research. This process has several stages: submission of the extended essay proposal, topic and literature review, outline, introduction and the first 1000 words of the essay, first draft of the complete essay and final version. All these stages are managed with the use of ManageBac, where students have their individual tabs and working

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<sup>4</sup> The styles recommended by IBO are those commonly used in the academic world and include MLA, APA, Harvard, Chicago/Turabian, CSE, ISO.

space carefully monitored by the IB Coordinator and the supervising teacher. Using this tool allows students' performance to be followed and improvements to be observed, as well as the logical continuation in the subsequent parts of the assignment. This usually guarantees the authenticity of a student's work and his/her engagement.

Another commonly applied software program is TurnItIn. This tool allows the work submitted by the students to be compared to all websites available in the internet but also to many scientific libraries and other school databases. TurnItIn analyses the authenticity of the submitted works by referring them to any other available sources and calculating a similarity index. Additionally, it allows for a careful analysis of any similarities found and compares them to the original works. This is the basis for the teacher's assessment of originality, which is always preceded by a careful investigation. In some areas, this index could be very high, as the system may have marked all phrases repeated somewhere else, but this does not always mean that the work is an example of misconduct. A decision about originality is always made after the teacher's review.

### **Planning the process of preparing internal and external assessment assignments**

As mentioned above, all works requiring a greater amount of time are prepared in stages. These stages help students in managing the assignment but also allow teachers to monitor the development of the work, see logical and coherent changes and observe the whole process. In comparison to seeing only the final version, this makes the teacher confident about the authenticity of the student's work. However, this is not the only tool used.

### **Student and teacher authenticity pledge**

Last but not least, another way to ensure that academic honesty rules and practices are observed is asking students to write out the following honor pledge on all major academic work: "I declare that I have neither given nor received any help or unfair advantage on this test/ or on this work which I now submit." (Błaszczak et al., 2017). This serves not only as a kind of final reminder of the academic honesty principles, but it also emphasises the importance of a student's individual responsibility for what he/she submits. A similar declaration is given by the teachers who supervise a particular piece of work after the whole process of preparation, researching and writing was monitored and the originality was verified by TurnItIn. In accordance with IB's Academic Honesty Policy, teachers declare "To the best of my knowledge, the material submitted is the authentic work of the candidate" (Błaszczak et al., 2017).

## **Teaching Ethical Standards in IB Diploma Programme Psychology**

Psychology is one of the subjects offered by the school in the group of social sciences<sup>5</sup> taught in IB DP. Ethical standards are highly emphasised both in the process of teaching psychology and psychology research as well as in the process of having students conduct their own experiments that serve as the basis for their internal assessment<sup>6</sup>. During the classes, students learn about the ethical demands of conducting psychology research on humans and animals. Such standards as informed consent, the right to withdraw, participant integrity, anonymity and

<sup>5</sup> Group 3 is formally called Individuals and Societies and in addition to psychology, includes geography, history, information technology, economics, among others.

<sup>6</sup> The internal assessment in psychology is an empirical report developed in order to describe and evaluate a prepared experimental investigation. This task constitutes one of the components of the final grade in psychology.



confidentiality, deception and debriefing are explained and their importance is discussed. Students learn how to consider ethical issues in reference to classic psychology studies. They also have to evaluate past studies in light of the ethical considerations they generate. Additionally, by learning about the ethical issues that are one of the topics to be covered before final exams, students develop an ethical awareness of research and gain an understanding of a researcher's responsibilities. This serves later on as a guideline in having students conduct their own investigation with human participants, which is a requirement in the process of preparing the internal assessment in psychology (serving as a component of the final grade from this subject on the IB Diploma).

### **Teaching ethical standards in psychology research in IB DP psychology classes**

Psychology is one of the social sciences offered in the IB Diploma Programme. Students who choose this subject take regular classes to prepare for the final exams and receive a grade on their IB Diploma. Topics covered during the lessons refer to biological, cognitive and sociocultural approaches but also to some areas of applied psychology, such as abnormality or human relationships. There is also a separate part devoted to research methods and the internal assessment. Teaching about ethical issues is implemented in all of these topics (see: International Baccalaureate, 2014g for more details about IB DP psychology and the curriculum). Ethical problems in biological, cognitive and sociocultural research are discussed. Similarly, ethics is included in the topics relating to abnormal psychology. Students consider ethical issues in studies undertaken with the participation of mentally ill people. Ethical problems in diagnosis are also discussed. Additionally, within the human relationships part of the curriculum, ethics is implemented by discussing the moral dilemmas in studies on social influence, altruism, attractiveness, group dynamics, prejudices, discrimination and conflicts (International Baccalaureate, 2014g). The module devoted to research methodology also requires teaching and learning about ethical issues.

Students take part in regular classes devoted to ethical standards in psychology research starting from being presented with just the set of norms. Rules are carefully explained together with the reasons for applying them and their origin. Later, different scenarios are presented and discussed with the students in order to show examples of when and how ethical problems in research can appear. This is an opportunity for students to develop a deeper awareness of these issues.

A great amount of time is devoted to discussing participants' integrity standard. In general, students know that in order to be ethical, a study must not harm anyone. However, at the same time, they have a very limited idea about how harm can be defined. The responsibility of a teacher is to explain that harm can manifest itself in different ways, not only physically. Examples of the different kinds of harm discussed in class include: hurt, injury, rejection, tension, torment, teasing, torture, traumatization, impairment, wounding, mistreatment, punishment, maltreatment, misuse, abuse, molestation, damage, or an adverse effect (International Baccalaureate, 2014g).

The next step in teaching about ethical standards in psychology class is to discuss the classic studies with regard to the ethical doubts they raise. Students are able to apply theoretical knowledge about the rules to assess particular studies. They look for examples of the proper application of ethical guidelines as well as for breaches of regulations. Moreover, they try to find justification for why some rules were eventually violated and whether there was

any reason for doing so. This enables them to develop an even deeper understanding of the ethical issues in psychology research, readying them to apply ethical guidelines in their own psychology studies conducted as an internal assessment assignment.

### **Implementing ethical standards in psychology research in the IB DP psychology internal assessment**

The International Baccalaureate clearly defines the rules and obligations of young researchers undertaking their psychology investigation required for their internal assessment in psychology and conducting an experiment on human participants. The ethical guidelines for human research published on the official IBO website establish the rules that should be followed in an IB approved psychology study (International Baccalaureate, 2014f). Experiments that induce stress, anxiety, pain or any kind of discomfort for participants are forbidden, as well as those relating to such social phenomena as conformity or obedience. Similarly, studies that involve unjustified deception, involuntary participation or invasion of privacy are not permitted. However, partial deception may be allowed for some experiments when revealing the real purpose of the study would lead to biases due to reactivity or demand characteristics.

Moreover consent must be explicitly gained from participants. This means providing the necessary information about the aims (if possible while maintaining the high reliability of data) and objectives of the study. The right to withdraw at any stage of the investigation has to be guaranteed. In the case of younger individuals, parental permission is required to participate in the study (International Baccalaureate, 2014f).

Monitoring compliance with the recommended standards is the obligation of the author of the research as well as of the teacher supervising the student's investigation. However, examiners are also sensitive to detect any breaches of the ethical guidelines and report them to the IBO Assessment Centre. If a case like this happens at the school for the first time, the school will be warned to pay greater attention to ethical standards, but if such a situation is repeated in the next session, diploma candidates will be penalized.

During regular classes, students participate in the process of acquiring in-depth knowledge and understanding of ethical problems. This prepares them for conducting their own research with human participants. Preparing, conducting and reporting an experiment is an internal assessment assignment that constitutes one of the components of the final grade in psychology, which makes it a significant challenge that has to be properly completed.

Consideration of the ethical issues in planning the study already starts when the students submit their internal assessment proposal. In this very first stage, students develop the concept of their own investigation. Proposals include information about the aim of the study and the basic ideas about who will be investigated and how. In this initial phase, the authors have to reflect on the possible ethical issues that should be addressed. Most of them recognise the necessity of informed consent and anonymity. Significant attention is also given to participants' integrity standard and students consider whether the study they are planning could have any negative impact on the participants. Any offensive content or manipulation that may cause distress is not allowed. When any ethical doubts appear at the very beginning of the planning process, the concept of the study is either significantly changed or another idea is considered.

Furthermore, compliance with the ethical guidelines is also monitored during the process of preparing and conducting the study. When developing the necessary materials, students



prepare informed consent forms, which include all the details regarding the aim and experimental procedure that could affect the willingness of a person to participate. Before the study, participants are formally asked to sign the consent form. Anonymity, confidentiality and the right to withdraw are guaranteed. During and after the study, compliance with the ethical standards is monitored, focusing on participants' mental state and wellbeing as well as their anonymity and confidentiality. After the study, a debriefing session is held to explain and justify any deception applied (if it was used) and provide feedback about the results. Finally, participants are thanked and their participation is formally ended.

Writing the report is the final stage of the internal assessment assignment. Here, ethical standards are implemented as well. Reporting findings raises the issue of anonymity and students carefully present gathered data paying attention to ensure that no personal data is revealed that could lead to the identification of participants. This is usually achieved by presenting aggregated results and anonymised tables with the raw data. As the final version of the report is assessed by the teacher, he/she not only supervises the whole process, but also verifies whether all ethical standards were followed at the end.

### Conclusions

The International Baccalaureate emphasises issues relating to academic honesty, scientific reliability and ethical standards. Educational programmes certificated by the IB and taught in different IB schools around the globe implement these important issues in their everyday classes and strive to develop principled, caring and responsible young individuals. It seems that this approach could serve as an example of the holistic development of students for all national curricula. Moreover, by focusing on these aspects as well as delivering challenging subject curricula, the IB prepares young adepts for further scientific development. It gives them not only knowledge in a particular field, but also an awareness of the importance of scientific integrity and the moral aspects of gathering and using data.

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