

INTERPARENTS

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– THE ASSOCIATION OF THE PARENTS' ASSOCIATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS –

I. Introduction

After sixty years of experience, the model of the European Schools remains a unique opportunity to build citizens who, without ceasing to look at their countries of origin with love and pride, become Europeans in spirit.¹ These values have been reconfirmed by the preamble of the staff regulations that will enter into force on 1 January 2014, requiring that multilingual and multicultural education be supported for all children of the staff of the European institutions.

The high academic standards and quality of the European Schools are widely recognised. Students must study ten or eleven subjects to succeed in the European Baccalaureate and are required to study their own language and at least one foreign language to a high level.

The European Baccalaureate entitles admission to any university in the territory of any member state on the same terms as nationals of that member state with equivalent qualifications. To safeguard this entitlement, the secondary cycle structure should accommodate the peculiarities of national university admission requirements in the various member states. This necessitates a flexible system enabling students to make the appropriate choices.

The European Baccalaureate (EB) has a very good external reputation. The Department for Education (UK) published in July 2013 the document "The European Baccalaureate (Information for admissions officers of universities and other higher education institutions)", which summarises the key elements of the EB. In this document the following positive aspects of the EB are highlighted:

1. A broad curriculum is followed throughout the secondary phase;
2. For degree courses in universities not requiring any specific subject knowledge on entry, the breadth of the EB should be seen as an advantage
3. EB is a demanding examination, but despite the large compulsory element in the EB, students are able to build up a programme which reflects their particular interests and strengths;
4. The close scrutiny of the examining board guarantees the high level and quality of the EB;
5. Students have an excellent working knowledge of languages and a unique multicultural outlook;
6. The exceptionally high pass rate at EB (98%) reflects the fact that any student sitting the final examination has already been through a rigorous annual monitoring procedure after joining the system.

¹ Jean Monnet (1953)

7. Excellent PISA 2009 assessment results puts ES Culham in the top 10% of UK schools

In our reflection on the secondary cycle we should build on these positive elements and reinforce them, by

- keeping the 2 periods options which ensure the breadth of the curriculum and the flexibility to adapt to the different national educational systems
- offering a wide combination of optional high level (4 period) courses in order to meet the university requirements
- teaching several languages.

II. Philosophy and objective of the European Schools

It is impossible to reform the structure of the secondary cycle without a clear view of the underlying philosophy and objectives of the European Schools.

The European School system is first of all a comprehensive system granting admission to all students. It therefore must optimise the educational outcomes for all students, taking into account differing levels of ability and different areas of strength. It is not, and should not be thought of, as an elite school system, as this implies that attention is focused on the brightest students to the detriment of others. All students have the right to be educated through to 18 years of age in a manner that allows them to achieve to the best of their abilities.

The European School system offers a general qualification; it is not a specialist school, as is sometimes quoted. Consequently, it should allow students to make a certain distinction of subjects that reflect their own individual strengths while maintaining a general education through to the European Baccalaureate. Thus it should offer a balanced combination of subjects across a wide curriculum.

The European Schools' mission is to provide mother-tongue education for students whose parents may be required to change their place of work or return to their country of origin. To this end, the system should enable pupils to study a broad range of subjects (particularly the sciences) in their mother tongue with qualified teachers.

We must safeguard the best features of the current "generalist" approach, an approach which has thus far been one of the great advantages of the European School system.

IV. Our proposal for S6-S7

This proposal is based in the following principles:

- To fully respect the current European Baccalaureate rules;
- To build on the experience and offer all subject combinations that were chosen by the majority of students in the last few years across the European schools
- To continue to grant wide choice of 4 period option subjects to students within the possibilities offered by the timetable while respecting the rules on compulsory subjects and on the minimum and maximum numbers of periods (29 to 35 hours);
- To maintain two-period subjects, thus maintaining the flexibility and adaptability of the system and the broad educational offer;
- To maintain laboratory courses.

- To provide religion/ethics as an optional course without exam;
- To make L3 and L4 and ONL available for most students;
- To introduce a cross-curricular project (CROSS) (contingent upon a clear explication of the proposed teaching and evaluation methodology);
- ICT and Sociology (SOC) would be new options (currently Sociology is already offered as a complementary course). This would restore the balance between science and humanities subjects.

This proposal offers a **reasonable rationalisation** of the existing options as it was requested by the Board of Governors, maintaining the flexibility of the educational offer.

Proposed educational offer for **S6-S7***

1				L1			COMMON CORE
2				L1			
3				L1			
4				L1			
5				L2			
6				L2			
7				L2			
8				PE			
9				PE			
C	CROSS						
10	MAT 5			MAT 3			
11	MAT 5			MAT 3			
12	MAT 5			MAT 3			
13	MAT 5						
14	MAT 5						
15	HIS 2						ADD-ON
16	HIS 2						
17	PHIL 2			REL			
18	PHIL 2			REL			
19	BIO 2			GEO 2			
20	BIO 2			GEO 2			
21	CHE	GEO 4		PHIL 4		ART	
22	CHE	GEO 4		PHIL 4		ART	
23	CHE	GEO 4		PHIL 4		ART	
24	CHE	GEO 4		PHIL 4		ART	
25	BIO 4	HIS 4		MUS		ICT	
26	BIO 4	HIS 4		MUS		ICT	
27	BIO 4	HIS 4		MUS		ICT	
28	BIO 4	HIS 4		MUS		ICT	
29	PHY	ECO		SOC		LAT	
30	PHY	ECO		SOC		LAT	
31	PHY	ECO		SOC		LAT	
32	PHY	ECO		SOC		LAT	
33	GRE			L3			OPTIONS & ADVANCED
34	GRE			L3			
35	GRE			L3			
36	GRE			L3			
37	MAT+	L1+	L2+	ONL	L4	LAB	
38	MAT+	L1+	L2+	ONL	L4	LAB	
39	MAT+	L1+	L2+	ONL	L4		
40				ONL	L4		

*See Annex 1 for Glossary

Rules to be applied:

Minimum 29 and maximum 35 periods can be taken.

Subjects in the common core and add-on are obligatory with the following exceptions:

- HIS2 is compulsory if HIS4 not taken.
- BIO2 is compulsory for those students not choosing PHY, BIO4, CHE or ICT
- GEO2 is compulsory for those students not choosing GEO4, HIS4, PHIL4, ECO or SOC.
- 2 period and 4 period options of the same subject cannot be taken together

Schools should integrate CROSS in to the timetable according the existing infrastructure and teaching capacities. The subject is foreseen to be thought as a 3 month module.

As an option, in S7 the CROSS could include extra-curriculum subjects necessary to ensure the admission to a national university.

The timetable could be modified or adapted by directors taking into account the local needs of the students if the organisation of the school so enables.

The students normally would take at least two, but not more than four 4 period options.

Tuition language: no changes to the existing rules are necessary. Sociology and ICT will be offered in L2.

Conclusion:

A preliminary estimation completed by the parents association of one of the European Schools suggests that, as a result of the rationalisation of the complementary and religion courses and of the introduction of the cross-curricular project in S6, this proposal could lead to cost savings of around 477,000 EUR per year.

However, any cost savings achieved through the reform of the secondary cycle should be put in perspective. A preliminary analysis done by the parents association suggests that the annual cost savings achieved through the creation in Brussels of a single Lycée for S6 and S7 would be around 3.7 million euros per year.

Any reform to the structure of studies at the European Schools should be accompanied by an appropriate **impact assessment** which analyses both the financial, pedagogical and social consequences of the reform. The impact assessment should include an analysis of the ramifications of teaching subjects in L3 and HCL. Parents, teachers and students should be involved as members of the steering group of the impact assessment and the analysis should include several alternatives, as Interparents proposal.

Any reform should be introduced gradually, giving students the possibility to modify their language choices, level of mathematics, etc. and families time to reconsider their commitment to the European Schools.

Annex 1

Glossary

L1	Language 1
L2	Language 2
L3	Language 3
L4	Language 4
EP	Physical education
CROSS	Cross curricular project
MAT	Mathematics
HIS	History
PHIL	Philosophy
BIO	Biology
REL	Religion
GEO	Geography
CHE	Chemistry
ART	Art
MUS	Music
PHY	Physics
ECO	Economy
SOC	Sociology
LAT	Latin
GRE	Ancient Greek
MAT+	Advanced Mathematics
L1+	Advanced Language 1
L2+	Advanced Language 2
ONL	Other national language
LAB	Laboratory work