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GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Model United Nations (MUN)

What is global engagement?

Since its inception, the International Baccalaureate (IB) has worked with schools, governments and international organizations to help create internationally minded young people who can work together to make a better and more peaceful world. International-mindedness is fundamental to the ethos and philosophy of an IB education, focusing on the development of multilingualism, intercultural understanding and global engagement in all dimensions of educational processes and school life. Global engagement includes taking responsible action to educate yourself, inform others, advocate for change and undertake service with the community. Action can span a range of activities in which young people gain experience, knowledge, and understanding of themselves, each other and the world beyond the classroom. Active engagement inspires an education without borders that reaches cultures and nations, overcoming stereotypes and prejudices that can separate people and create conflict.

Engaging with global issues can raise students' self esteem, confidence, and belief in their own efficacy for creating positive change. Global engagement creates opportunities for students to practise skills in research, public speaking, teamwork, negotiation, and writing within a safe and structured environment. By being globally engaged, students can develop multiliteracies, expand their understanding of language and culture, and build the competencies they need in order to make ethical decisions, solve problems and manage conflict.

How do MUN events help students become more globally engaged?

MUN is an academic replication of the United Nations that aims to educate youth participants about current events, and engage them in the topics of the United Nations agenda. The participants play the role of diplomats representing a country or non-governmental organization (NGO) in a simulated session of a committee of the United Nations, such as the Security Council, the General Assembly or any of its multilateral institutions/divisions. It is a place where students can debate global governance and current issues. There are also multiple opportunities for students to develop leadership experience. Anything from leading the building of a coalition or chairing a committee, up to managing the conference as a whole.



O-MUN (Online Model United Nations)

Online Model United Nations (or O-MUN) is a growing community of globally connected and engaged young people working together to develop a unique online debating platform, open to any high school student with internet connection and a desire to collaborate and discuss the world's most pressing issues. O-MUN is also open to middle years students through the Junior O-MUN programme.



How does MUN connect with IB programmes ?

The learner profile is the IB mission statement in action and promotes the development of international-mindedness, which is central to the continuum of IB programmes. The attributes of the learner profile are important in the MUN experience, which allows participants to develop and deepen their conceptual understanding and knowledge about global issues and skills for international-mindedness, and gives them an opportunity to work together.

Preparation for MUN involvement starts with the Primary Years Programme (PYP). The PYP prepares students for global engagement through inquiry into rights and responsibilities in the struggle to share finite resources with other people and with other living things; exploring communities and the relationships within and between them; access to equal opportunities; studying peace and conflict resolution to make connections from their own experience to global issues.

In the PYP, there is an explicit expectation that successful inquiry will lead to responsible action that is initiated by the student as a result of the learning process. Young children often express strong feelings about fairness and justice, and teachers can facilitate positive expressions of these opinions. Effective action includes demonstrating a sense of responsibility and respect for self, others and the environment. Action in the PYP can involve service in the widest sense of the word: service to fellow students, and to the larger community, both in and outside the school. Through service, students are able to grow both personally and socially, developing skills such as cooperation, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and creative and critical thinking.

The Middle Years Programme (MYP) offers students many opportunities to build background knowledge and personal skills that support junior or middle school MUN programmes. MYP **key concepts** like **change, communities, culture, global interactions, identity, logic, perspective, relationships,** and **systems** provide a rich mix of ideas that can inform MUN activities. Students' experience with teaching and learning in the MYP features engagement with six important **global contexts** and structures **inquiry** through the kinds of factual, conceptual and debatable questions around which MUN events are centred.

Like all IB programmes, the MYP builds **approaches to learning (ATL) skills**. MYP ATL categories can help to structure students' growth in skills that they will need for MUN events: **communication, collaboration, organization, affective, media literacy, critical and creative thinking,** and **transfer**. These ATLs help students to take responsibility and develop as responsible members of local and global communities.

How do MUN activities fit in with the challenging demands of the DP?

Diploma Programme (DP) subjects in the individuals and societies subject group help to build students' understanding of the concepts and historical, social and economic contexts that underlie some of the world's most important challenges. MUN activities are especially relevant in DP global politics, a course that helps students learn how to appreciate the complex nature of political issues at various levels of society and how these can be approached from multiple points of view. In global politics, students explore concepts like power, liberty and equality, different conceptions of which often explain why countries and actors would disagree on topics such as those debated at MUN events. Students complete core units in sovereignty and international relations, human rights, development, and peace and conflict, and their understanding of these debates in global politics informs and strengthens participation in MUN events. Students can use their study of political issues embedded in MUN activities as the starting point for their engagement activity to complete the required internal assessment for DP global politics.

All DP students can access the world studies extended essay (WSEE), an in-depth interdisciplinary study of an issue of global significance. The WSEE prompts the student to connect local phenomena within a larger global framework focusing on six themes: science, technology and society; equality and inequality; culture, identity and language; conflict, peace and security; environment and/or economic sustainability; health and development. Many MUN committees, councils, commissions, courts and summit addresses are organized around similar issues.

For some students, participating in and leading MUN activities can be an important platform for developing effective written and spoken communication skills that transfer to a variety of academic contexts in the DP. MUN events can also provide a context in which to achieve creativity, action, service (CAS) learning outcomes:

- increasing awareness of strengths and areas for growth
- undertaking new challenges
- planning and initiating activities
- working collaboratively with others
- showing perseverance and commitment
- engaging with issues of global importance
- considering ethical implications
- developing new skills.



DUBAI INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY MUN PROGRAMME

Background

- Dubai International Academy (DIA) opened in 2005 with over 500 students from 55 countries and an equally diverse faculty of over 50 members of 18 different nationalities. In September 2013 they welcomed more than 1,900 students from 78 nationalities and over 250 staff members representing 42 countries.
- MUN is a fundamental aspect of DIA's ethos. Founded in 2008, the programme is an entirely student-led initiative with some teacher support in administrative areas. There are **two** central components to the MUN programme:

Dubai International Academy Model United Nations (DIAMUN): with 800 participants, DIAMUN is a large annual MUN conference involving participants from local and international schools. DIAMUN is completely organized by DIA and its students. It hosts eight committees, which are simulations of different bodies such as the Security Council or World Economic Forum (WEF), offering three days of debate and resolution production. DIAMUN is one of the largest The Hague International Model United Nations (THIMUN) affiliated conferences in the Middle East.

The MUN club in the school has 150 members and is an after-school activity where students learn the essential skills of debate, legal writing, and policy research.

Cultural context

Located in Dubai, and surrounded by a politically tumultuous region, DIAMUN promotes broader understanding of political complexity by exposing students to democratic deliberation, differing viewpoints in debate and negotiation skills. The topics of discussion at DIAMUN often involve issues specific to the Arab world, giving students greater exposure and frameworks to approach local problems.

The MUN club, through an annual UN Day celebration and the weekly after-school club, aims to promote the principles of the UN charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights. By learning about the involvement of the UN in solving world issues, delegates at DIAMUN develop an appreciation for the diplomatic processes and collective security on which the UN is based.

DIAMUN, through its various committees (such as the Security Council, General Assemblies, Human Rights Committee and the African Union), provides student participants from different countries the opportunities to develop alternative viewpoints—a core skill needed for effective global citizenship. Through role play, students take on the diplomatic positions of different countries and become accustomed to finding solutions to challenging problems.

Inquiry/Challenge

Practices relating to MUN in DIA:

- After-school activity sessions begin with student discussion on a particular recent global problem. Varying perspectives are taken into account to produce extended understanding of the various “strains” to international issues.
- Students are assigned a country, and given a brief about its position. They then follow the problem–solution–outcome (PSO) model in producing a resolution that is then debated.
- Six to seven times a year, the club holds weekend simulations involving around 80 students in a 3- or 4-hour mini-MUN conference. This helps to develop confidence before the annual DIAMUN.
- DIA supports involvement in foreign MUN conferences and trains students for effective participation. Thus DIA students use MUN as a medium for global exchange of ideas.
- Student organization and oversight of conference in planning and execution
- Press and administration are also aspects of DIAMUN where school students gain additional skills in writing and organization. Younger students also formulate an understanding of MUN.

“MUN has helped me feel the need to explore the world beyond the classroom and experience the realm of the ‘real world’—to gain self confidence in ways which no other activity or subject could.”

Farhan Farooqui, 16 years old



Action/Solutions

The core strengths/positives of DIA’s MUN practices:

- The size of the conference, local media presence, and the involvement of many DIA students over the years has led to the development of a strong MUN culture in DIA. Students become well informed on global issues, develop legal writing skills, identify UN principles, and develop interest and an inclination towards solving global policy issues.
- Student leadership opportunities are created for DIA students. Committees in DIAMUN are led by three “student officers”, who are responsible for writing a 2,000–3,000 word research report and leading their respective committees during the conference. Student officer positions develop strong leadership traits as these students learn to facilitate problem-solving for delegates.

- Students improve communication skills (writing and speaking), confidence, and are able to articulate clearly.
- Students learn to critically analyse situations that are shaping the world today in terms of politics, human rights, conflict and the environment.

Reflection/Next steps

- Engagement with O-MUN is in its initial phase with the hope of expansion throughout the year. At the beginning of the calendar year, DIA was given the responsibility for coordinating the national O-MUN programme throughout the United Arab Emirates (UAE). While this phase is only in its infancy, students from DIA have already organized several online debates throughout the region.
- Development in the junior school (years 7–9) began in mid-February 2014 with the implementation of a Junior MUN as an after-school activity. This initiative aims to bridge the divide between the younger and older students and foster an even stronger MUN culture throughout the school.
- Development of an outreach programme that will develop a strong MUN culture and set up MUN programmes in surrounding local schools including the possibility of organizing a MUN programme in Arabic. The development of the outreach programme hopes to expand the MUN programme through local Emirati schools and increase the limited representation of Emirati students within the programme.

“MUN has truly helped to improve debating and public speaking skills that any other activity would not have taught me. I began doing it since 2008, at the age of 13 years, and it has definitely broadened my horizons with regards to world issues and has allowed me to step in the shoes of different nations to understand their role and importance in the issue. Through MUN I have made friends who are from every corner of the world and these are relationships that will stick for a long time to come—wherever in the world you are, there will always be someone you know and met through MUN.”

Mitali, 18 years old



Programme standards and practices

The MUN programme at DIA predominately adheres to *Programme standards and practices* (January 2014) through:

Section A: Philosophy

Standard A

- developing and promoting international-mindedness and all attributes of the IB learner profile across the school community
- promoting open communications based on understanding and respect

Section C: Curriculum.

Standard C3: Teaching and learning

- engaging students as inquirers and thinkers
- building on what students know and can do
- promoting the understanding and practice of academic honesty
- supporting students to become actively responsible for their own learning
- addressing human commonality, diversity and multiple perspectives
- using a range and variety of strategies
- incorporating a range of resources, including information technologies
- developing student attitudes and skills that allow for meaningful student action in response to students' own needs and the needs of others
- fostering a stimulating learning environment based on understanding and respect
- developing the IB learner profile attributes

“MUN has been extensively beneficial for my public speaking, networking, negotiating and leadership skills. Right from policy analysis to problem solving and debating, MUN has it all. MUN serves the primary purpose of education in that it replaces and 'empty' mind with an 'open' one.”

Siddarth Raj, 17 years old



Additional information

For more information about the Dubai International Academy, visit their website at www.diadubai.com.

For more information about DIAMUN 2014, please go to diamun.org.

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FAQs

How can schools get started with MUN?

The key is to have enthusiastic teachers to support and develop MUN. Enthusiastic students will then start to take responsibility and ownership, utilizing teachers as guides.

Students can practise MUN skills—including teamwork, research, writing, and speaking skills—in all courses and in the years leading up to their participation in MUN events.

Students select a conference to attend; most schools find it easiest to begin with a one-day event.

Once a country allocation is made, students engage in a “Country Profile Project” (demographics, economy, geography, history outline, political system or other aspect of the conference).

Once committees are allocated, students research the committee topics and prepare position papers on each (particularly focusing on the likely position of their allocated country).

Regular MUN activities and extra-curricular organizations (like a MUN club) support and motivate students, providing opportunities for continued growth.

Schools could eventually consider hosting their own conference.

Schools with well-established MUN programmes can be important sources of inspiration and advice.

What support is available for new MUN coordinators?

Attend a workshop (such as the annual networking event for new MUN coordinators during the THIMUN conference).

Use O-MUN to help students prepare for their first MUN conference.

Shadow a current MUN coordinator.

What are the challenges involved in integrating the IB Diploma Programme with MUN?

Finding time, staffing and space for MUN activities.

Horizontally and vertically integrating MUN activities in DP courses and in ATL skills across the programme.

Communicating with students, teachers and parents about the personal and academic benefits of participating in MUN.

Helping students develop good time management skills (especially when attending MUN events means missing class).

Where can I find out more about MUN organizations and activities?

www.worldmun.org/

www.harvardmun.org/conference-materials/tips-for-preparation

www.thimun.org/

www.unausa.org/global-classrooms-model-un/how-to-participate/getting-started/

bestdelegate.com/the-educational-benefits-of-model-un/

www.dosomething.org/actnow/actionguide/how-to-start-model-un-team

www.wfuna.org/wfuna-mun

onlinemodelunitednations.org/middle-school-jro-mun

www.unausa.org/global-classrooms-model-un/model-un-conferences/international-middle-school-model-un-conference

www.ofs.edu.sg/munofs/

www.ofs.edu.sg/munofs/welcome-message/

About Global engagement good practice guides

This series explores common activities that can engage students in service and action that can support the development of international-mindedness in IB programmes. They provide background information, establish connections, suggest ways of working and pose questions for reflection that teachers and other school leaders can use to make their own decisions about how best to develop international-mindedness in the unique context of each IB World School and the learning needs of individual students. These guides share observations and suggestions from a global community of IB practitioners. The IB does not endorse or require participation in specific global engagement activities.

Note: Creativity, Action, Service has been renamed to Creativity, Activity, Service. Although the word Action may appear in this document, please ensure you refer to it as Activity when leading this workshop.