The 'new-look' Baccalauréat

Since its creation in 1808 by Napoleon I, the French Baccalauréat has gained acceptance as a gold standard qualification, recognised and appreciated by the most prestigious universities throughout the world. Unsurprisingly, given its age, it is also no stranger to reform: from the introduction of the first written examination in 1830 to the admission of women in 1927 and the creation of our own Option Internationale du Baccalauréat (OIB) in 1981, successive French governments have sought to ensure that the Baccalauréat responds to changes in society and prepares its citizens for the needs of the time and the challenges of the future. And this continues to be the case today with the introduction of the most recent reform, *Pour Une École de la Confiance*, led by the Ministre de l'Education Nationale, Jean-Michel Blanquer.

Influenced by research into the highest performing educational jurisdictions, and following consultation with key stakeholders on their experience of the current system, the main aim of the reform is to improve students' chances of success in higher education and beyond. In practice, this means enabling students to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the subjects that most interest them during the final two years of schooling by creating Special Subjects (*Spécialités*) to which more curricular time will be devoted. However, in order to maintain the broad humanistic education that is so admired by foreign universities and employers alike, and which contributes to students becoming such well-rounded and engaging individuals, the new Baccalauréat will also allow all students to continue to study a core curriculum that includes French Literature, Science, two foreign languages, History-Geography and Philosophy, regardless of which subjects they choose to specialise in. This is made possible by the introduction of 'continuous assessment' (*contrôle continu*) in core subjects whereby a combination of results from three end-of-unit tests in each subject and marks registered by teachers in the termly bulletins will replace final examinations.

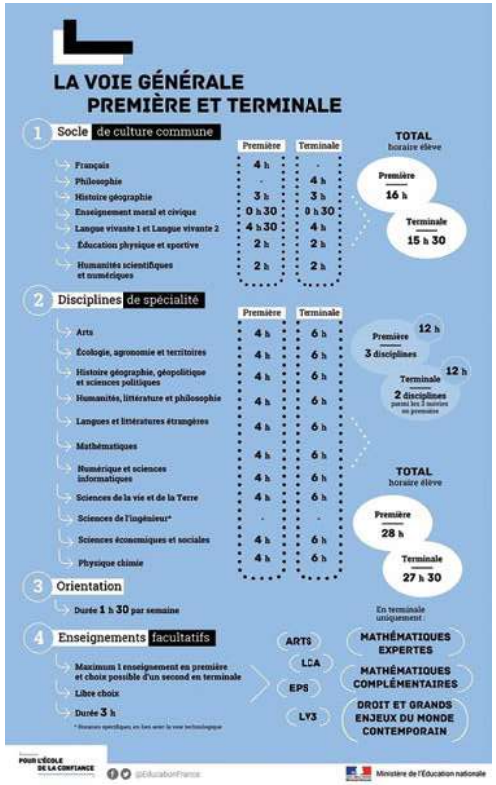
British Section students have every reason to be excited by the reform, which preserves the best of the Baccalauréat and introduces the possibility of deepening their knowledge and understanding of the subjects most closely aligned with their interests and future goals.

Of course, deciding which subjects to choose is not always easy and both the British Section and our French colleagues are well aware of the need to support our students in these choices. For example, the British Section puts Seconde students through a careers orientation programme offered by Cambridge Occupational Analysts which analyses the students' responses to a comprehensive careers questionnaire and produces an individualised report explaining over 40 careers linked to their interests. Similarly, the Lycée International's Careers Counsellor and Psychologist, Madame Brossard, holds a regular drop-in surgery for students wishing to discuss their options in France. More information and links can be found below.

Finally, I am pleased to be able to confirm that the subjects taught by the British Section maintain their central place in the new-look Baccalauréat. Indeed, English Language and Literature and History-Geography will continue to be taught and examined alongside the Special Subjects enabling British and Anglophone universities to continue to recognise our students' particularly strong aptitude to study there.

The articulation between the reform and the Option Internationale du Baccalauréat (OIB) has involved a great deal of discussion between the Ministry of Education and Cambridge International Education, the partner authority for the British OIB, to ensure the OIB continues to provide teaching programmes and assessment practices that are both recognisable by the partner authority and manageable for students and teachers. As the President of the Association des Sections Internationales Britanniques et Anglophones (ASIBA), I have been involved in many of these discussions and I have been impressed by the willingness of our French colleagues to incorporate our feedback and suggestions. I am also extremely grateful to my colleagues, Nicholas Baker (National Coordinator of OIB Language and Literature) and Alan Geary (National Coordinator of OIB History-Geography, based in Lyon), for their support. Work continues, not least on the adaptation of the OIB curricula to the new *programmes scolaires* that accompany the reform, and I am grateful to our colleagues here in the British Section, particularly Matthew Tomlinson (Head of History), for their tireless commitment and creativity.

James Cathcart



Aims of the Baccalauréat reform

- To enable students to specialise in subjects of particular interest to them
- To allow students to study combinations of subjects that weren't previously possible in the streams ES, S and L
- To reduce the number of final exams and reward students' efforts throughout the two years of study by introducing an element of continuous assessment

The key changes

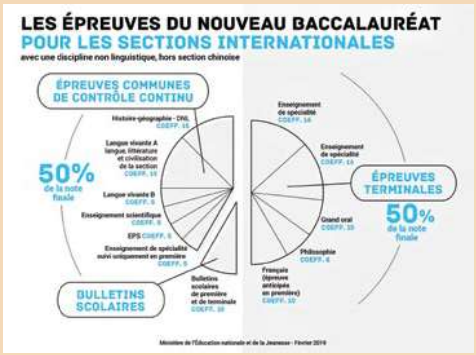
- Removal of the three streams, ES, S and L, in favour of a 'free' choice of Special Subjects (subject to individual schools' timetable constraints)
- More curriculum time devoted to Special Subjects enabling students to deepen their knowledge and understanding
- Assessment: students will be assessed through a combination of continuous assessment (core curriculum) and final examinations (Special Subjects, French and Philosophy) meaning fewer final examinations. An oral exam lasting 30 minutes is also being introduced to complement the written examinations in the Special Subjects

What's staying the same:

- All students will continue to study a core curriculum (French Literature, Science, two foreign languages, History-Geography and Philosophy) regardless of their choice of Special Subjects
- Notation: marks will continue to be expressed as a mark out of 20
- The existence of merit awards (*mentions*): ASSEZ BIEN (12–13), BIEN (14–15), TRES BIEN (16–20)
- A central place for the subjects taught by the British Section

Where can I find more information?

- COA profile
- Centre d'Information et d'Orientation, Saint Germain-en-Laye : http://www.lycee-international.ac-versailles.fr/spip.php?rubrique218
- https://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/Bac_2021/53/1/Bac2021_document_2de_fev2019_1079531.pdf
- http://www.secondes2018-2019.fr/
- http://www.horizons2021.fr
- www.secondes2018-2019.fr/quiz-mes-gouts
- Le site Eduscol pour toutes les informations concernant la réforme du baccalauréat : http://eduscol.education.fr/cid126665/vers-le-bac-2021.html
- Les guides de l'ONISEP en téléchargement sur www.onisep.fr/Guides-d-orientation



Orchestre des Lycées français du monde 2019

Our congratulations go to the five British Section students - Aurélien (2nde), John (2nde), Luc (3ème), Suvomita (3ème) and Victor (5ème) - who were selected to take part in the fifth season of the prestigious Orchestre des Lycées français du monde and accompanying choir.

This year the orchestra was made up of 70 young musicians of 23 different nationalities. With the support of musicians from the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France and directed by Adriana Tanus, they gave their first performance in Madrid on 29 January 2019 after just one week of rehearsals. The final performance took place on 19 March 2019 at the Maison de la Radio concert hall, accompanied by an international choir of 120 students, directed by Claire Perez-Maestro, from schools in: Cali (Colombia), Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), Marcoussis (91) and the Lycée International, Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The students performed a varied programme of pieces including classical works by Rameau, Rossini and Grieg, modern choral pieces by Karl Jenkins and Morten Lauridsen, songs by Poulenc and Aznavour, and traditional pieces from Colombia and Africa, to an audience of more than 1400. A great achievement by all involved.

Nicola Bullough