

# ALASCA

AMSTERDAM LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES ACADEMY

## School brochure 2021 – 2022 for the IB-DP



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## Foreword

We, members of staff at our school, often say to one another: there's never a dull moment at ALASCA! That is a good thing. It means we are still changing, working, growing and learning. And indeed, we are constantly in motion. In recent years we have built a curriculum, we changed our school name, we moved to a new school building and we've successfully completed the first audit by the Dutch ministry of education. Academic year 21/22 will undoubtedly prove to be an exciting year for the students and team at ALASCA as well, as it marks the first year in which we may officially call ourselves an IB World School. This is yet another highlight in the short history of our school. All of these innovations and changes mean that we are still well on our way to achieve our overall ambitions to maintain and expand on our position as an innovative, modern hybrid school, bridging the gap between international and 'regular' Dutch schools. In doing so we aim to cater to the needs and wants of 21st century learners, whatever their background, ethnicity and mother tongue may be.

This school brochure is a translated and greatly abbreviated version of our general, Dutch school guide (schoolgids), which is aimed at *all* current and prospective students. This version of the brochure, however, focusses on (prospective) IB-students and their parents and offers them a short introduction to our school, our educational values and approaches to teaching and learning. It also offers additional and detailed information about the IB Diploma Programme.

Martijn Meerhoff  
director ALASCA

January 2021

## Introduction to our school

ALASCA (formerly known as Cartesius 2) started with 90 students in August 2016. We were then housed in two small and temporary school buildings in the city centre of Amsterdam. Our school was launched with the explicit goal to enrich the city of Amsterdam with an innovative school with a unique and modern educational profile. The school offers education at pre-university level, inspired by a liberal arts & sciences approach. Our curriculum consists of modules and projects that are often interdisciplinary and sometimes thematic.

In February 2020, the Dutch Inspectorate of Education visited our school and concluded that our school meets the quality standards for good education in the Netherlands. They were impressed by our educational approach, the active involvement of students and great sense of commitment among members of staff.

In August 2020 ALASCA moved to its definitive location: a beautiful and modern school building in a relatively new district of our city: Zeeburgereiland. The school also chose to adopt a new name, better fitting to its academic goals and educational approach. Cartesius 2 became ALASCA, short for Amsterdam Liberal Arts and SCIences Academy. In the academic year 2020/2021, the fifth year in our existence, we have 515 students enrolled in our school. In the following year, 2021/2022, we start with our first group of DP students!

### Educational approach

To help students to fulfill their potential and become the leaders, thinkers, academics, artists of tomorrow, we have developed our own educational approach. Key elements of this approach are:

(1) We offer a broad academic development from a strong liberal arts and sciences curriculum, with great attention paid to inquiry based learning within interdisciplinary modules and projects. We thereby aim to offer students training and experience in analyzing complex academic problems and real life situations, without the need to stay within the (often arbitrary) barriers between the school subjects.

(2) Actively we encourage students to develop their 'moral compass', thereby aiming to help students in their moral citizenship, in both local and international contexts. We offer courses in philosophy and ethics, as well as yearly service learning projects;

(3) We provide students with a modern curriculum, focussing on essay writing, debating, coding and programming, research skills, (digital) design and art, and conceptual thought. Today's curricula however, always run the risk of becoming outdated for tomorrow's challenges and problems. For that reason, we insist on helping students to develop metacognitive skills, enabling them to understand and manage their own learning and development in the years to come. In our IB Diploma Programme we maintain and uphold our educational approach: placing a strong emphasis on Theory of Knowledge (TOK) as the heart of our programme, tying all courses together. Philosophy and History of Science play an important role in our approach to TOK, alongside ethics and sociology of knowledge. We also choose to continue offering interdisciplinary units to connect the regular IB subjects. Finally, we choose to emphasize the "S



AMSTERDAM LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES ACADEMY

in CAS” by making Service learning an important, mandatory part throughout our school’s curriculum.

### **Our graduate: a rebel with a cause**

Our educational approach is aimed at stimulating students to reach their full potential. We have high expectations of our students and we encourage them to be ambitious. We thus assist students to graduate as autonomous, ambitious, analytical thinkers and doers with a strong moral compass. Our graduates show an interest in their community, nationally and internationally, and would like to contribute to it. They have informed opinions about the big questions of our time and possess the confidence to experiment, to discover, to make mistakes and to reflect critically.

Our students will be challenged to commit themselves and use their talents in the service to others. Consequently our students become aware of their own values and develop their perspective on fairness and justice, both in local and international contexts.

### **Our teacher: a professional in supporting learning**

Teachers at ALASCA are, first and foremost, professionals in supporting the learning of their students, which requires a great deal of knowledge and skills in the fields of pedagogy and didactics. This is something our teaching staff continually emphasizes in their professional development.

In addition, all teachers have a great deal of ‘content knowledge’, covering at least one, and often more, school subject(s). All members of the teaching staff have at least a bachelor’s degree and (additional) teaching qualification. Most members of our teaching staff, however, have at least one master’s degree.

## The DP curriculum at ALASCA

### General curriculum structure

In our junior years (meaning years 1 to 3) our school works with a 'core curriculum', which is mandatory for all students, consisting of several modules and projects. In this core curriculum all mandatory learning outcomes, as prescribed by the Dutch ministry of education, are covered. Some of these modules are taught in English. Additionally, students take elective modules, allowing them to broaden and/or deepen their knowledge and skills. Students that need more time and/or support in completing (parts of) the core curriculum, can use these moments to follow so-called 'deficiency modules'.

In the senior phase of our school, meaning years 4 and up, student can choose between three tracks:

(1) the Dutch havo-track (senior general secondary education), comprising two years: school years 4 and 5. This track prepares students for higher vocational education. Students who have finished a havo-programme are also eligible to enroll in the vwo- or IB-tracks.

(2) the Dutch vwo-track (pre-university education), comprising three years: school years 4, 5 and 6. This is the Dutch pre-university track.

(3) the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme track, comprising two years: school years 5 and 6. This is the international pre-university track. More information about admission criteria can be found below.

### IB programme

In the Diploma Programme we will offer a curriculum that fits with our educational values, providing an alternative to the curricula offered at other Dutch and international schools and meeting the needs and wishes typical to our student population.

At ALASCA IB students take the following courses:

<b>Core subjects</b>	<b>Diploma Subjects</b>
(1) Theory of Knowledge (ToK) (2) Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) (3) Extended Essay (EE)	(1) Language A: Dutch Language and Literature (HL) (2) Language B: English Language Acquisition (SL/HL) (3) Psychology (HL) (4) Design Technology (SL) (5) Maths Application and Interpretation (SL/HL) (6) Visual Arts (SL)

We expect to expand the number of subjects offered in the next few years.



AMSTERDAM LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES ACADEMY

### Standard level and Higher level subjects

Subjects are offered at Standard level (SL, 150 teaching hours) and/or Higher level (HL, 240 teaching hours). Each student takes at least three (but not more than four) subjects at higher level and the remaining at standard level (SL). The Higher Level courses cover the same core learning outcomes as Standard Level, but expand on those with additional topics, research assignments and optional course components.

At ALASCA Dutch language and literature and Psychology will be offered at Higher Level. For the third higher level subject students can choose between English or Maths. Visual Arts and Design Technology are both taught at standard level.

### An interdisciplinary approach

The core topic **Theory of Knowledge (ToK)** lies at the heart of our Diploma Programme curriculum. All the other core and diploma subjects are intertwined with the relevant ToK concepts and approaches. Every term offers an interdisciplinary unit and project where subject contents and skills of the various subjects are combined and integrated to explore the main thematic question:

***“How are humanity, society and technology interrelated?”***

Throughout the curriculum the various diploma subjects use different interdisciplinary perspectives to deal with this question: historical, academic, contemporary, future and personal perspectives.

### First year of the Diploma Programme (DP1)

In the course of the first and second terms of DP1 students become more familiar with IB in practice: how Theory of Knowledge connects the subjects, how the perspectives of the six subject disciplines complement each other and, at a practical level, what course work is expected for the internal assessment. The development of the Extended Essay takes shape during the third term: a process of a year extending well into the second year of IB. Throughout the first (and second year) students participate in CAS-projects and activities for a duration of at least 18 months.

### Second year of the Diploma Programme (DP2)

In the second year (DP2) students further strengthen their knowledge and skills within the core topics and the diploma subjects, in preparation for the final exams.

Students produce a number of products as evidence in the progress of their learning: the extended essay, the Theory of Knowledge essay, portfolio of CAS experiences, and various products for the Internal Assessment of the six diploma subjects.

At the end of the second term of DP2, students sit trial exams to experience the setting and requirements of external examinations and to identify what needs to be reviewed and practiced to be successful in the May exams. The third term focuses on submission of the internal assessments, and the exam practice and review. The fourth term features the May exams and finishes the first week of July when the exam results are published.

## Time table

The timetable at ALASCA looks like this:

08.30 uur	School building open
09.00 uur	Lesson 1
12.00 uur	Lunch break
12.30 uur	Lesson 2
15.00 uur	Lesson 3 or extended study time
16.30 uur	School building closed

## Parental Contribution for IB Diploma Programme students

Parents/guardians of students who follow the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme pay a parental contribution to cover the additional costs of this programme such as the annual fee to the International Baccalaureate Organisation and the exam fees.

This parental contribution does not include the costs for international travel or nor costs for resitting exams.

The annual parental fee is €1250,- per year.

This fee covers the following costs:

Student activities and additional learning materials	€650,-
Examination fees (total costs made in DP2 are approx €700) <sup>1</sup>	€350,-
Costs to remain authorized as an IB World school	€200,-
Solidarity fund IBDP <sup>2</sup>	€50,-

## Admission to the Diploma Programme

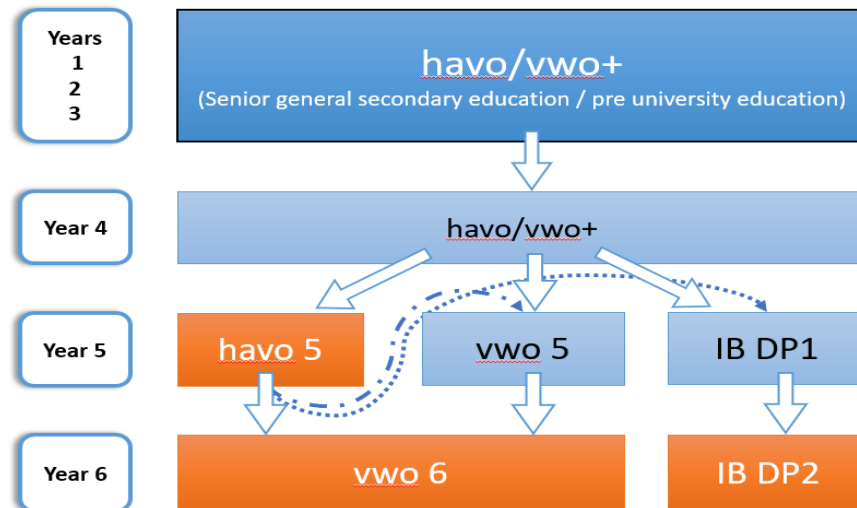
<sup>1</sup> Excluding the exam fees for re-sitting of exam papers. .

<sup>2</sup> The multi-year IB solidarity fund is used to financially support talented students and their parents when they cannot fully meet the costs of participating in the IB diploma programme.



Enrolment in the IB Diploma Programme will be open to the following categories of students:

- Students with a 4 vwo report card of their school providing admission to 5 vwo;
- Students with a full havo diploma;
- Any other students who are proficient in Dutch and English and have an academic record sufficient to enter year 5 of pre-university education (vwo), such as a certificate of completion for the MYP of another international certificate or diploma.



**School career flow chart:** havo: Senior General Secondary Education; vwo: pre-university education (vwo+ refers to the additional academic challenges offered at our school); IB DP: International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. Orange indicates “final year / external examinations”

Due to the challenging and academic nature of the Diploma Programme and the limited number of places available, admission is selective. All students interested in enrollment in our Diploma Programme are invited to enter our admissions procedure.

## Professional development school

ALASCA is a professional development school. This means that we collaborate with two teacher colleges in Amsterdam (Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences and the University of Amsterdam) and play an active role in their teacher training programmes.

## Esprit schools

ALASCA is part of a larger school board: Esprit schools. Esprit Schools consists of 14 schools, offering both primary and secondary education.

More information about Esprit Schools is available at:

<https://www.espritscholen.nl/home/over-esprit/about-esprit-school>