

12th October, 2015

Dear ASIBA member,
Dear OIB school / parents' association,
Dear Parent,

ASIBA is the association which supports and promotes the British version of the *Option internationale du baccalauréat* (OIB). Its activities involve:

- the organisation and funding of annual training events for teachers and examiners led by the Cambridge inspectors
- liaison between the French Ministry of Education and Cambridge International Examinations on issues of curriculum and examination development
- the planning and organisation of OIB examinations including moderation (the process by which marks are checked to ensure national standards are applied in all examinations)
- the production and regular updating of the OIB handbook
- promotion of the OIB with university admissions departments in the UK and further afield
- management of the ASIBA website to publicise the OIB and to support the teaching community, students and parents
- administration of IGCSE on behalf of Cambridge International Examinations enabling OIB schools to benefit from reduced rates.

All of these activities are essential for ensuring the sustainability of the British OIB examination and the continued involvement of Cambridge International Examinations.

The rapid growth of the British option, which now includes schools as far afield as Singapore, Athens, Luxembourg, Nairobi, and Guadeloupe, to mention but a few, is a reflection of the success of the British option as well as the French government's and Cambridge's support for the international sections and their role in promoting international mobility, exchange and inter-cultural understanding.

Expansion also creates a number of challenges which make the role of ASIBA even more important to the future of the OIB. With the growing number of candidates and the consequent need to coordinate an increasing pool of examiners, regular training has become even more important to ensure that standards are maintained and that examining produces fair and reliable marks that are consistent across France and abroad. Underpinning quality assurance of the OIB examination is ASIBA's commitment to developing a professional learning community to support colleagues from an increasing variety of linguistic, educational and professional backgrounds in developing their ability to deliver the pedagogy, content and skills that are required for success in the British OIB.

Consequently, we have become increasingly aware of the need to put in place more professional and sustainable structures to support the British OIB, and this year ASIBA has invested in new systems that will ensure improved communications. These include subscription to an email system that enables us to correspond more efficiently and effectively with a large pool of colleagues and to collate essential information necessary for the organisation of the annual subject meetings and examination sessions. Similarly, we have commissioned a new website which will ensure that up-to-date information is available for teachers, parents, university admissions tutors and other stakeholders, as well as a members' area for teachers to share teaching resources. We aim to launch the new website by December this year.

ASIBA has also introduced a scheme to complement the funding of oral examining, which is a potential source of fragility. Unlike the normal Bac, OIB examiners often have to travel long distances and stay away from home for up to a week at a time, and the reimbursements are insufficient to cover all the costs this involves. Whilst some parents' associations have generously made up the differential for their teachers,

Association régie par la Loi du 1^{er} juillet 1901 et le Décret du 16 août 1901

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Association des sections internationales
britanniques et anglophones

some teachers have found themselves out-of pocket and, understandably, they have begun to question whether they can continue to examine, especially when the partial reimbursements they receive are late in arriving or, in the worst-case scenario, non-existent. We need to be able to count on every teacher being available to examine, and to have the freedom to deploy examiners as required.

This year, ASIBA set aside a fund to top up the reimbursements for teachers working in schools with no complementary sources of funding, and we are pleased that over twenty-five teachers have benefited from this initiative; over €2,000 has been claimed. We would like to extend this to all examiners in future so that the true cost of examining the OIB is mutualised across all sections, and not subsidised by some sections or, worse, the examiners themselves. We have also decided that ASIBA will pay for examiners' lunches in each examination centre from June 2016 to help ensure that the partial allowances examiners receive go further, and to remove this cost from the schools receiving candidates. In return, we are asking examination centres to remove the examination centre fee that some charge for organising the exams in their centre so that the only costs incurred by candidates and their families are the unavoidable travel and accommodation costs.

All of these initiatives are intended to spread the additional costs associated with running an atypical examination across the whole community of OIB schools.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity of writing to remind you that ASIBA is a not-for-profit association and that much of ASIBA's work is performed on a voluntary basis by people who are committed to the OIB and the development of international education more generally. Moreover, the OIB has been generously subsidised by a small group of parents associations who employ the OIB Administrative Coordinator based at Saint Germain-en-Laye and fund the time and expenses of the OIB Steering Group. The cost of these essential services now needs to be mutualised across the whole community.

None of this can be done without your support. Consequently, we have introduced a new structure for calculating membership fees which was presented and approved unanimously at our Annual General Meeting held in Lyon last January. Henceforth, ASIBA membership fees will be calculated as 10€ per Terminale student, with a minimum contribution of €250 per school. We suggest that this is collected by parents associations.

By signing an agreement with Cambridge International Examinations to manage IGCSE on their behalf in France, ASIBA has significantly reduced the cost of offering these qualifications for member schools. We very much hope that the small contribution we are now asking members to make to support the future of the British OIB will be recognised as a legitimate and worthwhile cause.

Please find enclosed your school's membership form. Please complete and return the form along with a cheque payable to "ASIBA" for the total amount by 16th November.

We look forward to seeing you at the Annual General Meeting which will be held at the Lycée François I in Fontainebleau on 27th November (starting at 14.30).

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Many thanks for your continued support.

Kind regards,

James Cathcart
President