

Lanterna 2022 Autumn report

IB Diploma Spotlight

*Challenges and opportunities in a changing
IBO world.*





**LANTERNA
EDUCATION**

Dear IB Educators

A warm welcome to the Autumn edition of the Lanterna IB educational dispatch. I hope this finds everyone healthy and well after what I'm sure has been an exhilarating, and exhausting, start to the new academic year.

This is the final publication of 2022, and is one of four publications which makes up our annual educational dispatch.

In this report, we cover:

- Key findings from our September IBDPC survey
- ATL solutions in IB DP schools

Our next quarterly dispatch will cover assessing M22 and M23 exam results and looking ahead to M23 and the return to pre COVID standards. A huge thank you to everyone who so kindly participated in our survey and in particular for those DP Coordinators who gave their time for follow up video interviews. If you are interested in taking part, please book a call [here!](#)

Best wishes, Tim Hoffmann



Timothy Hoffmann

IBC Cat 2 trained DP coordinator
MEng Oxford University, 2009
IB Graduate, 2005

CHECKING IN WITH DP COORDINATORS - 2022 SURVEY



BACKGROUND

In September 2022 we sent a survey to all of the IBDP coordinators around the world. The intention of this survey was for us to learn from IB Coordinators, and to give an opportunity for schools to learn from each other. For many schools, there are limited opportunities **to share information, teaching methods, and learning solutions and so we want to give you that opportunity.**

We received 103 survey responses, and we've had the opportunity to follow this up with nearly 30 interviews with school leaders. The survey participants ranged from those at schools recently authorised in the IBDP, to those who have been delivering the programme for 50+ years.

The survey focused on better understanding DP coordinator's challenges, and the challenges of their students.

- Which key challenges do you face in your role as DP Coordinator?
- How confident are DPCs about their DP2 and DP1 students' levels?
- What are the biggest barriers to learning at the moment?
- Which subjects are your students finding most challenging?

Post survey, we have had video calls with coordinators in countries spread around the world, and have listened and learned to the challenges they're currently facing.

If you'd like to review a comprehensive list of the responses, please do so via the link below. [Lanterna DP Coordinator's Survey Findings.](#)

Now we're sharing what we learned.

It didn't take much digging to establish that DPCs are often juggling unsustainable workloads. The dominant response to what the main thing DPC's would **want** in order to help their students, and school, succeed was simple: **more time**. There is no lack of motivation, but rather an overarching sense of frustration underpinning these responses. For a role which must balance people management, strategy, administration and instruction, this can be enormously challenging.

This is a global epidemic, a department of education (DFE) study in the UK from 2019 reported that

Teachers are working

50 hours a week

Heads are working

55 hours a week

70% of newly qualified teachers in a workload which is higher than they'd anticipated

UNDER-STAFFED & OVER-WORKED

Other surveys show alarming global statistics around teachers considering new professions. Those planning to leave the profession are at an all time high of 44% in the US and almost all the survey respondents highlighted some degree of burnout amongst their teaching team, without a clear solution of how to overcome this.

DP coordinators have a unique lens of seeing the workloads of their teaching team, and one respondent, in answer to the question of which single thing would make their job as DPC easier, replied: "the ability to provide more time to teachers (or reduce the demands put on them by IB)"

Another, when asked what one thing would make their job easier, replied: **"Have 48 hours in a day"**.

When expanding on the theme of finding a solution to carving out more time, suggested: “An IB secretary to take care of the routine stuff like registering students, sorting exam schedules & rooms, etc.” Some form of the suggestion of an assistant cropped up in over one third of the responses.

There isn't a silver bullet which is likely to solve this particular issue, but the fact that they want, and need, for more time across so many schools means there is a need to dig deeper, and see which solutions may exist to lessen the responsibility placed on a DP Coordinator. **This solution may either be reactive, or proactive.**

A reactive solution might be tools which can lessen this burden through the upcoming academic year. Proactive solutions may be more a case of looking forward to next year's cohorts to reduce the burden on DP Coordinators- which solutions can be implemented to better prepare students and teachers for incoming cohorts, to reduce the burden on DP Coordinators?



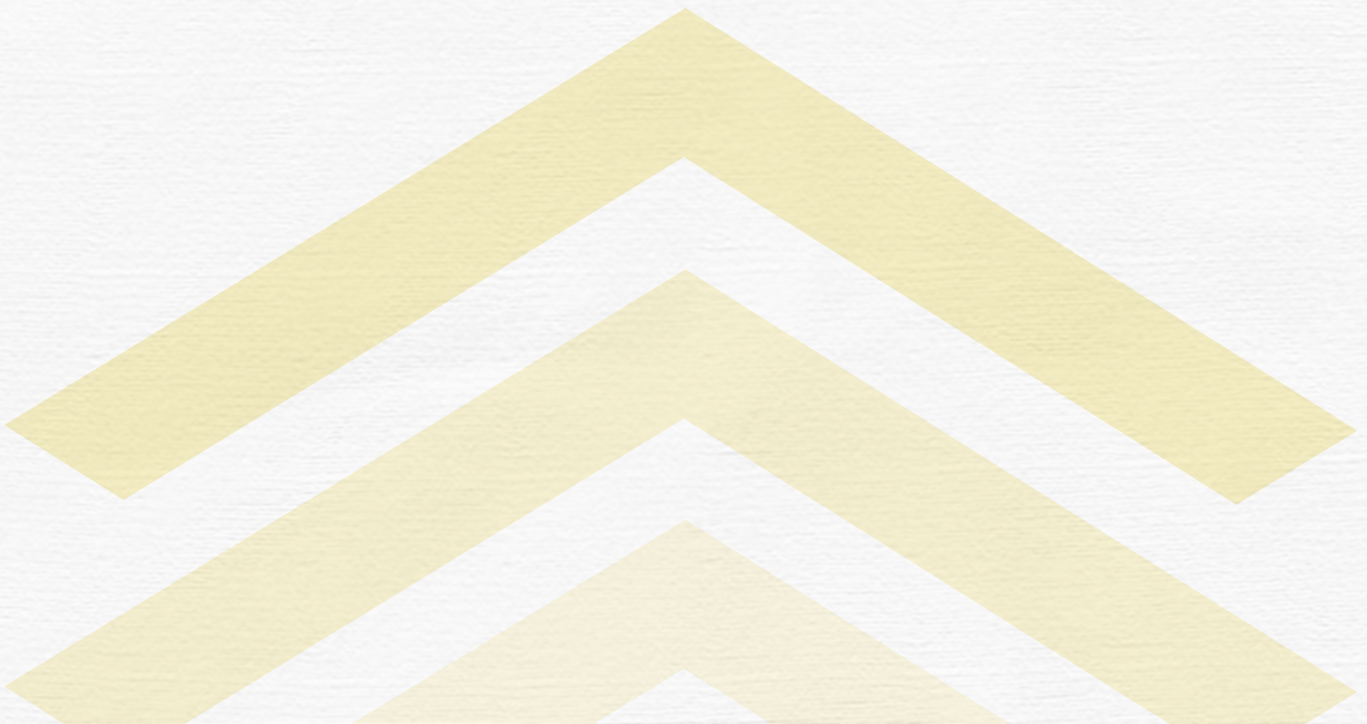
STAFFING CHALLENGES IN A CHANGING IBO WORLD

During many of our interviews, respondents spoke of staffing issues they have had to contend with, and how this challenge has increased due to the spending power of international schools in regions such as the UAE and parts of Asia, where high wages and low taxes can lure a talented teaching population.

This is compounded by the expat nature of the IB ecosystem, with many teachers choosing to return closer to home for family reasons post COVID, schools quickly find themselves understaffed in key subjects, and without much notice. Many schools turn to local teaching staff who can deliver the content, but without the requisite knowledge of IB methodologies.

Historically, this would be enormously challenging for schools, having to source and train local teachers not used to the intricacies of the IB system, or choosing a very expensive route of flying in IB teachers from further afield to plug short term gaps while they found long term solutions.

With all this in mind, and the IBO announcement that M23 exams will return to pre-COVID standards, and with many examination elements returning, these next 6 months will prove challenging for IB communities around the world.



Students lack essential learning skills



Learning skills(ATL) 45.5%

Base knowledge entering the programme 34.8%

Incorrect HL & SL choices 7.6%

Understanding IB exam methodology 4.5%

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST BARRIERS TO LEARNING FOR YOUR LEAST ABLE STUDENTS?

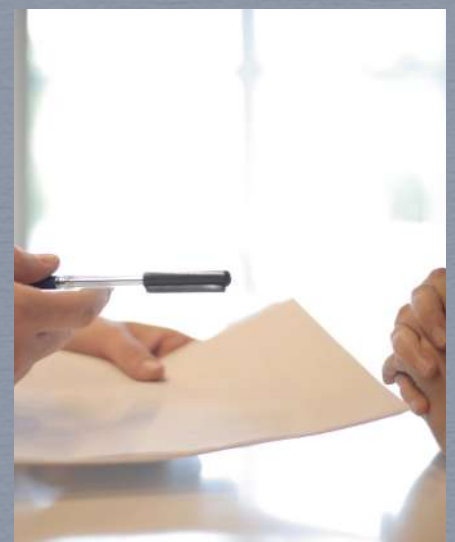
The responses made it overwhelmingly clear that both the main hurdle to overcome, but also the secret potion to success, is a well equipped ATL skillset which students can build prior to the DP, and hone during the course of the DP.

As we saw in the most recent [IB Standards and Practices \(2020\)](#), the IBO are very keen on driving ATL in schools and ensuring engagement from the teaching team, and student population. ATLs have always been central to the MYP philosophy, but implementing a really well curated skills-based teaching philosophy can be challenging in the DP, particularly if students are entering it from different, and often national, curricula.

Do students understand the value of why ATL is important?

It would appear that it is hard to impress this on students until it's too late, & they are drowning under deadlines.

Do teachers, many of whom have come from regional curricula, understand the merits of ATL? Or indeed, the methods to implement them?



Having completed more than 30 interviews with DP Coordinators after sending our survey, we have learned just how challenging implementing a robust ATL methodology can be, as it is understandably often pushed to the bottom of the pile to ensure teachers have sufficient time to deliver on teaching content, reach IA deadlines & more.

This can quickly become a vicious cycle, as if teachers and a school's SLT don't have the bandwidth to properly implement a robust skills-based solution, it is hard to break the cycle.

Perhaps the most complex thing here is the different optics when perceived by teachers and students. For example, if you were to show a 9th grade student a University level Maths problem, it will be quickly clear to them that they don't know how to solve it. However, you ask them to complete a skills based challenge or assessment, perhaps one focusing on time management, and the extent to which they do or don't understand is perhaps less clear to the student, but more clear to the teacher.

The same applies for skills like critical thinking - for many students, particularly those who enter from national curricula, they have never been assessed on their critical thinking skills before. That makes explaining to them why this is important difficult as their frame of reference is so differently aligned.

It's clear that DP schools must actively engage with further integrating ATL into its teaching practices, the challenge being how. For many schools, simply delivering the learning based around IB subject guides can be difficult, particularly those who are dual stream (alongside say AP or A levels).



POOR PERFORMANCE IN ORGANISATION AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Most coordinators responded that students were lacking skills in organisation and time management, both in terms of juggling a significant workload, but also understanding and reaching key IB deadlines.

It isn't clear to Pre-DP students why a skill like time management is so vital, or the importance of having a framework for managing a large number of deadlines, but this comes in like a steam train in DP2 when they enter "submission season".

Every coordinator reading this and indeed every student will be painfully aware of the deadline cycle for EE / TOK / Uni applications / IAs piling up around this time of year in their IBDP2 year.



There are a number of tools that can be used to help students better understand and manage deadlines and workloads. One respondent suggested “dedicated time spent on explaining to students how to organise and begin work on IAs and EEs and then how to work efficiently on implementing teacher feedback”. Another mentioned introducing the perfect calendar with all important deadlines clearly outlined.

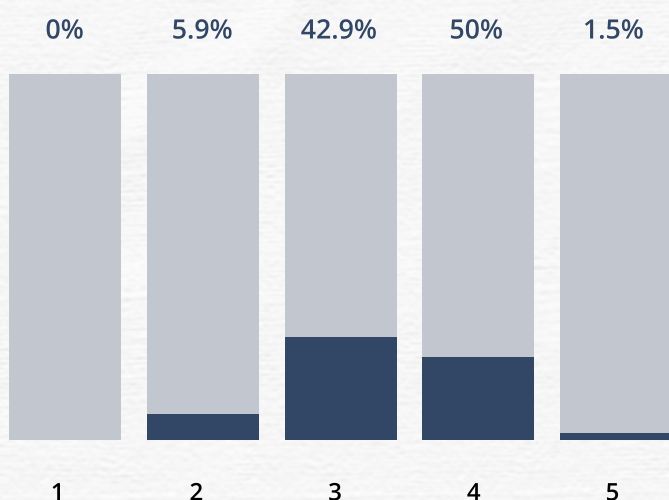
Establishing best practice alongside school leaders is something we plan to investigate further alongside our school community in our next whitepaper. **Particularly how this can be best addressed in the pre-DP phase to ensure this is not a last minute patch solution for students already in the throes of the programme.**



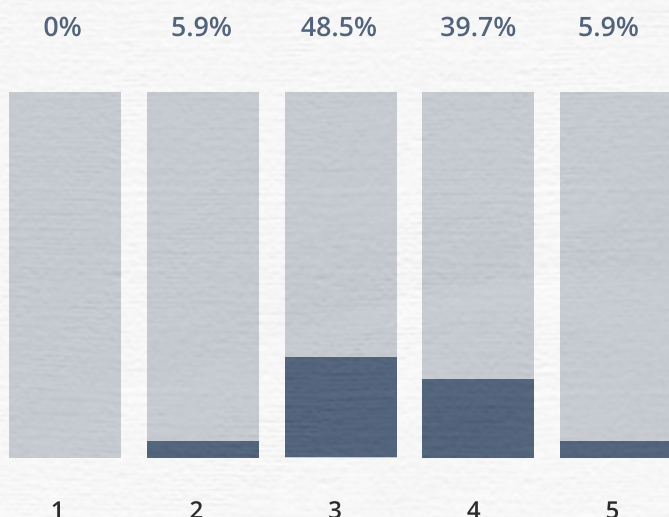
STUDENTS ARE UNPREPARED FOR THE PROGRAMME

The survey shows that coordinators are equally concerned of how well prepared the students are to succeed in DP1 and DP2.

How well prepared do you feel your DP2s are for upcoming IAs & Exams?



How well prepared do you feel your DP1s are for the next 2 years?



Coordinator's might be concerned about the accumulated lost learning over the past three years, putting them at a disadvantage as examination standards return back to normal.

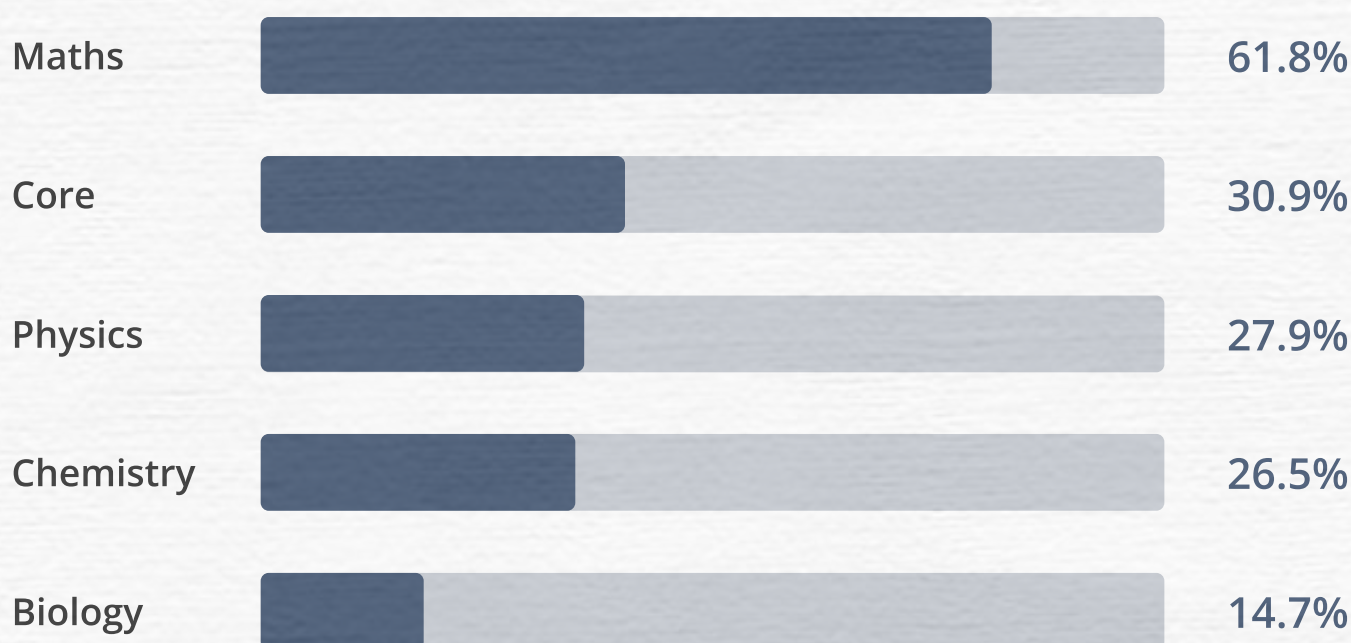
Another challenge worth highlighting is how well students are equipped to enter the programme from a knowledge perspective. Few students are actually aware of the "Assumed Knowledge" section of an IB syllabus, particularly for STEM. This often leads to exorbitant knowledge gaps later on in the DP.

Of course, this is easier for IB continuum schools offering PYP, MYP & DP and can integrate elements of the syllabus into the latter stages of their Pre-DP learning. Many schools offer an even more robust assessment opportunity to ensure students are fully prepared for their IB studies. The MYP e-assessments, still in relative infancy, have not taken off in schools whose parent populations are more comfortable with more widely acknowledged examination bodies. Many schools use IGCSE as a benchmark for which students can take certain HL subjects, and moreover, which students can enter the programme at all.

MATHS

- A REASON FOR CONCERN

The introduction of the new Maths curriculum presented challenges and opportunities for IB world schools. M23 will be the first cohort where this is examined without “In session mitigations” - i.e. essentially looser grading scales for attainment. These results will be very interesting after the first two sessions were either dual route (ie exam & non exam route) and the subsequent in session mitigation grade inflation.



WHICH SUBJECT DO YOU FEEL YOUR DP1 ARE LEAST PREPARED FOR?

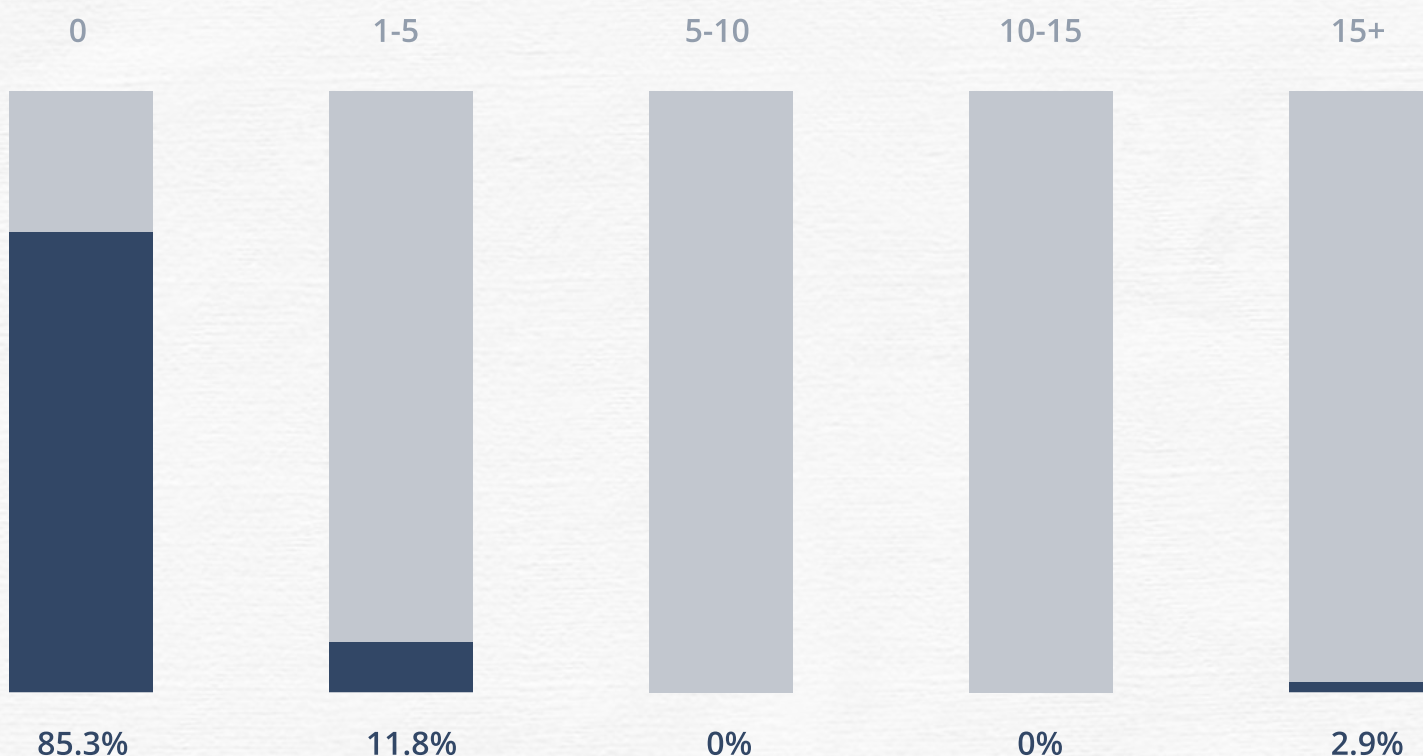
There is a challenge for schools to deliver high quality Maths support to their students, across curricula and levels to ensure all students are prepared for their M23 and M24 exams.

Teacher training can be difficult. The Lanterna group have a team of over 300 IB world school teachers, and our Maths AI HL tutors have expressed it difficult to build lesson plans due to lack of literature and lesson planning material. Many schools opting for either AA or AI instead of offering both and some schools are teaching both curricula concurrently due to issues of class sizes and teacher allocation. Clearly there is room for improvement here.

BENEFITS OF ONLINE LEARNING NEGLECTED AS SCHOOLS REVERT TO THE CLASSROOM

Finally, we wanted to understand in a nearly post-COVID world, how are schools choosing to engage with online learning, in the classroom and outside? Are schools adopting a hybrid approach to learning, which so many pedagogical leaders celebrated over the past few years?

How many hours a week are your students receiving online learning as a part of their school curriculum?



The answers are discouraging - **only 15% of the respondents said their students receive online learning** - and when they do it's a small part of the entire learning experience.

The reasons for this were fascinating. This varied from “greater reluctance since their learning experience during lockdown” to “We are not allowed to have online teaching and learning any more.”

Is it perhaps strange that schools would mandate fully in person learning when we saw so many benefits to online opportunities arising over the past few years? The results suggest that any online learning is seen as a lesser version than in-person-learning.

When interviewed, many DP coordinators spoke of a seamless transition to online learning but that there is pressure from parents to have all lessons in person, despite the benefits we clearly saw during COVID of well delivered hybrid learning. It will be interesting to see, with the introduction of the IB’s first online world schools, what paths schools take in the years to come.



We hope to unpack this further in a follow up survey to schools to see if there are ways schools may want to reconsider this approach.

CONCLUSION AND HOW LANTERNA CAN HELP

Unsurprisingly, many of the challenges schools face are common: time management both in the teaching and student populations, students struggling to reach deadlines, concerns about Maths attainment levels and general overwhelm felt by DPCs. Much of what appears to underpin this is a desire to better integrate long-term ATL solutions into the DP programme, and into IB schools more generally.

The three main takeaways from this survey were:

- Generally overworked DP Coordinators
- A desperate need for ATL skill development for DP students, particularly time management & organisation skills
- General concerns around staffing

Points 1 and 2 appear to be inextricably linked - DP coordinators are overworked in part, because their students are not equipped with the skills to succeed in the DP, and this therefore lands back on the DPCs plate to solve. The solution clearly seems to be a better understanding of, and integration of, ATLs into DP programmes, both Pre-DP to develop the requisite skills, but also during the DP to ensure students have the agency to own their deadlines, triage their workloads and ensure they have balance in their lives to ensure ongoing wellbeing.

The Lanterna network consist of a talent pool of nearly 500 IB world school teachers. Being able to offer our teachers to schools who struggle with staffing is a way to consolidate our position as a school support solution, as much as a we are a student support solution.



The successful integration of ATLs is something we are actively looking into. Our goal is to design a scalable solution which schools around the world can utilise, no matter where they are in their DP journey. There is likely to be a large disparity between a recently authorised school with a DP cohort of 10, and a long established school with a DP cohort of 200. Which challenges exist in both schools? Which are unique to each? We are planning to send a follow up survey to all of those who kindly participated to workshop solutions with schools, and plan to present this in our next report alongside M22 and N22 examination session assessments.

As always, we'd love to hear your views and your feedback.

Please write to tim@lanterna.com if you would like to discuss any of these findings, receive a more comprehensive set of the results, or to take part in our ATL workshops.